



**EAST ORANGE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
*East Orange Department of Health & Human Services*  
*143 New Street*  
*East Orange, New Jersey 07017*  
*August 18, 2020*  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Call to Order – 5:40 PM**

Board President Christine Harris read the following **Sunshine Law**: This meeting, which conforms to the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act, Chapter **231**, and Public Law of **1975** is a regular meeting of the City of East Orange Board of Health. Notices have been filed with our official newspaper, with the City Clerk and posted on regular bulletin boards. The public is permitted to participate at this meeting.

Zoom Telecommunication ID: 856 6246 5849

After the roll call, it was determined there was a quorum to convene the meeting.

**Board Members Present:**

Christine Harris, President  
Horace H. Henry  
Tobbia M. Corbitt  
Deanna Phillips  
Angela Jones-Williams

**Council Liaison:**

Leneus Bergson - Absent

**Board of Health Counsel:**

Joseph Campbell, Attorney assigned to the Board of Health - Absent

**Health Department Staff:**

Dr. Griffith, HHS Director - Absent  
Victor Kuteyi, Health Officer  
Chesney Blue – WIC Program Coordinator

**Mayoral Staff:**

Ajah Baldwin

**Public in attendance:**

None

**Approval of February 18, 2020, Meeting Minutes:**

Approved Unanimously

**Approval of July 21, 2020, Meeting Minutes:**

Approved Unanimously



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**Announcements President Harris:**

1. President Harris shared she and Trustee Corbitt attended the Rutgers Child Health & Wellbeing Research Group zoom teleconference on August 5, 2020, for schools, as they try to navigate the classroom settings post COVID-19. The forum consisted of 4 panels each with various topics of discussion.
2. Spoke briefly about work being done by the de Beaumont Foundation, Public Health National Center for Innovation, federal agencies, and a task force of public health experts and federal agencies to review and update the 10EPHS.

**Health Officer Kuteyi Updates:**

**New Health Educator**

HO Kuteyi announced that the Health Department hired a new Health Educator, Ms. Iman Johnson. She has a very strong background in health education and public health and will be working alongside Nurse Karen LaRussa. HO Kuteyi shared he met with Ms. Johnson to discuss the demographics of East Orange and provided an overview of what she should expect while serving our constituents. Topics of discussion included the number of shelters, nursing, and boarding homes within the City. HO Kuteyi relayed various information he felt would be prudent to her role as a health educator to foster better collaboration between those entities and the Health Department. HO Kuteyi described Ms. Iman as upbeat and eager to assist. The nursing homes would be her first point of contact to continue providing education for nursing home residents and staff, and review of equipment/supplies to mitigate a possible resurgence of COVID-19 during Fall and Winter.

**COVID-19 Data**

HO Kuteyi shared the OEM county data related to COVID-19 and to date, there were 2,031 cases in East Orange and 229 deaths. The number of cases and deaths had decreased in comparison to the day prior. HO Kuteyi shared the fluctuation often occurs after the data has been reconciled and cases belonging to other municipalities or counties have been redirected.

**Contact Tracing**

HO Kuteyi communicated contact tracing has been successful. Seven health department staff have been trained as contact tracers. Vice-President Henry asked if the seven health department staff have been assigned to contact trace exclusively, or are they assigned other tasks. HO Kuteyi shared some are a part of the Health Department staff and have other duties. Two contact tracers are operating as supervisors and we also have a permanent volunteer. The State assigns multiple contact tracers to various municipalities including East Orange. The Essex County Regional Health Commission has also been a resource and has offered us support from its numerous volunteers. President Harris asked if HO Kuteyi was made aware of approximately \$23 million being offered to a Massachusetts based organization to be in charge of contact tracing and if East Orange was contacted in this regard to assist in our effort.



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HO Kuteyi stated he is not aware then proceeded to discuss the State's regulatory process and use of the ComCare system.

#### School Re-Opening

HO Kuteyi revealed he was advised school will be re-opening in September. Vice-President Henry asked how social distancing would impact the students and faculty. HO Kuteyi communicated the EO School District is preparing a comprehensive plan which aims to address issues such as face coverings, staggered lunches/grab and go, staggered break times, social distancing amongst students and faculty, temperature monitoring, screening, proper sanitization of common contact areas and others. President Harris asked if remote learning been incorporated into the school year. Ajah Baldwin stated the EO School District has incorporated remote learning for a portion of the school year. Trustee Phillips concurred with the exception of students whose parents opted into hybrid learning. President Harris asked if the district is offering electronic devices to support remote education. Trustee Phillips stated electronic devices have been provided to students. Trustee Corbitt announced that the next City Town Hall Meeting will discuss school reopening and the speaker panel will be School Assistant Superintendent Dr. Harvest, Mrs. Santos, and others. Trustee Phillips discussed the many issues, concerns, and needed actions that must be addressed.

#### City of East Orange Re-Opening

HO Kuteyi stated most divisions in the Health Department have continued to service clients in some capacity, with the exception of the clinics. The Health Department has taken numerous measures to re-formulate operations post-COVID-19 to begin servicing residents full-time.

#### Social Distancing

HO Kuteyi mentioned that several businesses throughout the City have been non-compliant. Barbershops were advised to install partitions to adhere to social distancing. Initially, barbershops were tasked with putting distance between the chairs, however, this did not work well. President Harris asked if businesses are in well-ventilated areas, with enough space to social distance, masks are being worn, etc., are they considered in compliance if partitions are not placed. HO Kuteyi stated they would be in compliance as long as all of the aforementioned protocols are being adhered to.

HO Kuteyi noted that when patrons wait in the lobby of businesses and exceed the number of protocol space occupancy, then they are instructed to wait outside or in their car until the previous client has concluded their business. Ajah asked on behalf of Tony Jackson, how often inspectors visit retail food and other establishments to enforce and monitor the mask requirements? HO Kuteyi stated the inspectors visit establishments once a complaint has been received and enforce a shutdown depending on the findings of an investigation until they comply. HO Kuteyi shared they padlocked a restaurant the same day, as there had been numerous reports of them servicing clients outside which at this time is not permitted. The police and health inspectors visited the location and found the complaints warranted which resulted in the shutdown. The goal is to meet with the owners and discuss why they



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are non-compliant and advise of the consequences of their actions should this continue. Ajah asked for clarity regarding the frequency of the inspections and if they only occur as a reactionary measure once a complaint has been filed. HO Kuteyi stated the inspectors usually perform routine inspections but shifted their focus to COVID-19 related matters. They are catching up with their regular inspections and anticipate presumptive inspections going forward. HO Kuteyi discussed in detail the inspection processes (approximately 350 food establishments taking 3 hours per establishment to inspect) and staff responsibilities. Vice-President Henry shared that canvassing would be a way to ensure the inspectors can remain diligent in monitoring establishments throughout the City. HO Kuteyi stated a task force is in place to monitor and enforce compliance. If there are no flagrant violations the inspectors issue warnings, in lieu of an immediate shut-down. If businesses are still out of compliance after the warning a summons is issued. The next step would be to shut down the establishment.

Ajah asked if it is possible for Public Safety Officers to accompany his task force to assist with compliance. HO Kuteyi discussed customer behavior where there is initial compliance upon entering an establishment then noncompliance once inside. In these cases, the staff or an inspector if onsite, will ask the individuals to leave the store. Trustee Corbitt and Trustee Jones-Williams shared similar situations of patrons and staff not enforcing or complying with face mask policies. HO Kuteyi shared that members may reach out to him when these situations arise, and he will investigate and enforce compliance.

#### Ordinance for Violations of Executive Orders

HO Kuteyi is researching methods to incorporate social distancing, utilization of facial coverings in public settings, and other guidelines, into an ordinance. HO Kuteyi is reviewing ordinances crafted by surrounding municipalities to gauge how they have been able to create these ordinances successfully. So far, he has located ordinances that are on the County level but nothing that directly relates to municipalities. Once this has been identified he will begin crafting the ordinance(s) and disseminate the information with the BOH. Vice President Henry asked if the City can adopt Governor Murphy's executive orders. HO Kuteyi shared the Governor's orders are being enforced by the police. If we want to adapt these items into legislation, we would have to review the executive orders and amend our existing Municipal code to avoid duplications.

#### Nursing Homes

HO Kuteyi would like to create a set of protocols to assist residents and staff with managing a possible COVID-19 resurgence during the flu season. HO Kuteyi shared plans to schedule monthly conference calls with the D.O.N. of each nursing home. This will allow the Health Department to manage any potential outbreaks proactively. President Harris asked, since Influenza and COVID-19 exhibit similar symptoms, at what stage should individuals be concerned that their symptoms may not be a typical cold or flu. HO Kuteyi stated that COVID-19 has additional symptoms such as loss of senses of taste, which does not coincide with having the flu which makes it easier to distinguish between them, especially as the diseases



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progress into an advanced stage. Vice-President Henry asked who regulates nursing homes and what role does the local health department play in regulating its operations. HO Kuteyi shared the nursing homes are regulated by the State, however, the local health department has a relationship with the nursing homes to manage outbreaks of communicable disease and environmental issues. The relationship the EO Health Department has with the nursing homes is similar to daycares. Both the State and Local Health Departments are responsible for inspecting those entities. President Harris noted she was under the impression that inspecting nursing homes was recently delegated to local health departments. HO Kuteyi stated he would research that information and report back to the BOH.

**WIC Updates:**

Ms. Blue stated WIC is waiting for DPW to install plexiglass so they may begin allowing clients extending service in their office. At this time the USDA gave waivers for WIC offices to continue assisting clientele remotely. Also, the required clientele blood finger stick sample for hemoglobin and hematocrit determinations have been suspended until September 30, 2020. Some WIC and USDA officials are lobbying Congress to extend the waiver until the end of the year. Until further notice, the office is preparing to open in some capacity by October 1, 2020.

**Open Discussion:**

President Harris remarked the August 5, 2020 forum was informative, but the context of the information differed from her expectations. Trustee Corbitt concurred stating she felt the information did not deliver pertinent materials to address the expectancies and concerns of reopening schools post COVID-19. The forum seemed to be more discussion than solution-based. One of the main concerns was the psychological effects of COVID-19 on the students, parents, and staff and how that will be managed. President Harris asked if Trustee Corbitt received a copy of all discussions from the forum. Trustee Corbitt stated she had not received any materials from the forum. President Harris stated she will remit a copy of the forum data she received to be disseminated amongst the BOH. President Harris also shared her panel consisted of members from the YMCA and learned of the many programs offered to residents such as food drives and housing. President Harris shared many YMCA members expressed concerns over their ability to continue these programs. President Harris asked if the forum allayed Trustee Corbitt's concerns about re-opening schools. Trustee Corbitt stated the forum did not allay those concerns and shared she still has major reservations about reopening schools in lieu of distanced learning. President Harris shared there are numerous methods of re-opening schools which also include virtual and hybrid learning. Trustee Corbitt stated the issue lies in our inability to predict who students and staff are coming in contact with. President Harris asked the status of the ordinances as discussed in the last meeting. HO Kuteyi stated he is not aware of any changes since the last BOH meeting. President Harris suggested that now may be a time to revisit the possibility of utilizing the space dedicated for medical use at Cecily Tyson School.

***City of East Orange***

NEW JERSEY



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At the conclusion of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jo-Ann Mills  
Board Clerk