



**EAST ORANGE BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING
East Orange Department of Health & Human Services
143 New Street
East Orange, New Jersey 07017
September 15, 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: 848 1598 2955

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
Victor Kuteyi, Health Officer
Iman Johnson, Health Educator

Mayoral Staff:

None

Public in attendance:

None

Approval of August 18, 2020, Meeting Minutes:

Approved Unanimously



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Announcements President Harris:

1. President Harris disseminated the ratified 2020 Revised 10EPHS. This was a collaborative work between the de Beaumont Foundation, Public Health National Center for Innovation, federal agencies, which began in September 2019.
2. President Harris shared the Boston Company that had been hired by the State of NJ to spearhead some of the activities associated with contact tracing for COVID-19 was awarded 23.5 million dollars to that effort instead of the 2 million dollars as reported. As noted by HO Kuteyi, their efforts will encompass training contact tracers and the implementation of gathered information into the ComCares system.
3. President Harris introduced Ms. Iman Johnson, as our newly appointed CHES Health Educator, for the City of East Orange. Ms. Iman introduced herself and shared her background and projects at the height of her focus.

Dr. Griffith Updates:

MOU'S

Dr. Griffith shared DHHS has approximately 4 MOU's they are currently pushing forward. The first MOU is an updated agreement with EOGH for chest X-Ray services, required for positive cases of TB that HO Kuteyi has been working on. The updated MOU allows us to receive discounted chest x-rays for constituents via the referral process and our partnership. Discussion ensued and President Harris asked about the approval timeframe by Council and execution. Dr. Griffith shared that the next phase is to have discussions with the leadership of EOGH and begin the process of implementation, however, we are not able to advise how long it will take for them to execute the MOU.

Vice President Henry asked about the number of instances where chest x-rays were required. HO Kuteyi indicated that they occur as a response to an influx of immigrants migrating to East Orange, where a PPD test is required. If the PPD test is positive the chest x-ray is recommended to rule out active TB or other illnesses. EOGH has outsourced the reading of chest x-rays to a private company. Once the company reads the x-rays a bill is remitted to the Nursing Division for payment. HO Kuteyi explained we normally have 5 referrals for chest x-rays per month, however, the number of cases requiring the chest x-rays has diminished most likely due to COVID-19. President Harris asked about the outsourcing of reading the x-rays since EOGH has a radiology unit. HO Kuteyi explained under the new leadership, the unit's focus was behavioral issues, which may speak to their need to outsource the readings. He hopes in the future they may once again have radiology readings completed onsite.

The second MOU is between the Health Department and the Essex County Health Officer as the County will be offering support to the Lead Hazard Control & Healthy Homes Grant. The grant not only supplies funding for lead abatement to East Orange residents but also provides lead abatement support to anyone that resides in the jurisdictions throughout Essex County covered by our Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP). The MOU outlines services, shared data, and the educational component of the partnership with the County. The MOU makes us unique as a City and Health Department, as most municipalities provide these



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services only to the constituents they serve. Dr. Griffith noted Mr. Salaam, Program Coordinator of the Lead Hazard Control & Healthy Homes Program, has been instrumental in making connections with pediatricians and residents to spread the word about the program. With the implementation of this MOU, the County will now be able to assist in spreading the word.

The third MOU is between the Newark Community Health Center (NCHC), in East Orange and will support the Lead Hazard Control & Healthy Homes Program. In addition to our CLPPP program, NCHC provides lead screenings and education to families. Because NCHC screens numerous families for lead it was important for us to establish a formal reciprocal referral agreement, which will allow them to refer families to the Health Department that need financial support.

The fourth MOU is between the Health Department and UMDNJ. UMDNJ has an emergency medicine rotation for their residents, so we have an opportunity to partner and receive approximately 6-8, second-year medical residents who will provide support within the community. This increases our capacity in managing all pandemic-related issues. They will also assist in engaging the community, especially our senior population who may not be able to leave their homes. The medical residents can utilize this opportunity to help develop health policies while gauging the overall needs of our residents and contribute during the impending flu season. The medical residents will complement the efforts of our Health & Education Division

President Harris commended Dr. Griffith and the Health Department for being progressive in acquiring the medical resident's work to complement the existing internship programs we offer. Dr. Griffith shared that because of specific requirements needed and current clinic closures, the undergrad student internship program has been put on hold until we can assess and evaluate the department's needs in the coming months. We would need to make sure our divisions that are public-facing, i.e., our clinics have reopened before continuing the internship program. Dr. Griffith also noted the accomplishments of the Health Department are a testament to the hard work that each of the divisions has exhibited.

Trustee Corbitt asked about the method the medical residents will use to contact senior residents. Dr. Griffith stated they will be contacted via house calls and create workshops in the senior buildings. The senior residents can come to the shared space and attend the workshops at their leisure. Fully functional divisions such as Substance Abuse will be paired with the medical residents to assist in their regular functions as well as for events. Trustee Corbitt asked if Senior Services will be a point of contact for those who do not reside in senior buildings. Dr. Griffith shared Senior Services has yet to re-open due to the vulnerable population it services but there are plans to establish another mechanism by which opportunities will be provided for those who do not reside in senior buildings to engage with the medical residents.



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Health Officer Kuteyi Updates:

Nursing Homes

HO Kuteyi received approval from the nursing homes to establish a set of protocols to assist residents and staff with managing a possible COVID-19 resurgence during the flu season. HO Kuteyi is working with Ms. Iman to coordinate this initiative. President Harris asked if we received any clarification as to who is tasked with inspecting the nursing homes. HO Kuteyi stated he investigated whether the Governor's office declared the responsibility of inspecting nursing homes should be shared with the Municipalities but did not find official statements supporting this.

WIC Waivers

President Harris inquired whether the USDA extended waivers for WIC programs to continue working remotely. HO Kuteyi stated he was unable to reach Ms. Blue to obtain an answer.

Managing Regular Inspections Post-COVID-19

President Harris inquired whether a resolution was created to regulate the frequency of non-pandemic related inspections. HO Kuteyi communicated the Environmental Team has already implemented a process for regulating inspections and has currently inspected approximately 120 retail food locations throughout the City. President Harris remarked the need to frequent establishments to ensure they are complying with mask-wearing and social distancing policies. HO Kuteyi shared the Environmental Team is following up on complaints, insuring patrons are wearing masks and social distancing as they enter and exit establishments and have planned to complete an additional 48 inspections in September.

Trustee Corbitt shared observing multiple operation violations in some local bodegas.

Dr. Griffith tasked the Board with communicating their observations or matters that affect public health in real-time to better assist us with responding to issues more immediately. Board members made mention of numerous homes that are vacant or appear to be vacant throughout the City and are littered with trash and debris. It is believed to be a health concern due to the attraction of feral cat and rodent populations. Dr. Griffith concurred stating those observances should be reported to HO Kuteyi, so that he may work to mobilize DPW, Health, and Code Enforcement Inspectors as those issues are normally addressed collectively. President Harris noted the Mayor, Code Enforcement, DPW, and the Health Department were making tremendous in-rows to beautify the City, however, perhaps COVID-19 put a damper on that project. Dr. Griffith shared operations were suspended to protect staff from COVID-19. Trustee Corbitt stated she has seen a resurgence of the Mayor on the Block initiative but believes their focus has been on the more challenged areas throughout the City.

Ordinances

President Harris inquired about the creation of an ordinance to enforce mask-wearing and social distancing policies. HO Kuteyi declared that during his research into methods of incorporating social distancing, utilization of facial coverings in public settings, and other



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guidelines, into an ordinance it was discovered this has already been crafted by another department. Dr. Griffith clarified; City Council passed a resolution regarding face masks. While we do not want to duplicate legislation, we are evaluating the resolution that was passed to gauge whether we can incorporate more detailed information. President Harris asked if Dr. Griffith could provide more specific information regarding the resolution. Dr. Griffith explained the resolution was not drafted by the Health Department and asked if Secretary Mills could disseminate the document to the BOH. Dr. Griffith did share the resolution addresses the City's stance on mask requirements and reiterating what is in Governor Murphy's Executive Order. President Harris asked if the resolution covers enforcement of the policies. Dr. Griffith replied in terms of violations and fees, that aspect would be covered by the Health Department. That is why we need to create an ordinance to address fees and violations to be enforced by the Health Department. At this time, if anyone violates these policies, they are held accountable under the Executive Order by the EOPD. HO Kuteyi is reviewing successfully crafted ordinances by surrounding municipalities but 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 could 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.

Mercantile Ordinance

Dr. Griffith explained when attempting to evaluate and revisit the Hair Salon, Nail Salon, and Barbershop ordinances it was discovered that some of the languages mirrored the existing Mercantile ordinance that is already in place. It created a bit of miscommunication regarding our efforts to create an ordinance referencing the mercantile permits. Dr. Griffith asked that the existing Mercantile Ordinance be distributed to the BOH so they may compare its contents to the ordinance they crafted. President Harris suggested this be done by the next BOH meeting. Dr. Griffith requested the comparison be remitted prior to the next BOH meeting so feedback can be collected from the Health Inspectors. Once the feedback has been given, Attorney Campbell will take the collected data and modify the ordinance. Tuesday, September 22, 2020, was selected as the submission date for the ordinance comparison.

Ms. Iman Johnson Updates:

Dr. Griffith shared how thrilled she is to have Ms. Iman join the City as the CHES, Health Educator. Dr. Griffith explained that the State requires local health departments to have a CHES on staff as health education is an important component of the health department. Ms. Iman will assist current health education efforts throughout the community, but she was also selected to provide a certain type of structure and evaluative component that accompanies certification as a Health Education Specialist. This will ensure that we realize the outcomes and goals that we set out to achieve.



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Ms. Johnson introduced herself as the new Certified Health Education Specialist and has her master's degree in Public Health from Rutgers' School of Public Health.

Ms. Iman began her transition into public health while working in the Prosecutor's Office. Since then Ms. Iman has worked within the realm of sexual health, substance abuse, and various subjects that influence public health; and expressed her passion for dissuading health disparities within our community. Ms. Iman shared "Mask Up EO", as one of the many projects she is working on. Mask Up EO serves to highlight the importance of continuing to wear masks utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook. Residents have their pictures taken and are interviewed to ascertain why they choose to wear a mask. Thus far Mayor Green and Councilman Leneus Bergson have lent their voices to the project. The aim is to broaden awareness of the importance of wearing masks, especially in public and social settings, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. President Harris commended Ms. Johnson's dedication to Public Health Education and noted she will be a tremendous asset to the department.

BOH members then introduced themselves to Ms. Johnson.

Open Discussion:

Dr. Griffith announced HIV, Nursing, and Dental Clinics are preparing to reopen. All services will be available via appointment only and contained in the clinical space downstairs. In addition, the Nursing Clinic has begun offering flu shots to the community at our testing site located on Elmwood Avenue on Wednesdays. The flu shots are free and available to both children and adults. Extending the flu shots to both children and adults is new this year but is needed based on the emphasis to have everyone obtain the flu shot. We are also looking to offer the flu shot to staff, senior buildings, and other entities such as Isaiah House to ensure that those who are interested in being vaccinated can.

President Harris asked if Dr. Griffith could shed some insight into the benefits of obtaining the flu vaccination as it correlates to COVID-19. Ms. Iman shared she put together the infographics on its effects but stated people should be informed that obtaining the flu vaccination will not contribute to being afflicted with Coronavirus. Ms. Iman stressed the importance of obtaining the flu vaccination this year as we are going to potentially enter a twin-pandemic. Obtaining the flu shot can help your provider rule-out the flu as opposed to COVID-19, as their symptoms are largely interchangeable. The information has been disseminated to City staff and is on our City of East Orange webpage. They are highlighting these issues to mitigate the flu in the same respect as they mitigate COVID-19. President Harris remarked they are both viral infections and any antibodies obtained via the flu shot will presumably fight the symptoms of Coronavirus that leads to the COVID disease. Dr. Griffith concurred that they are both respiratory illnesses and obtaining a proven vaccination via the flu shot will provide added protection for uncompromised immune systems from contracting COVID-19. Dr. Griffith also shared there is a lot of information being learned about the antibodies and to her knowledge, there have not been any definitive statements about the flu translating to COVID because COVID is so unique. The goal is to make sure



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people are protected and doing everything in their power to remain healthy. Trustee Jones-Williams stated she was informed by seniors, individuals who have asthmatic or bronchial symptoms are not supposed to take the flu vaccination, as it may result in pneumonia or other respiratory illnesses. HO Kuteyi stated he believes the information is being spread falsely to deter individuals from receiving the flu vaccine based upon personal beliefs.

Dr. Griffith shared the CDC has released information encouraging our senior population to get vaccinated. We are paying attention to the current research as there is a lot of skepticism within our community surrounding vaccinations. Trustee Corbitt shared as she and her husband are COVID-19 survivors, they have been advised to obtain their pneumonia shot as well. Trustee Corbitt inquired if it is necessary to obtain both vaccinations. Ms. Iman recommended our vulnerable populations, i.e., seniors and minors maintain their regular vaccination schedule, and the CDC's website suggests those aged 65 and older should obtain their pneumonia vaccinations. Dr. Griffith stressed the importance of those who have pre-existing conditions speak with their primary care physicians as they are well-versed in their conditions. Given how unpredictable COVID has been we would encourage more protection as opposed to less. HO Kuteyi added those who have been recommended to take both vaccinations should do so, as the flu is a viral infection and pneumonia is bacterial.

Board members inquired about the relocation ordinance that was discussed in previous meetings. Dr. Griffith stated she is not aware of any movement towards that legislation being passed, but the question can be posed to Attorney Campbell via email. President Harris asked if there are individuals still moving into East Orange from New York or other locales. Dr. Griffith shared she is unaware of any large numbers of people moving into the City but that the Department has been dealing with the displacement of residents. Prior we were providing resources and outreach to those without shelter. We are now preparing for an increase in families and individuals who have been displaced due to the pandemic. President Harris asked when did the Federal or State mandates ban the displacement of individuals who are unemployed due to the pandemic. Dr. Griffith shared those mandates are still in effect, but we do participate in larger meetings related to displacement or homelessness within our region. What we are preparing for on a local and national level are spikes in homelessness due to unemployment or those that have been impacted in other ways in case the moratorium on evictions is lifted soon.

President Harris asked for an update regarding our transient and homeless populations. Dr. Griffith stated the shelters are full, but the Environmental Team is monitoring that population. Dr. Griffith shared they are learning that there are individuals who are coming to East Orange from other communities because there is a greater degree of comfort in East Orange if they don't have shelter. These individuals regard East Orange as a haven that allows them different areas where they can sleep, but once we become aware of them, we intervene. We also are starting to canvas as well so that we can get ahead of any increases in our numbers.

City of East Orange

NEW JERSEY



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At the conclusion of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jo-Ann Mills
Board Clerk