



**EAST ORANGE BOARD OF HEALTH  
REGULAR MEETING**  
*East Orange Department of Health & Human Services  
143 New Street  
East Orange, New Jersey 07017  
December 15, 2020  
MEETING MINUTES*

**Meeting Call to Order – 5:35 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: 940 7111 4788

Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/94071114788?pwd=OXpldWpLTEY3a0ZRdmY0SEMrrZ0g3dz09>

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  
Dr. Tonya X. Cook

**Council Liaison:**

Leneus Bergson - Absent

**Board of Health Counsel:**

Joseph Campbell, Attorney assigned to the Board of Health

**Health Department Staff:**

Dr. Griffith, HHS Director  
Victor Kuteyi, Health Officer  
Chesney Blue, WIC Coordinator  
Iman Johnson, Health Educator

**Mayoral Staff:**

None

**Public in attendance:**

None

**Approval of November 17, 2020, Meeting Minutes:**

Approved Unanimously



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**Announcements President Harris:**

1. President Harris spoke at this year's NJ League of Municipalities virtual conference following Commissioner Judith Persichilli. The Commissioner's speech was comprehensive, and few questions ensued.
2. Jo-Ann distributed the Revised *Board of Health Orientation Manual* to members of the Board, Dr. Griffith, and Health Officer Kuteyi. She shared the Association incorporated the revised *10 Essential Public Health Services*, and procedures on how to create ordinances, and conducting successful virtual meetings.
3. Conveyed that one of the first individuals to receive the vaccine occurred at University Hospital this morning and Governor Murphy and Commissioner Persichilli were in attendance. President Harris expressed hope that the distribution of the vaccine will establish a reduction in new COVID cases. The CDC and the FDA have approved the utilization of the Biontech vaccine, in addition to the vaccines being distributed by Pfizer and Moderna.
4. Condolences were extended to Mayor Green and his family upon the death of his father and best wishes for his continued recovery from COVID.

**Dr. Griffith Updates:**

Medical Student Rotation

Dr. Griffith shared the medical resident began after Thanksgiving and we are currently working with the second assignment of a Tuesday, two-week rotation cycle. The experience has been positive and fostered relationships with the community as we are conducting testing within our Senior buildings. Their rotation of duties includes but is not limited to discussing administrative measures with herself and Victor and devoting time to community efforts. Dr. Berenson and our previous medical resident Dr. Qui, directly engaged with the seniors and staff. The conversations were fruitful in that they were able to discuss the general sentiment regarding COVID testing and vaccinations; which will be utilized when developing our Health & Education materials.

From the medical residents' discussions within the community, we understand there is a level of hesitancy and reluctance towards the vaccine and it is a sentiment we are hearing across the board. There is a lot of information to be shared about the test and the vaccine and our Health & Education methods are being directed towards managing their reluctance by ensuring we are fully communicating with our residents and being as transparent as possible.



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Dr. Griffith shared that she is very pleased that the medical residency program is going well and a total of between 8-9 residents will continue through 2021. The larger program is renewable and provides support for University Hospital and vice versa. The connections and rapport established with the medical residents fostered their interest in assisting with community focus groups and other programs. President Harris expressed gladness that the program is doing well.

**Teleconference & Newsletter for Faith-Based Organizations**

Dr. Griffith shared that she just signed off on the final version of the newsletter to be shared the following day with the faith-based community, in addition to inviting them to tomorrow's town hall meeting. We will be hosting another video call with them, before the end of the year. The goal is to supplement our video call with the content of the newsletter to provide updates to the ever-changing information on COVID-19. This ensures the members of our faith-based community have information, such as the differences between the Pfizer & Moderna vaccines, and the information is broken down in the same way that we are doing it for the larger community. From the information gathered we are looking to develop a FAQ as part of our educational campaign. Some other materials being developed are door tags, banners, etc., that encompasses the material so the information is disseminated, and we can answer the questions while allaying some fears.

President Harris asked if the newsletter was exclusive to the faith-based entities or being shared globally. Dr. Griffith stated the newsletter will be shared with their congregants, but other materials are being developed with similar content that will be disseminated within the community. Trustee Corbitt asked for clarity regarding faith-based entities. Dr. Griffith shared the information is provided to the leadership of the faith-based entities for circulation amongst their congregants. Dr. Griffith noted that those who are not able to attend the meetings have assigned someone else to guarantee they are still obtaining the information. President Harris asked when will the next call take place. Dr. Griffith shared the goal is to have a call the following Monday or Tuesday following dissemination of the newsletter. Dr. Griffith shared this will allow them a few days to receive and review the context of the newsletter and then provide feedback during the call. As this is a critical time since the vaccine has been disseminated, we don't want there to be too much time or a lag in between the distribution of the newsletter and any new content that we need to impart. Trustee Corbitt asked how many faith-based entities there are throughout the City. Dr. Griffith shared she can't recall the number of entities but that it is a comprehensive list. President Harris surmised the faith-based entities were also participating in the efforts surrounding the transient and homeless community. Dr. Griffith concurred.

**Virtual Contact for Senior Residents**

President Harris inquired about the virtual contact program for senior residents. Dr. Griffith



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shared there was a delay in receiving technology. The remainder of the program is functional, and as soon as they receive their technology, the program can commence.

**Reinstituting Special Shopping Hours for Senior Residents**

President Harris asked if the City plans to reinstitute special hours dedicated for senior residents or will the current regular hours remain in effect. Dr. Griffith shared the businesses mandated special hours themselves not the City and since we have shifted our focus to COVID vaccination efforts, it is not something we have planned to mandate at this time. We can garner feedback from the businesses to determine if it is something they are looking to continue. Dr. Griffith believes that some businesses have continued making accommodations for senior shoppers, while others have not.

**Rainbow Group Updates**

Dr. Griffith shared everything is in place, we are waiting for the Rainbow Group to submit the final documentation so we can move forward. It is unclear whether we will be able to complete that before the end of the year, or early next year. However, after the holidays we will be able to hit the ground running and begin training individuals. A partner organization has been identified and a local church has voiced interest in becoming a potential second partner.

**Health Officer Kuteyi Updates:**

**EO COVID-19 Vaccination Updates**

Dr. Griffith shared a lot of their focus has been on COVID response and the dissemination of the vaccination. President Harris asked if we were designated as a vaccination area. HO Kuteyi stated the health education survey was formulated partially to supplement plans to host vaccination sites throughout East Orange. This will allow us to address any questions or concerns residents may have prior to us rolling out the program. Currently, we are looking for locales where we can provide vaccinations. Vice President Henry commended these efforts and relayed it is imperative to educate and provide answers to concerns to allow residents to make informed decisions.

President Harris asked about Victor's role in the vaccination sites. HO Kuteyi stated he will work with OEM to guarantee a locale is selected, operates effectually, and canvassing the nursing schools to obtain volunteers. President Harris stated the site sounds like it will be well-executed and managed. Dr. Griffith shared all 4 of our on-staff physicians have been monitoring the program and will have significant involvement in our local vaccination roll-out. HO Kuteyi shared the City will utilize the same vaccines as provided by the County at their vaccination sites. The reasoning behind this is to avoid causing adverse reactions when inoculating residents with different vaccines. It will also ease residents' concerns as to why they are being offered one brand of the vaccine over another.

The rollout of the vaccine will most likely occur at the end of the first quarter of 2021. Also, the Pfizer vaccine is being given to healthcare institutions and the Moderna vaccine is being



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distributed to community-based institutions such as the Municipal Health Department. Dr. Griffith explained the healthcare institutions have the capability of managing the Pfizer vaccine, particularly its need for storage at an extremely low temperature, whereas the Moderna vaccine can be managed at the required temperatures more effectively by community-based organizations. Dr. Cook noted the refrigeration storage unit needed to house the Pfizer vaccines are very expensive. Vice President Henry concurred, stating the vaccines must be stored at low temperatures requiring the use of dry ice to transport it via delivery companies. President Harris asked if the Federal government will be providing EO with funding to host a vaccination site and how many sites will be used. HO Kuteyi shared they are still in the process of working with OEM and the Planning Department to find a site for vaccinations and are not at the stage to determine whether federal funding will be provided. We are also looking to provide vaccinations via a mobile clinic for seniors and those who have limited mobility.

President Harris inquired whether communications will go out regarding locales, and other pertinent vaccination information. HO Kuteyi stated that communications will go out well in advance to prepare residents and provide detailed information to those who are on the fence about obtaining the vaccine.

**Essex County COVID-19 Vaccination Program**

HO Kuteyi shared he and Dr. Griffith attended a press conference at Essex County College and observed the setup at the vaccination site, how the site is managed, and gained clarity on the space needed to execute a vaccination program. President Harris asked for clarity on the vaccination process. The County is still in the 1A phase and those who are interested in obtaining the vaccine are advised to register online. The vaccination sites will be open Mon-Sat from 9 am – 6:30 pm. President Harris asked if the Essex County sites will be utilizing both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. HO Kuteyi advised the County has chosen to utilize the Moderna vaccine, most likely due to its storage requirements. The vaccine selection process will be included in educational materials within FAQ.

President Harris asked if the County will follow-up with residents in between inoculations or will the resident be required to self-manage arrangements for their second doses. HO Kuteyi stated the follow-up appointments are automatically scheduled after the first dosage. Phone calls are also made a week before their appointment which ensures residents return for their additional doses. After vaccination, individuals receive a yellow card containing patient demographics that is entered into the vaccination tracking system NJISS. President Harris remarked the site seems well developed. The site consists of the following areas: intake, injection, post-injection, and the discharge going in one direction. The post-observation (discharge) area requires monitoring for 15 minutes after the inoculation by a healthcare worker. President Harris asked if there will be any literature on what to do if an adverse reaction occurs. HO Kuteyi shared the information is provided on the yellow cards. HO Kuteyi shared the vaccine is at no out of pocket cost to individuals who wish to obtain it, however, it will be billed to insurance for those who have coverage, as there are low administrative fees





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associated with the vaccine. Vice President Henry remarked the low cost of the vaccination's administrative fees aid those who would otherwise be deterred due to lack of coverage or the insurance insecure. Dr. Griffith concurred stating there are administrative fees associated with COVID testing as well, however, it is billed to the insurance. The only time individuals paid the administrative fees were if they went to an alternate facility or they did not have insurance. The Municipality was able to find alternative funding via Cares and other resources to absorb the cost of those fees for those who are uninsured.

HO Kuteyi shared the State has decided to use both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. While the vaccines are similar in composition the storage requirements differ. The Pfizer vaccine requires a colder storage temperature than the Moderna vaccine. Both companies have also shared similar reasons for requiring their storage temperatures. Victor shared Moderna has developed similar mRNA vaccines in the past and their research supports requiring a storage and transportation temperature at -20 degrees. The mRNA vaccines are genetic protein-based and can easily be destroyed by enzymes. The only way to ensure the destruction of enzymes does not occur is to store it at a very low temperature, as the enzyme will be inactive or non-functional. Some other differences between the vaccines include the needed dosage. Pfizer is approximately 30 micrograms while Moderna is approximately 100 micrograms per dose. Both vaccines require two inoculations, Pfizer is three weeks apart and Moderna is 4 weeks apart. Due to the extreme temperature storage requirements, the vaccines must be thawed before usage.

In phase 1A, healthcare workers and volunteers at the sites will receive prioritized vaccinations. Long-term care facilities are included in phase 1A, but their vaccinations will be managed by CVS and Walgreens. Phase 1B will follow 1A and include essential workers. Phase 1C will encompass those who are 65 years or older and those at-risk with pre-existing health conditions. East Orange and Irvington residents are only allowed to obtain vaccinations at the Essex County College and Donald Payne School sites. Newark residents can obtain vaccinations from all 4 locales in Newark. Other municipalities will go to Livingston Mall Sears Center and West Caldwell Technical School, and K-Mart sites. Victor shared Essex County is working to provide transportation for seniors and designate a timeslot for seniors only. HO Kuteyi stated we will work with Senior Services to provide transportation to our senior residents, as well.

#### COVID-19 Vaccine

HO Kuteyi informed the BOH, the City has applied for the COVID-19 vaccine from the State and expressed hope, that we will be selected as one of the sites to administer the vaccine. President Harris asked if we were informed of the protocols involving the rollout of the vaccine. HO Kuteyi stated he believes the rollout will begin with healthcare workers and first responders as stated by President Harris but has not received any additional information. HO Kuteyi has been in discussion with the State to prepare for how the vaccine will be stored.



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There has been word that the Pfizer vaccine would require a storage temperature of approximately -80 degrees necessitating a freezer that can keep the vaccine at that temperature. Dr. Cook indicated that the information she obtained indicates temperature to be in degrees Fahrenheit. Discussion ensued on refrigeration requirements. President Harris asked what the normal injectable temperature for vaccines is. Vice-President Henry remarked vaccines are usually injectable at 40-41 degrees Fahrenheit. VP Henry stated that the effectiveness of each vaccine is equal. Storage requirements are the determinant of which vaccine is distributed to which site. Safety is the issue. President Harris suggested the refrigerated system may be supplied when the vaccines are delivered. Trustee Corbitt remarked Moderna created a vaccine that does not have a low-temperature storage requirement.

**Bodegas**

HO Kuteyi stated they have had to shift focus to concentrate on the COVID vaccine and new cases. The Environmental Team is cognizant of the need to monitor the bodegas and will continue to ensure the safety of staff and residents who frequent those locales.

**EO School District**

President Harris asked for an update on the school concerns. Trustee Phillips advised the EOSB has a Culture & Climate Committee that maintains a rotation of schools to actively address maintenance concerns.

**WIC Updates:**

Dr. Griffith commended Ms. Blue for doing an amazing job with her staff at WIC. They are doing a remarkable job ensuring they haven't missed a beat supplying services to the community. The team has transitioned from providing in-person services such as voucher delivery post-COVID safely and effectively. Ms. Blue shared residents are becoming adjusted to utilizing remote services but praised her team's success in ensuring the residents are still serviced.

**Ms. Iman Johnson Updates:**

The Nature Conservancy & Rutgers School of Public Health

Trustee Jones-Williams revealed her positive experience with Ms. Baker who interviewed BOH members regarding their COVID stories and provided approximately 10 additional individuals who were interested in sharing their stories. Trustee Corbitt asked how the information collected is going to be rolled out. Ms. Johnson shared that the result would be implementing policy and messaging regarding the overall impact of COVID. Iman stated she will debrief with the Nature Conservancy to determine the outcome of the compiled data and share that with the BOH later.

**COVID-19 Survey**

Ms. Johnson shared she worked on a survey which is located on the City's Facebook page, to ascertain resident's feelings about the COVID vaccine and whether individuals would be



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willing to take it. This has allowed us to gather names and contact information for the individuals who took the survey and find out whether they would take the vaccine or not. It will also allow us an opportunity to gain an understanding; what would compel them to get the vaccine, maybe seeing someone they respect to take it or learning more information about it. This information will be utilized to develop the messaging and figure out what questions we can answer in upcoming town halls and newsletters. Currently, there have been over 450 responses. President Harris asked if the responses are positive for obtaining the vaccine.

Iman shared 51.5% of the responders stated they did not want to get the vaccine, 14% stated they will and a third of responders stated they are undecided. So there is a real opportunity to explain what the vaccine is comprised of, how it is being rolled out, previous coronavirus research was used to develop the vaccine and that despite the timeframe of its execution all of the safety precautions were adhered to. President Harris suggested that we inform residents that Black people also participated in trial studies that show that it is effective. Education will be needed to garner a more positive response. She also noted that we must move past the fear that Blacks and people of color are being targeted, so we can feel more comfortable with obtaining needed vaccines and medical treatments going forward. President Harris also shared that the Tuskegee experiments propelled the policy of *Informed Consent* utilization in medicine going forward.

**Open Discussion:**

Trustee Corbitt shared she received a robocall from the County Executive, Joseph DiVincenzo, regarding locations throughout Essex County where the vaccine will be distributed. The Old Caldwell complex, Donald Payne Sr., Tech, Essex County College, the former Sears facility at Livingston Mall, and the former Kmart facility in West Orange were identified as vaccination distribution sites.

Trustee Corbitt inquired about the status of the BOH COVID Pledge. Dr. Griffith shared the pledge was presented to the Health and Education Committee and adopted by City Council, with the next steps falling on the Health Department, however, since our focus has been on the many things discussed tonight; a plan has not been formulated to roll it out to the larger community. Trustee Corbitt asked if we can make this a goal for the New Year. Dr. Griffith agreed this was an achievable goal, as we are in the process of developing content in our health education messaging regarding COVID-19.

Trustee Jones-Williams inquired whether those who are allergic to penicillin would be at high risk of adverse reactions when getting the COVID-19 vaccine. HO Kuteyi stated those with pre-existing allergies should consult with their physicians.

Attorney Campbell disclosed his belief that we may encounter residents who are concerned and feel there are equal arguments to state why we should choose both vaccines as opposed to one. Dr. Griffith clarified that the Municipality does not choose which vaccine we are





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provided, we would have to follow the guidelines provided by the state. The State and County will determine which vaccine is given to the Municipality.

At the conclusion of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jo-Ann Mills  
Board Clerk