

Tompkins County Board of Health
May 27, 2025
12:00 Noon
Rice Conference Room and via Zoom

Minutes Approved
June 24, 2025

Present: Christina Moylan, Ph.D., President; Melissa Dhundale, MD, Vice-President; Edward Koppel, MD; Ravinder Kingra; Shawn Black; Samara Touchton; Dr. Andreia de Lima (Zoom); and Frank Cantone

Staff: Jeremy Porter, Interim Commissioner and Fiscal Administrator; Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health Services (Zoom); Dr. William Klepack, Medical Director; Samantha Hillson, Director of Health Promotion Program; Elizabeth Cameron, Director of Environmental Health; Jessica Clark Mandeville, Director of Children with Special Care Needs; Rachel Buckwalter, Director of Community Health; Holly Mosher, Deputy County Attorney (Zoom); and Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

Excused: Brenda Grinnell Crosby, Deputy Public Health Director; and Zoe Lincoln, Whole Health Planner

Guests: None

Call to Order: Dr. Moylan called the regular meeting of the Board of Health (BOH) to order at noon.

Privilege of the Floor: None

Approval of April 22, 2025, BOH Minutes: Ms. Black moved to approve the minutes from April 22, 2025, and Mr. Kingra seconded the motion. All were in favor as written and unanimously approved.

Financial Summary/Administration Report: Mr. Porter referenced the April financial report included in the packet, noting that most of the State and Federal funds are currently being processed. The staff is preparing this year's budget, which will consist of two components: the Maintenance of Effort Budget and a Flat Budget.

The Maintenance of Effort Budget will be created first. This budget accounts for fixed expenses that increase annually, such as contracts, software costs, and other expenses that naturally rise over time. The department's goal is to ensure that these necessary cost increases are included in the budget, rather than trying to find funding within existing allocations.

In July, the legislature will hold its budget retreat to review financial information for the entire county. Following this, departments will develop a Flat Budget, with potential adjustments made after receiving the updated financial details from the legislature.

Ms. Black notes that tax revenue has remained relatively flat, and the legislature aims to be fiscally responsible while addressing the complex needs of county services and constituents. They are also monitoring the work requirements for SNAP benefits and changes in Medicaid that affect the community.

Fellowship Program: Mr. Porter states that the State has extended the fellowship program; however, no official end date has been provided. They are currently in the process of allocating funds approved through the HHA, which will be submitted to the full legislature. Once an official end date is established, a reevaluation of all expenses will be presented to the county administrator and the legislature to detail the remaining funds.

Whole Health Integration Presentation: Mr. Porter included slides from the Whole Health Integration presentation in the packet, but they can also be viewed during a legislature meeting, for which the link will be shared. Mr. Porter shared some highlights of the presentation below:

Structural Changes:

- Created a single whole health commissioner role
- Established three deputy positions (public health, mental health, and financial)
- Brought departments physically closer together
- Improved communication between previously separate departments

Client Service Improvements:

- Opened Brown Road mental health clinic, where clients can access multiple services in one building
- Created a new referral system allowing easier cross-program client support
- Reduced client burden of repeating paperwork and stories

Administrative Enhancements:

- Consolidated administrative functions under one team
- Created new positions like data analyst, HR person, planner, and billing coordinator
- Developed a quality insurance and improvement unit
- Integrated planning processes across departments

Unique Approach:

- Integration wasn't just about saving money but treating individuals holistically
- Intentionally breaking down systemic barriers
- Focusing on maximizing client outcomes
- Building capacity to provide comprehensive services

Notable Achievement:

- Tompkins County is one of the few counties successfully implementing this type of comprehensive health department integration.

The overall goal is to provide more seamless, client-centered health services across mental and public health domains.

Medical Director's Report: Dr. Klepack reemphasizes the importance of Medicaid in providing care to those who currently lack it, arguing that timely access to healthcare can prevent more costly treatments down the line.

Avian Influenza – There have not been many public health alerts concerning avian influenza, and no human cases have been reported. Furthermore, a recent study investigated the immunity of dairy cows to the virus and found that, after artificial exposure, the cows developed some level of immunity. Whether this finding will lead to vaccination options for dairy cows will depend on further research. Overall, this is a promising development in the context of avian influenza.

Oral Health Project Update – Rachel states the project is in its early stages:

Key details:

- A shared document has been created with interested members
- They are preparing to schedule the first Zoom meeting, likely in July
- Current participants include School Nurses, Ithaca Free Clinic, the Executive Director of the 6th District Dental Association, and Dr. Patel (local dentist), who will join later in July

Project focus:

- Addressing access to dental care for children on Medicaid
- Exploring why children have difficulty accessing dental services
- Investigating the quality of care from existing providers

Challenges:

- Finding local dentists willing to participate
- Understanding the current landscape of Medicaid dental providers
- Addressing past concerns about poor care from some providers

The coalition is still forming and gathering interested partners to develop comprehensive solutions for pediatric dental care.

Division for Community Health (DCH) Report: Ms. Buckwalter had nothing to add to her written report included in the packet.

Dr. Moylan acknowledged the important contributions of various Tompkins County Whole Health staff who were recognized for excellence at the New York State Public Health Association meeting.

Health Promotion Program (HPP) Report: Ms. Hillson had nothing to add to her written report included in the packet.

Children with Special Care Needs (CSCN) Report: Ms. Clark Manderville shared that they are looking to fill the Special Education teacher position.

Environmental Health (EH) Report: Ms. Cameron had nothing to add to her written report included in the packet.

Ms. Black, a member of the Public Safety Committee discussed the committee's interest in addressing illegal cannabis stores and the involvement of the county attorney on how to move forward with shutting down illegal cannabis stores.

Deputy County Attorney, Holly Mosher states that the process for implementing the eviction law is straightforward. According to the Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law, we will notify the landlord that they need to evict a tenant involved in unlicensed cannabis sales. If the landlord does not proceed with the eviction within five days, we can step in and handle it for them. This involves filing a petition with the court, appearing in court, and obtaining an order of eviction from the judge.

Selling flavored vapes is treated as a civil action, not a criminal one. Selling to minors is handled civilly through the Tompkins Underage Possession Act (TUPA)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Enforcement Actions:

- 1. Draft Resolution # EH-ENF-25-0007 – Empire Commons Market, Violation of Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act (ATUPA) (5 mins.)** Dr. Koppel moved to accept the resolution as written; seconded by Dhundale.

Ms. Cameron explained the penalty breakdown for the violations:

For Sale to Persons Under 21:

- Maximum penalty: \$1,500 for initial sale
- \$250 mandatory surcharge

For Flavored Vape Products:

- Maximum penalty of \$100 per bank product (X7)
- No specified minimum penalty

EH is charging the maximum allowable penalties for both violations. This approach is consistent with EH's previous handling of similar violations, with the goal of deterring illegal sales, particularly those targeting young people.

All were in favor; the vote to approve the resolution as written was unanimous.

12:37 p.m. Executive Session - Dr. Dhundale moved to enter an executive session to discuss the search for a commissioner; seconded by Mr. Kingra; all were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 12:37 pm.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, June 24, 2025, @ noon.