



**EAST ORANGE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
*East Orange Department of Health & Human Services*  
*143 New Street*  
*East Orange, New Jersey 07017*  
*January 21, 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.

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

**Health Department Staff:**

Dr. Griffith, HHS Director  
Victor Kuteyi, Health Officer  
Karen LaRussa, RN Nurse Educator

**Mayoral Staff:**

Ajah Baldwin

**Public in attendance:**

None

**Approval of December 17, 2019, Meeting Minutes:**

Approval unanimous

**Announcements President Harris:**

1. Elections for the positions of President and Vice-President were held. Both Christine Harris and Horace Henry were unanimously re-elected to their currently held board positions for 2020.



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2. Announced that Councilman Bergson will continue as the BOH Liaison again this year.
3. Shared that the Health and Education Commission meetings will be held twice a month at 4:30 pm, prior to the City Council Meetings.
4. President Harris has not met with Councilman James regarding the autonomy status of the BOH; however, she had a brief discussion with Councilman Leneus, and he stated he will have a discussion with Councilman James as a follow-up to last year's meetings.
5. Requested BOH members, if in favor, to contact Senators Rice and Gill, to support passage of NJ State Senate bill clarifying mandatory childhood vaccinations.
6. Suggested the BOH should finalize a date to host the Vaping forum. March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm were selected as potential dates and times for the forum.

**Director Griffith Updates:**

Newly Appointed Essex County Health Officer

Dr. Griffith and HO Kuteyi met with Ms. Maya Lordo, the newly appointed Essex County Health Officer to explore developing a collaborative partnership.

Homelessness Initiative

Dr. Griffith - Homelessness Meetings: She will finalize the final draft of the five-year plan that addresses-homelessness within the City. The document summarizes data collected by the task force that aims to address the top 5 or 6 challenges affecting the homeless population. The document also contains materials supporting responses ranging from local legislation to practical responses, i.e., responding to code blue and identifying local code blue shelters apart from Isaiah House or determining how we are going to provide vaccines for those who are homeless.

Homelessness Resource Guide

Dr. Griffith shared a copy of the first draft Resource Guide which serves as a rudimentary handbook and provides local information for those in need. Dr. Griffith shared Essex County and other entities are putting together guides to highlight resources they provide either on a County or other level. This guide will be utilized for a period that may extend to a quarterly basis and gauge any feedback given. The goal is to start collecting the feedback and work to immediately realize any needed amendments. At this time the guide has not been disseminated broadly, but we are planning to share it at the next forum which will occur in March. Currently, we are working to shift from planning to the implementation of procedures that will address the issues identified within the 5-year plan.



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**Mobile Showers**

President Harris asked if the mobile showers are providing homeless residents with new clean clothing after they utilize the showers and how long have ambulatory showers been available. Dr. Griffith stated there are entities who partner with the organizers of the mobile showers and aid in equipping the showers with kits to provide new clothing, however, some individuals may not want to be separated from their clothing. If we decide to have mobile showers, we will need to gather partners and find resources. Dr. Griffith stated there are numerous community partners, who service surrounding municipalities and are waiting for collaboration with East Orange. Dr. Griffith stated she is not aware of how long the showers have been in operation, but that Newark implemented mobile showers fairly recently.

**St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center**

Had a great meeting with St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center and East Orange Animal Control. The goal is to establish a collaboration between the Center and the Municipality to expand our efforts to control the animal population. St. Hubert's will provide a range of services previously unavailable, such as this year we will have 2 free rabies clinics. East Orange Animal Control, Health Department, and Public Safety will partner with St. Hubert's while they partner with People for Animals. The rabies clinics will provide licensing & micro-chipping and set up appointments for spay and neutering of domestic animals and provide additional resources-such as-leashes and food. Trustee Phillips shared she had previously contacted St. Hubert's as a potential resource for feral cats. Dr. Griffith indicated that St. Hubert's is willing to offer support from an outreach perspective, but they cannot assist us financially in addressing our feral populations.

**East Orange General**

As per Dr. Griffith's conversation, East Orange General is open to a proposal on how they can provide their support to the development of community programs and make residents aware of the investments made in the hospital and the updated services they provide.

Currently, EOGH providing tables at events or attending health fairs is not sufficient for developing a broader relationship. Practitioners are needed to go out into the community. The Health Department will submit evidence-based findings i.e. programs, nutrition based or otherwise which will support these efforts.

Dr. Griffith asked the BOH for suggestions or recommendations that can be included and shared with EOGH. President Harris suggested EOGH provide services in senior homes or at the senior residences, such as physicals, blood pressure screenings, and immunizations, as they are not always a mobile population. Vice-President Henry stated it is good that the hospital has initiated this endeavor.

President Harris inquired if a community ambassador were still in its employ. Dr. Griffith stated yes, however, EOGH needs to be more engaged in fostering community health and that is why it is imperative we have tangible services. They already have physician's forums and



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they do go into senior buildings, but we are looking for things that are evidence based so we can shift behaviors.

Similar to the method used by the Health Care Foundation, whom we will be partnering with, we will obtain pre and post assessment, education and participation workshops.

President Harris suggested a representative from East Orange General attend some of the community forums such as the Council Ward meetings. Dr. Griffith stated that was a great idea but would need to be represented to the Council for approval.

**Health Officer Kuteyi Updates:**

**Ordinances**

HO Kuteyi alerted us the new mold ordinance has been signed. President Harris thanked everyone for their hard work in assisting with the ordinance being passed.

President Harris asked if the Tobacco ordinance language was changed to reflect its name as Nicotine Delivery Systems. HO Kuteyi stated that the ordinance has been modified.

**Essex County Health Officer**

HO Kuteyi shared he and Dr. Griffith met with the newly appointed Essex County Health Officer Maya Lordo as the previous Health Officer retired. The main office is located at 50 S. Clinton St, in Newark but they have satellite offices in Verona, Cedar Grove, and other locales.

President Harris inquired about the role of the County Health Officer. HO Kuteyi informed the BOH the Essex County Health Officer regulates air quality, pollution, emergency preparedness, and works in coalition with Essex Regional Health Commission to execute programs, provide grants, and address communicable diseases. We were trying to ascertain whether they would provide data for Health Departments in Essex County municipalities so that we can retrieve the data from the State website.

Dr. Griffith stated HO Maya Lordo is excited to partner with and has been in communication with all Health Departments within Essex County, meeting with municipal Health Officers, as she is developing a new strategy for collaborations.

Our new lead grant is one such project HO Lordo may collaborate with the Health Department on which the County may provide specific health education services as we cover not just East Orange but the other municipalities as well through CLEP. This collaboration would place the development of materials as the County's responsibility with our support from the grant.

Through this collaboration, the County would not have to apply for grant funding as it would be counterproductive but by partnering with us it should increase our capacity.

Dr. Griffith and HO Kuteyi discussed the Health Care Foundation Needs Assessment with HO Lordo. HO Lordo is interested in undertaking a County level Health Needs Assessment but are cautious as they do not want to lose any local data when an assessment is completed County-wide. President Harris stated it's great that we partner as long as we remain the grantee. Dr.



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Griffith concurred that we remain the grantee stating the County may become somewhat of a sub-grantee as long as they provide services. At this stage, we are working alongside HO Lordo to realize the execution of a partnership. Dr. Griffith expressed HO Lordo is wonderful, active passionate, and eager to connect with the communities.

**Attorney Campbell Updates:**

**Mercantile Ordinance**

The Mercantile Ordinance is the only one that needs to be reviewed. The issue is that some businesses that fall under the Mercantile category would be subject to double fees, such as barber shops. The Body Art and Barbershops Ordinances can be presented at the next Health and Education meeting. Attorney Campbell stated we need to put a bit more thought into the mercantile issue prior to presenting it to the Health and Education committee. Attorney Campbell presented Barbershop and Body Art ordinances, signed by the BOH, which were never presented at Council meetings. The dates need to be revised so they may be presented to City Council.

Shared Attorney Ryan Linder has crafted an ordinance relating to the SOTA (Special One-Time Assistance) Program but is not aware if a task force has been created. Steps have been taken to investigate and inquire with Property Maintenance Inspectors as to what properties were utilized as residences for SOTA participants. Attorney Campbell believes Director Barner of Property Maintenance may have compiled a list of any complaints or records obtained of properties with SOTA tenants in addition to owners who received violation notices for not obtaining a certificate of habitability. One piece obtained from the interview with Property Maintenance inspectors was that multiple efforts were made to reach out to someone from SOTA to no avail.

The version of the ordinance viewed by Attorney Campbell would hold landlords responsible and give tenants an avenue to address their concerns. Attorney Campbell cautioned against singling out one owner or program and citing them for paying rents in advance. Other programs or tenants who want to pay their rent in advance won't be permitted to do so if a statute preventing advanced payments is enacted. One solution would be to allow advanced payments only after the landlord is confirmed as having a certificate of habitability and other required means of renting. The other challenge the City would face is how to monitor activities seeing as though landlords are not required to inform the city when accepting large amounts of rent except via the rent roll.

President Harris stated the Health Department should have open communication with SOTA to establish what additional services participants may need beyond housing. Dr. Griffith stated according to SOTA they are providing services to their clientele; however, this creates an issue as the Health Department has not been made privy to what their services entail. The roles of Property Maintenance and the Health Department may overlap when attempting to provide support to ensure that individuals aren't misplaced, and we start addressing the



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factors that can lead to displacement. Allowing SOTA to pay rents in advance undermines our ability to provide support in the event an issue arises. The clearest issue and obstacle would be if the unit is not habitable, however, we have a multitude of other concerns to be addressed or considered which could still lead to an impact on the community and individuals.

Dr. Griffith stated the drafting of an ordinance is a wonderful step in making progress. Nurse LaRussa asked if anyone has considered the underaged children who may be affected by displacement that have been transferred into the community and the support services they may need. Nurse LaRussa shared in the '90s there were agreements drafted where the schools and pediatricians were notified of transfers which could assist in alerting the City when there is an issue with housing or resources. Dr. Griffith stated she had a similar conversation with Dr. Harvest of the EO BOE who shared the difficulty in obtaining knowledge of which children are affected as that knowledge can only be obtained if a child or parent reports it. Once a struggle is reported we can probe for additional details and offer services but other than that we are truly being reactive.

**Ms. Baldwin Updates:**

Ms. Baldwin shared Mayor Green is hosting the State of the City on Thursday, February 20, 2020, at 6:00 PM at Cicely Tyson Performing Arts Center.

Ms. Baldwin shared she is the Chairperson for the Census Complete Count Committee. She can be contacted if there are questions about the purpose and importance of collecting the Census Bureau data and how it affects our ability to obtain resources as a community. Brochures and materials that reference the Census will be disseminated throughout the community to ensure the Census is completed correctly. Ms. Baldwin shared often individuals may not complete the Census properly due to a fear of losing benefits or being reported if they are illegal residents. President Harris asked if Census employees are required to go door to door to collect resident's data. Trustee Phillips responded yes; they are unless the information is collected online. Ms. Baldwin also informed the BOH that individuals can still apply for Census jobs via their website at [2020census.gov](http://2020census.gov). Trustee Phillips also shared her chapter of Delta Sigma Theta is collaborating with the Census and East Orange. President Harris asked if the City has encouraged individuals, they know to be undocumented to become citizens. Ms. Baldwin noted the difficulty in tracking resident status as people who are illegal try to fly under the radar. Ms. Baldwin stated she is not aware of any methods employed by the City to encourage citizenship however we are a Sanctuary City.

**Health Department Staff:**

**Nurse LaRussa – Health Educator:**

Introduced her newest intern, Mr. Ravi Patel. Mr. Patel, a resident of East Orange, is currently pursuing his master's degree from Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus. Nurse LaRussa and Mr. Patel will be meeting with HO Kuteyi to discern vital statistics related to e-cigs and vaping. Mr. Patel's interest to create a brochure referencing the Hazards of Tobacco and E-cigarettes which will be translated into Hindi and directed towards East Orange residents who





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use Hindi as their main language. Nurse LaRussa intends to facilitate collaboration between Mr. Patel and the North Jersey Tobacco Coalition with the hope they can utilize materials produced by Mr. Patel.

January is Cervical Cancer Month and Radon Awareness Month. Nurse LaRussa encourages the community to realize the importance of Radon Awareness, especially since we are in an area that used to contain a radium factory.

February is Heart-Health Month. February 1, 2020, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM, Langston Hughes School is having an event hosted by Delta Sigma Theta, Sorority. Delta Sigma Theta hosted the same event last year which produced an excellent turnout and Nurse LaRussa anticipates the same for this year.

Nurse LaRussa shared AMA came up with materials referencing steps to obtain an accurate blood pressure reading. She shared often people take actions that cause an inaccurate reading such as, talking, arm in the wrong location, not sitting in the proper position, and eating prior to or during testing. Nurse LaRussa divulged questions such as have you eaten today, when did you eat, making sure the arm being testing is in the proper position, etc. can ensure individuals receive an accurate reading and are referred to the appropriate professionals. Trustee Phillips stated Delta Sigma Theta is hosting another Heart Healthy event later the same day.

**Open Discussion:**

Trustee Corbitt asked if it was feasible to submit a written correspondence asking for a response to Councilman James requesting an update regarding BOH autonomy status. President Harris agreed a formal response will be submitted.

President Harris asked Attorney Campbell if the Hold Harmless Agreement needed any revisions. Attorney Campbell stated that he just received the document prior to the meeting and has not had time to review it thoroughly. He will review the document and supply us with a formal response thereafter.

Trustee Corbitt asked how the BOH plans to implement the marketing aspect of the forum, i.e. flyers, participants, disseminating info to the Mayor, etc. Trustee Corbitt stated an aggressive marketing strategy is required to ensure the information goes out in a timely and efficient manner. In response to Ms. Baldwin's question, the BOH affirmed the target audience is children, parents and the whole community. Ms. Baldwin suggested, and Dr. Griffith concurred the format and content of the forum needs to be created to ensure the program is executed correctly. Trustee Philips stated the tapes, as presented by Ms. Shareef during a previous BOH meeting, will allow Mayor Green and others to obtain clarity on the purpose of the forum and garner attendance and participation.



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President Harris shared Mayor Green seemed very enthusiastic and receptive to the idea of an e-cigarette forum and she will ask him to announce the forum at his State of the City Address in February. President Harris and Nurse LaRussa have contacts who may be willing to participate in the forum. President Harris asked if robocalls can be made via Public Information and in the schools. Ms. Baldwin explained the schools have a separate robo-calling system and the information would have to be given to the superintendent of the EO BOE. Trustee Philips will use her connections with the EO School Board, Nurses and additional parties to assist with disseminating the info through the schools. President Harris stated committees should be formed and assigned roles were identified.

At the conclusion of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jo-Ann Mills  
Board Clerk