

**Portage County Combined General Health District  
Board Meeting Minutes  
January 17, 2023  
6:00 PM**



**I. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER**

The Portage County Combined General Health District Board of Health met on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at 999 East Main Street. The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM by Board President, Robert Howard.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Robert Howard, President  
Evelyn Cutlip, Vice President  
Lucy Ribelin, Member  
Linda Grimm, Member  
James Bierlair, Member

**Board Members Not in Attendance:**

Dr. Howard Minott, Member  
Amy Everett, Member  
Charles Delaney, Member

**Staff in Attendance:**

Joseph Diorio, Health Commissioner  
Mark Arredondo, Medical Director  
Sarah Meduri, Director of Personnel and  
Administrative Services  
Christina Jewell, Administrative and  
Account Clerk  
Debra Stall, Temporary Fiscal Officer  
Rosemary Ferraro, Director of Nursing  
Becky Lehman, Director of Health  
Education & Promotions  
Amos Sarfo, Environmental Health  
Supervisor, Stormwater/Wastewater  
Justin Rechichar, Deputy Director of  
Environmental Health  
Amy Cooper, Director of WIC

**Advisory Council:**

Bruce Lange, Charlestown Twp.

**Others:**

None

**Media Present:**

None

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Board of Health Meeting: On January 17, 2023, Board Member Bierlair presented a motion to accept the Board Meetings Minutes for December 13, 2022, seconded by Board Member Ribelin.

An “aye” vote was cast by all, and motion carried.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Howard	Yes	Board Member Everett	Absent
Board Member Cutlip	Yes	Board Member Dr. Minott	Absent
Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Delaney	Absent

## III. PORTAGE COUNTY TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION: (Advisory Council)

Mr. Lange stated that he and Mr. Diorio are preparing for the 2023 District Advisory Council meeting in March 2023. It has been virtual since the pandemic began. Mr. Lange is looking forward to having all the trustees and representing townships present.

## IV. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

## V. ACTION ITEMS:

### A. Expenditure Ratifications \$69,599.90

Invoice Batch No.	661	\$2,700.00
Invoice Batch No.	662	\$3,842.42
Invoice Batch No.	696	\$56,976.94
Invoice Batch No.	708	\$6,080.54

Ms. Stall stated that these invoices and batches are expenditures that are to be ratified and approved by the board.

Board Member Ribelin presented a motion to accept the above Expenditures and Ratify these expenses, seconded by Board Member Cutlip.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Howard	Yes	Board Member Everett	Absent
Board Member Cutlip	Yes	Board Member Dr. Minott	Absent
Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Delaney	Absent

**B. Travel Expenditures and Equipment Requests**

Ms. Stall requested that these travel expenditures be approved by the board. Mr. Rechichar shared with the Board that prior to Mr. Bull's departure he had received grant funding from NEHA (National Environmental Health Association) for a travel scholarship, allotting Ms. Natalie Menke, a Registered Environmental Health Specialist with PCHD to attend the Inform East Regional Conference in Greenville, SC. Mr. Rechichar was quite thankful for the opportunities that this grant program will bring to future events for PCHD staff.

A motion was presented by Board Member Bierlair to approve said stated travel expenditures, seconded by Board Member Grimm.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Howard	Yes	Board Member Everett	Absent
Board Member Cutlip	Yes	Board Member Dr. Minott	Absent
Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Delaney	Absent

- C. Resolution #23-01** The Portage County Combined General Health District's acceptance to enter into a contract with Clemans, Nelson & Associates, Inc. to provide staff trainings, retainer services and Personnel Manual review and revision for Portage County Combined General Health District and Permit the Health Commissioner to Sign the Contract Pending Completion.

Ms. Meduri presented this resolution to the board, requesting permission to enter into and accept a contract between Clemans, Nelson & Associates, Inc. to provide staff trainings, retainer services and review and revisions of the Portage County Combined General Health Districts Personnel Manual and permit the Health Commissioner to sign the contract pending completion. The contract is for one year and is not to exceed \$19,600.00 and will be funded entirely through the Public Health Workforce Development grant.

A motion was presented by Board Member Grimm to Approve Resolution #23-01, seconded by Board Member Cutlip.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Howard	Yes	Board Member Everett	Absent
Board Member Cutlip	Yes	Board Member Dr. Minott	Absent
Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Delaney	Absent

- D. Resolution #23-02** The Portage County Board of Health Acceptance to Enter into Agreement Between the Portage County Board of Commissioners and the Portage County Combined General Health District for The Purpose of Cooperation and Coordination as it Relates to the Execution of the Responsibilities of the Portage County Storm Water District.

Mr. Sarfo presented a contract renewal to the board for the Portage County Board of Commissioners pertaining to the Portage County Storm Water District.

A motion was presented by Board Member Bierlair to Approve Resolution #23-02, seconded by Board Member Ribelin.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Howard	Yes	Board Member Everett	Absent
Board Member Cutlip	Yes	Board Member Dr. Minott	Absent
Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Delaney	Absent

- E. Resolution #23-03** The Portage County Board of Health Acceptance to Enter into a Services Agreement Between the Portage County Combined General Health District and Richardson Animal Hospital for the Purpose of Preparation of Animals for Rabies Testing.

Ms. Ferraro presented this resolution to the board, requesting annual renewal of services needed in the preparation of animals for rabies testing. Board member Ribelin inquired if Richardson Animal Hospital also tests for rabies through this contract and if the state charges PCHD for the rabies testing. Ms. Ferraro stated that they do not and that all testing is handle by the state. This contract is for Richardson Animal Hospital to prepare the animal for rabies testing and forward to the state for rabies testing, which is at no charge to PCHD.

A motion was presented by Board Member Cutlip to Approve Resolution #23-03, seconded by Board Member Ribelin.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Howard	Yes	Board Member Everett	Absent
Board Member Cutlip	Yes	Board Member Dr. Minott	Absent
Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Delaney	Absent

## **VI. DISCUSSION REPORTS:**

### **Administration and Personnel:**

Ms. Meduri shared with the board a status update regarding the employment vacancies. She stated that there had been a great deal of applicants for the eight open positions. Ms. Meduri also stated that she planned to ask the board to approve four new hires, (2 for WIC Clinic Assistants, 1 Public Health Nurse and 1 Director of Finance).

Ms. Meduri's administration and personnel report stated that there were 3 resignations:

- Ms. Angela Konkle, a WIC Clinic Assistant,
- Ms. Carley Buzzard, a WIC Peer Helper, and
- Mr. Andrew Bull, an Environmental Health Supervisor

1 retirement, which came with sadness and deep appreciation of 45 ½ years of service.

- Ms. Karen Hendrickson, a WIC Clinic Assistant

There were also 3 interns who completed their assignments with the Health Education Division and the Nursing Division.

Ms. Meduri stated that there are several new and fulfilling projects planned for PCHD staff. She is currently working with KSU to provide several different classes for monthly PCHD staff meetings as well as assembling a leadership curriculum for staff in leadership positions. Ms. Meduri stated that she and Mr. Diorio met with Ann Ramer, Regional Representative for the Ohio Department of Health and Ms. Ramer informed Ms. Meduri that the Public Health Workforce Development grant has been approved for another 5 years, so PCHD can reapply for those funds. Ms. Meduri is hopeful that PCHD will receive equal funding, if not more than previously awarded. She was also informed of additional funding available for interns, which could be useful for PCHD, she plans to review that program for the future.

Ms. Meduri stated to the board that she has scheduled staff training sessions, and the 1<sup>st</sup> training session is scheduled for January 19<sup>th</sup>, with the Mental Health Recovery Board and Townhall II, entitled, "QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Program". Some of the future topics are as follows,

- Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Training provided by the Mental Health and Recovery Board
- Employee Safety
- Discovering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) provided by KSU
- Recognizing Bias provided by KSU
- Addressing Microaggressions provided by KSU
- Social Media
- Harassment and Discrimination
- Conflict Resolution

Ms. Meduri is currently working on updating employee job descriptions and completing the PCHD Pulse Survey and Performance Evaluations. Mr. Sexton has been meeting with each employee to review the current Core Competencies and how those relate and apply to each employee and their job descriptions and is doing a great job. She also noted that with Mr. Diorio's approval, she put together a staff survey to gather information from the staff on employee morale, ideas on how to boost the agency overall and as individuals. There was a great response with the feedback and she plans to share the feedback with the board once she reviews and filters the data more thoroughly.

Ms. Meduri's updates were well welcomed by the board, and she is looking forward to a new year and her personal mantra for 2023 is, "The year of the reset".

#### Fiscal and Accounting:

Ms. Stall stated that the cash basis report looks pretty well for the end of the year. Overall, the carryover is \$3,558,543.23, which aligns with the previous few years at this time of year. Ms. Stall stated that in purchasing a building and updating the building, overall, PCHD has done a tremendous job, financially. While there were a few grants this past year, those grants supplemented the costs of salaries, expenditures which came in handy for the payroll aspect of the company. The general fund shows \$968,308.14, however, there were \$1,085,400.00 advanced out for other funding programs until PCHD is reimbursed by the grants. Ms. Stall also stated that there were some expenditures for the Health Education Division and the Nursing Division that Ms. Stall reviews for budgetary purposes. While these two divisions do provide funding, they are not self-sufficient, financially. The Health Education Division accounted for \$224,587.77 in expenditures to be reimbursed and the Nursing Division accounted for \$316,223.91 in expenditures to be reimbursed, which gave a total carryover balance to the general fund of \$1,512,896.46. Ms. Stall stated that overall, the divisions look good, and the end of year was good as we start a new year, and more grants are in the works for 2023.

Board President, Mr. Howard commented on how impressed he has been with the staff over the years, across the board. Board President, Mr. Howard said, "Especially with the two divisions that are not financially self-sufficient provide great value to the county. These are areas that we should be spending our money



on.” Board President, Mr. Howard wished to congratulate the staff overall with how grant funds were applied and utilized with the impact the pandemic has had over the past few years and profits at a very low rate. Board Member, Ribelin agreed with Board President, Mr. Howard.

Board Member, Ribelin asked Mr. Diorio if there were any reason that we as an agency should worry about grants on a federal or state level with these grants not being as lucrative as previous, especially with the changes in the economy and state legislature. Mr. Diorio stated that he did not feel that it would be an issue within the short term of these grants, however, a few of the grants that our agency has maintained for years, such as the preparedness grant, in normal circumstances you cannot rely on a grants sustainability each year. However, with the WIC funding, the agency has been able to sustain funding for years for both Portage and Columbiana counties. The PHEP grant has been in operation since 2002 and the WIC grant has been active longer than the PHEP grant. The PHEP grant has been active for at least 20 years, which is a very long period of time for a grant to stay active, which leads Mr. Diorio to believe that there is a strong financial contribution to this grant which allots the grant to progress as it has and with the impact the pandemic has endured, the overall funding for this grant has been sustained.

The COVID grants are short term grants and Ms. Stall works on ensuring those funds are allocated to relieve the strain off of the general fund, especially with salaries for each division. Mr. Diorio stated that those are the grants that are more volatile as there is uncertainty if the COVID grants will be extended or if they will terminate. He mentioned that we currently have a COVID grant that will terminate this June/July. Mr. Diorio stated that grants such as Project DAWN, that grant has such a great impact and there is so much drive for this particular grant that he cannot foresee those types of grant terminating any time in the future.

Ms. Stall also noted that Mr. Rechichar and Mr. Bull had been a great duo in searching out available grant funding for the food service program. In 2022, they accounted for \$21,000 in grant funding, with another \$5,000 in grant funding for 2023 so far. Every grant fund helps for each division.

Mr. Diorio stated that Ms. Ramer whom Ms. Meduri had spoken about in her divisional discussion was appointment as a regional representative designated through the Ohio Department of Health to assist LHDs in the Northeast region. Ms. Ramer also mentioned that another ODH person will assist LHDs with searching for both state and federal grants to meet program needs. In doing so, this takes a great deal of burden off of the staff to have a representative available to research and assist the needs of an agency.

Nursing:

Ms. Ferraro wished to thank the board for all their support to her and her staff, especially since her staff has been very short staffed for quite some time. Her staff

has flexed and is working to fulfill the needs of the community. Though they are not quite there yet, they are positively optimistic is achieving that goal. Ms. Ferraro stated that there are still a great deal of COVID-19 cases and flu cases. There have been a lot of vaccines and learning of new vaccines that are being researched and possibly released. Ms. Ferraro stated that the Ebola outbreak has ended and there is no longer a medical emergency. She did share that the communicable diseases have increased most recently with STD's and Salmonella cases. She and her staff are appreciative and ecstatic to have a new Public Health Nurse to join their staff and look forward to working with her.

Board Member Ribelin asked Ms. Ferraro what her point of view was pertaining to the current COVID-19 level. Ms. Ferraro stated that while the number of cases are declining, she feels that not many are reporting the positive cases as previously reported. The number of individuals requesting the COVID-19 test kits has increased, so this leads her to believe that not all positive COVID-19 cases are being reported. She plans to continue to increase the number of test kits given to the jail and other areas that her division plans to visit this month. Ms. Ferraro reported that while the RSV cases have decreased, the number of flu hospitalizations has increased a great deal. Having the feedback of data reported through the Epidemiologist has been very much appreciated and such an insight on the actual data being sent throughout the state with live data. While the calls are still coming in on the "What to do's" once a positive case is received or reported. She is eager for the grant funded program for the CHW's (Community Healthcare Workers) to finish up their training and assist areas of the community with available healthcare programs and vaccinations as well as proper education available to meet their needs for their personal health.

#### Environmental Health:

Ms. Smith stated to the board that within the board packet is an update on the Chinn Allotment. The packet has a detailed report outlining the plans and specifications for the Chinn Regional Sewer Improvements for Portage County. The Ohio EPA has approved PCHD with a complete Permit to Install (PTI) application to construct the Portage County Regional Sewer Improvement project for \$6,367,000 with a timeline of approximately 33 months. The Chinn Allotment is located in the Ravenna Township and affects approximately 300 – 350 households. The Portage County Water Resources has been working on sewer design project which did incur issues with the consultant with areas that needed to be redone. The Ohio EPA has approved the permit to install and the design to instruct the sanitary sewer project. The Ohio EPA enclosed a disclaimer stating that it was approved with applicable rules and regulations and, "This is an approval of technical aspects of the plans and specifications for the sanitary wastewater treatment works and does not imply an approval for a WPCLF loan". However, Ms. Smith stated that there has been a placeholder in the WPCLF Draft Management Plan for the past two years offering each county upwards of 30 million dollars for this project. While this project is seeking grants to assist in the project costs, Ms. Smith is hopeful that they will reach out and apply for WPCLF



funding for this project.

The question was asked to Ms. Smith if the project will progress soon and Ms. Smith stated that it will most likely be another year before a company is hired, but the project has been released for competitive bidding. While this affects the residents of the Chinn Allotment of 300 – 350 households, the discrepancy is within the triangle sector of Blackhorse Township, there's an area on the down slope that could affect the flow of the gravitational sewer which has a low pressure pipe sewer system.

Ms. Smith also shared the notice received from the Department of Agriculture stating that PCHD's Retail Food Establishment Program provisional status has been upgraded to approved status. This will also lift the provisional status that was invoked by the Ohio Department of Health and is currently in the process of being upgraded as well per the approval of the Board of Health, which was approved and the letter of approval from the Department of Agriculture. Ms. Smith noted that the survey provided for the Campgrounds program, which was conducted in 2022, this was approved and scored a 95% and there were recommendations provided as well. Also, the Pools program survey was approved and scored a 93.5%, which also included a couple of recommendations. Overall, she is pleased with her staff and the status of the surveys.

Mr. Rechichar stated that his division received three grants from NEHA. The first is to become a Mentor for the retail standards program. In the past we have been a mentee. This will allow us to help grow another jurisdiction in their retail standards path. This award is for \$12,000. The second grant is another NEHA grant which will allow us to continue our work with the standards program. This grant award is for \$5,000.

The final grant is a training grant worth \$7,500 which will allow our agency to send multiple staff to the annual NEHA conference which will include the standards audit verification workshop. We also wrote for and were accepted to present at this conference details of the work that we have completed in the standards program so far. Lastly, we wrote for a scholarship to send one staff member from our food safety team to attend an inFORM food safety training in Greenville, South Carolina. All expenses are covered under the scholarship.

#### Health Education & Promotion & Accreditation:

Ms. Lehman stated that Mr. Walker was providing a table top exercise on Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> on Radiological events which included community partners and staff. Overall, there should be about 30 people who accepted his invitation to join, which will be a role play of training in different roles. Ms. Lehman shared that Ms. Holtz has expanded the Project DAWN program to include 2 new agencies this past month that have been trained in the Project DAWN program and to be distributors of the Naloxone kits. These new agencies were Kent City Health Department and the new Mental Health Substance Abuse

Clinic, Bright View which is also located in Kent. Ms. Lehman also shared that Hope Village in Rootstown are closing due to lack of staff. This was one of the most prominent substance abuse locations in Portage County. Bright View has picked up quite a few of their patients and this will be a great resource for the county who are now distributors for PCHD and Project DAWN. Ms. Lehman added to Board Member Ribelin's question pertaining to the grant programs, that Project DAWN is integrated with Naloxone which has been under the injury prevention category description with ODH (Ohio Department of Health), but has recently been recategorized as harm reduction. Going forward the Project Dawn as well as Sexuality Education. Ms. Lehman shared that Ms. Selvy was invited to attend an award ceremony for the "Saved By the Belt" program, by the Ohio State Highway Patrol who recognized a young man who was saved by his seatbelt in an automobile accident.

Ms. Lehman stated that Mr. Sexton who is the Accreditation Coordinator has met with every staff member of PCHD and reviewed the Core Competencies with each staff member as well as updating which Core Competencies apply to each staff member. He is about half way through and this has been quite interesting and a learning experience for all staff. The Performance Management Plan is complete, however, Ms. Lehman wished to review it one last time before sharing with the Board to ensure all is well. She did state that she will be sure to have it in next month's board packet for the board to review. Mr. Diorio requested that Ms. Lehman email the document to him, and he will share with the board members.

Ms. Plough has been assisting with Portage Soil and Water and will be working with Mary Helen, Amos and Justin for an event they are working on a May event for septic systems. Ms. Lehman shared that she will be working with United Way at an event of how they update their fund for funding streams. United Way assists with Education, Health and Income and they are transitioning their Health program to include Public Health. Ms. Lehman also shared that the final completed version of the CHIP is almost complete. There are a couple of corrections that need to be made but should be done very soon.

Board Member Ribelin inquired if the "None Under 21" event will be returning for 2023. Ms. Lehman stated that yes, it is planned for April 2023. This is the 1<sup>st</sup> since COVID-19. The company that PCHD used in the past for the event doubled their costs, so Kent State University stepped up and offered to host the event at one of their larger venues at no cost.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):

Ms. Cooper shared that in December, WIC held some holiday events for the children. "Bright Tips" for a Healthy Holiday - Columbiana WIC provided in-person nutrition education in December. The WIC staff decorated the WIC office in a North Pole theme. WIC staff had gifts to give the children which included a coloring book, crayons and a stamper. WIC staff also provided "Reindeer" carrot cake cookies using a recipe from [wichealth.org](http://wichealth.org) health's ekitchen. Warm Up with

WIC – Portage began the nutrition education series titled “Warm Up with WIC” which included nutrition education and soup recipes using WIC foods. Participants had a chance to enter a drawing for a crock pot (donated by staff). Families were also able to select from hats and mittens donated by PCHD staff, as well as books from Bright Star Books! In the month of December, despite having a short month due to holidays, the WIC staff served approximately 724 participants. The SNAP benefits are being reduced in February and Ms. Cooper expects the WIC program to see more participants. Ms. Cooper commended her staff as the work of a WIC employee can be very stressful being on the front line, but it is worth it for a much-needed program and Ms. Cooper thanked the Board for bringing them on board.

Health Commissioner:

Mr. Diorio stated that the WIC Lisbon building is in the process of being sold to the Columbiana County Port Authority. The current owner being the Portage County Commissioners have been seeking to sell off this property for many years. The Health Commissioner has spoken to both parties and the Columbiana County Port Authority is content to keep the WIC office at the current location to serve residents of Columbiana County. To date, our agency does not have a lease agreement in place with either party. A lease agreement will be forthcoming upon the transfer of the property located in Lisbon Ohio with the new owner- Columbiana County Port Authority.

Mr. Diorio also provided updates with regards to the building HVAC. The K Company will commence with the updating of the controls for all 30 VAVs (Variable Air Volume) components in early February. Additional work will continue when the electronic VAV controllers arrive-sometime in Mid-February. The initial work will be to reconfigure the electronic control board and connect to a new server. This will provide for AC and Heat control in all 30 zones and all three floors.

**VII. OLD BUSINESS:** None

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Accept the hiring of Renee Zembala, WIC Clinic Assistant.  
A motion was made by Board Member Ribelin to accept the hiring of Renee Zembala, WIC Clinic Assistant, and seconded by Board Member Cutlip.  
An “aye” vote was cast by all, and the motion carried.
- b. Accept the hiring of Katie Mathews, Public Health Nurse.  
A motion was made by Board Member Ribelin to accept the hiring of Katie Mathews, Public Health Nurse, and seconded by Board Member Bierlair.  
An “aye” vote was cast by all, and the motion carried.
- c. Accept the hiring of Cheryll Wetshtein, WIC Clinic Assistant.

A motion was made by Board Member Ribelin to accept the hiring of Cheryll Wetshtein, WIC Clinic Assistant, and seconded by Board Member Cutlip.  
An “aye” vote was cast by all, and the motion carried.

- d. Accept the hiring of Branden Burns, Director of Finance.  
A motion was made by Board Member Grimm to accept the hiring of Branden Burns, Director of Finance, and seconded by Board Member Ribelin.  
An “aye” vote was cast by all, and the motion carried.

Board President, Mr. Howard announced his retirement and confirmed that he will not be renewing his seat on the board as Board President or as a Board Member. Mr. Diorio thanked Board President, Mr. Howard for his service on the Board of Health and advocating for Public Health and wished him well on retirement, which will take effect in March, 2023.

- e. Board Member Grimm nominated Board Member Ribelin to serve as President of the Portage County Board of Health, seconded by Board Member Bierlair.  
An “aye” vote was cast by all, motion carried.
- f. Vice-President, Cutlip announced that she will remain on the board as a member but requested to not renew her position as Vice-President of the Board of Health.
- g. Board President Howard nominated Board Member Bierlair to serve as Vice-President of the Portage County Board of Health, seconded by Board Member Ribelin.  
An “aye” vote was cast by all, motion carried.

The election of a new Board of Health member will be appointed by the District Advisory Council and will be announced at the District Advisory Council Meeting in March.

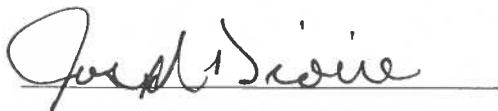
**IX. BOARD ISSUES AND DISCUSSION: None**

**XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION: None**

**XII. ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion was made by Board Member Grimm to adjourn and seconded by Board Member Ribelin. An “aye” vote was cast by all, motion carried.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:17pm, on January 17, 2023.



Joseph J. Diorio, MPH, MS, REHS  
Health Commissioner