

Geauga Public Health
Special Board of Health Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2023, 5:00 p.m.
12611 Ravenwood Dr., Chardon, Ohio

Call to Order

Mr. Richard Piraino, President, called the monthly meeting of the Geauga County Board of Health to order at 5:02 p.m.

A roll call found the following Board members present: Mr. Richard Piraino, Ashley Jones, Pharm D, Lynn Roman, Carolyn Brakey, Esq., and Dr. Mark Rood.

Staff members present: Dr. Jefferey Cameron, Health Commissioner, Carol Straniero, Nursing Director, and Dan Lark, Interim Environmental Health Director.

Others present: There were 4 others present.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Piraino asked everyone to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

New Business

a. Geauga Public Health Levy

The Board stated they did not have anything discuss regarding the levy.

b. Operations Planning

Mrs. Brakey and Ms. Roman had a call from Trumbull County regarding the cooperative agreement. Trumbull will be reviewing the financial impact to their department and whether they can meet the needs of Geauga Public Health.

Mrs. Brakey and Ms. Roman met with Ron Graham and discussed some financials of a cooperative agreement could look like and how many full-time and part-time employees Geauga Public Health would require.

Ms. Roman stated that Mrs. Brakey will be meeting with Lance Himes and Wally Burden at the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). During the discussion with Trumbull County, they felt that any cooperative agreement would have to be reviewed and approved by ODH and the Health District Advisory Council (HDAC).

Summit County and Portage County both declined to enter into a cooperative agreement with Geauga Public Health. Ashtabula County did not respond. Lake County continues to express their interest a cooperative agreement.

During discussions about a collaborative agreement, the other counties were informed that the Geauga County Board of Health would stay in place to approve policies. Ms. Roman stated a decision needs to be made if the Administrator position is under contract with the county or would they be a Geauga Public Health employee, hired by the Board. Any agreement would be for five years with a one-year termination notice.

Lake County has been accommodating in providing models for an agreement. Ms. Roman stated that there would be some reduction in salary and benefit expense.

Ms. Roman stated that revenue has been reducing both at the local and federal levels. In March 2023, the health district will have a negative \$35,000.00 balance. This is due to a reduction in COVID and other grants. The balance does not reflect hiring an Administrator and Environmental Health Director. There are several grants Geauga are not eligible for due to size and having a healthy population. At less than 100,000 population, health districts typically cannot sustain themselves.

Benefit costs, health care specifically, are increasing. The levy is also an issue because it has not increased in many years, but salaries have continued to increase.

Ms. Roman mentioned some difficulties that the Board will need to overcome such as the turnover of health commissioners and administration three times in the last five years and lack of prospective candidates and talent during recruiting, as well as the distance of candidates to Geauga County. Accreditation standards will be more difficult going forward. To be successful, the health district needs a strong triad between the health commissioner, nursing director, and environmental health director.

A cooperative agreement will reduce employee costs and the cost of training and expenses associated with training, by combining resources.

Gauga Public Health and Lake County have a good working relationship. An agreement with them, Lake County, could also expand services related to public health. Minimum requirements of services would be offered. Mr. Piraino stated that Geauga Public Health needs to maintain the services currently being provided to the residents. In the future, there may be ways to be more efficient in providing those services.

Ms. Roman stated a decision is needed to pursue the agreement with Lake Co. Much work needs to be done after that decision is made. In addition, a decision of what the administrator duties will look like.

Dr. Rood stated that the Board should have control over the administrator and the directors. He felt that there would be a problem of control since those positions would be employed by the county that the cooperative agreement is with. Ms. Roman stated that the duties of the administrator need to be worked out. The position may need reposted because if there would be no supervisory duties for the administrator. The control of that position needs to be detailed in the cooperative agreement.

Mrs. Brakey expressed concerns about how the Board would be informed of issues. Who is the advocate for Geauga Public Health if Lake County is the contractor?

Dr. Cameron asked if there were other health departments in the state that have a cooperative agreement. The Board indicated that there were not. Mr. Piraino stated this cooperative agreement could be a model for other health departments with less than 100,000 population. Other county agencies have combined such as Lake-Geauga WIC, Lake-Geauga Transit, and Lake-Geauga Recovery.

Mrs. Brakey stated she felt that the Board should contract for an administrator through a cooperative agreement with another county. Ms. Jones concurred with Mrs. Brakey. Dr Rood felt it was the fiscally responsible decision. Geauga Public Health could possibly expand services because Lake Co. offers more services and has more employees.

After speaking with ODH, more definite decisions can be made.

c. Administrator and Environmental Health Director positions

To date, there have been 28 people who have applied for the Administrator position. Ms. Jones stated that four applicants had been interviewed. It was disclosed that the Board is exploring different ideas regarding the administrator position. They were told that it would be two to three weeks before a decision on which model is made. She felt there were two of the candidates that were highly qualified and would be a good fit for Geauga Public Health.

Ms. Roman said three of the four people interviewed have public health experience and agreed with Ms. Jones that two of the applicants interviewed would be a good fit.

Ms. Roman stated that the Board should make the decision on who the administrator is whether they are hired or appointed through the cooperative agreement. Dr. Rood expressed that he was unsure whether that would be agreed to. It would need to be detailed in the agreement.

The Board discussed removing the administrator posting and reposting with different duties. A decision will be made at the next meeting.

Ms. Roman stated that she would like for the Board to decide soon which path they are taking and the reasons why. She did not feel that Geauga Public Health had the funds to continue.

Public Comment Session

There two people who requested to speak and were given 2 minutes to provide their comment.

Executive Session

The Board discussed and decided there was no need to adjourn for executive session.

Meetings

Regular Board of Health meeting, January 25, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. at 12611 Ravenwood Dr., Chardon, Ohio.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Litke
Administrator