

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
JULY 22, 2025**

ATTENDANCE: Deanna D’Amore, Director of Health; Frank Ehrlich, MD; Norman Weinberger, MD; Joan McNiel, DNP; Anthony Santella, DrPH; Janet Karpiak, MD (joined at 8:06 a.m.)

OTHERS: Brian Weeks, Program Director of Epidemiology and Informatics

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. D’Amore called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. D’Amore called the roll.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: June 24, 2025

****DR. WEINBERGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED.**

****DR. EHRLICH SECONDED.**

****THE MOTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

V. EPIDEMIOLOGY UPDATES

Mr. Weeks presented the latest data on respiratory illness activity, reporting that emergency department visits for COVID-19, influenza, and RSV remain low. Supporting this trend, wastewater monitoring showed minimal viral presence across all three illnesses. Although overall seasonal virus levels continue to decline according to the NREVSS dashboard, a slight uptick in SARS 2 COVID 19 activity was noted.

In a shift to national concerns, Mr. Weeks shared that the U.S. has reached a milestone of 1,309 measles cases in 2025, raising concern for potential exposure and highlighting the ongoing need for vaccine outreach. He also reviewed local mosquito surveillance, explaining that while no human cases of West Nile virus have been reported, mosquitoes testing positive for the virus were found in Stamford, Easton, and especially Bridgeport.

The environmental conditions in Fairfield County were also addressed. While drought is not currently a concern, the area is experiencing abnormally dry weather. A minor heat risk alert had been issued for the county, projected to increase to moderate by the end of the week.

During discussion, Dr. Ehrlich asked whether any national public health groups had issued a position on the measles vaccine. Ms. D'Amore responded that NACCHO has shares several resources regarding vaccination and public protection. Dr. Ehrlich also asked whether West Nile virus could be linked to swimming pools. Mr. Weeks clarified that well-maintained pools are not at risk, and that birds and standing water, particularly in coastal communities like Fairfield County, are more common contributors to mosquito activity.

VI. REPORTS

A. Director's Report

Ms. D'Amore reported on several departmental updates and ongoing concerns. She explained that the President's proposed federal budget does not currently include funding for local public health preparedness or the preventive services block grant, which are two areas that are vital to local health department operations. On a more encouraging note, she confirmed that the state had received federal funds to continue the Immunization Action Plan, and the department is working to finalize the related contract.

She also shared news of staffing developments, announcing that a part-time employee has officially transitioned into a full-time Health Inspector role. Additionally, the department will be hosting quality improvement (QI) training sessions for staff, particularly to members of the Quality Improvement Workgroup.

VII. NACCHO ANNUAL RECAP

Ms. D'Amore shared insights from the recent NACCHO annual conference, highlighting themes such as workforce development, mental health, the value of public health infrastructure, and the ethical integration of artificial intelligence in health systems. These themes prompted a broader conversation among board members about the public's limited understanding of the department's full scope of work.

Dr. Santella noted that the department is often perceived solely through its food safety role, which makes it even more important to correct misinformation and increase visibility through other city agencies. Dr. McNiel added that communication and public education are areas where the department could improve. Dr. Ehrlich stressed the need for proactive messaging, stating, "The negatives got first say and once they get first say we're reactionary. We need to be primary, upfront, and propagating all the good things that public health is responsible for."

Dr. Karpiak reflected on an earlier public awareness initiative that was interrupted by COVID and suggested the Board resume such efforts. Dr. Weinberger supported the idea of increased

public engagement through school programs and town halls. He also noted the strong example set by the American Academy of Pediatrics in public outreach. Dr. Ehrlich added that promoting vaccine awareness and general health education should not fall solely on the Board but also on the broader medical community.

Ms. D'Amore concluded by stating she would move forward with organizing more presentations and advocacy efforts, with the support of Board members.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jada Caballero