

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 28, 2025**

ATTENDANCE: Frank Ehrlich, MD, Anthony Santella, DrPH, Ken Lalime, RPh, Norman Weinberger, MD, Joan McNeil, DNP.

STAFF: Deanna D’Amore, Director of Health, Aniella Fignon, Project Coordinator, Theresa Argondezzi, Assistant Director of Health, Community Health, Kelley Tomlinson, Health Educator, Brian Weeks, Program Director of Epidemiology and Informatics

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. D’Amore called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. D’Amore called the roll.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Special Meeting: October 7, 2025

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

****MR. LALIME SECONDED.**

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

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present who wished to address the Board.

V. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ANNUAL ANALYSIS

Ms. Fignon reviewed the Department of Health’s Performance Management System, explaining that it tracks and improves public health programs through quarterly measurement and data-driven goals. Each division maintains a dashboard outlining objectives, metrics, and color-coded status indicators. Divisions conduct annual self-assessments to identify successes, challenges, and priorities for improvement, which inform dashboard updates for the next fiscal year.

She summarized key accomplishments across four divisions:

Community Health Division: Conducted over 150 outreach activities, including Know Your Numbers screenings and QPR suicide-prevention trainings; the Growing Gardens program reported increased fruit and vegetable consumption among all participating families; 256 residents joined Norwalker and active-transportation events; follow-up calls improved with a bilingual health worker for the Know Your Numbers program. Upcoming goals include expanding community engagement and refining program evaluations.

Epidemiology and Informatics Division: Completed all communicable-disease follow-ups and delivered more than 35 educational presentations. Collaborated on the Norwalk Community Health and Well-Being Profile (version 2.0 underway) and provided staff technology trainings. Priorities include addressing staffing gaps and pursuing funding for epidemiological initiatives.

Preventable Diseases and Clinical Services Division: Achieved 100% treatment compliance for reportable STIs and active tuberculosis. Norwalk's childhood vaccine compliance ranked first statewide (94%), and WIC staff participated in 18 outreach events. Focus areas include staff succession planning and improving patient result sharing.

Office of the Director: Held 12 Board of Health meetings, completed two quality-improvement projects, and developed tools for reaccreditation tracking and standardized emergency-plan formatting. Future efforts will include pre-planning annual report topics, evaluating trainings, and soliciting new QI project ideas from performance management analysis results.

In discussion, Dr. Santella praised the results and asked about evaluating children's outcomes in the Growing Gardens program. Ms. Argondezzi said this will be piloted at Colonial Village Learning Center with teacher-assisted pre- and post-evaluations. Ms. D'Amore thanked Ms. Fignon and the team.

VI. HEALTH DEPARTMENT OUTREACH

Ms. Argondezzi provided an overview of the department's outreach efforts, emphasizing that community engagement involves the entire Health Department and serves to share accurate health information, connect residents with resources, promote programs, gather feedback, and build trust.

During the last fiscal year, the department conducted or attended 186 outreach activities totaling 430 hours and engaging approximately 4,700 residents. These included health fairs, screenings, information sessions, program events such as Fit Kids and Growing Gardens, and two community-engagement sessions. She clarified that the outreach tracker excludes presentations to the Board or partner organizations, focusing only on resident-facing events.

Outreach occurred across Norwalk at locations such as public parks, libraries, schools, food-access sites, early-childhood centers, healthcare providers, senior housing, and faith-based venues. Events were also hosted at City buildings, including City Hall, Police Department, and Fire Department.

Ms. Argondezzi stated that the department collaborates with partner agencies to share timely information about federal or policy changes, citing the recent coordination with Norwalk Public Schools on school-meal program updates. She added that the Norwalk Food Alliance convened to prepare for potential impacts to SNAP benefits during the federal shutdown.

Dr. Ehrlich suggested including the percentage of Norwalk's population reached to better illustrate impact.

Responding to Dr. Santella, she clarified that "community-engagement" events differ from outreach in that they are designed to collect input from residents. To Dr. McNeil's question about event selection, she said some invitations come from organizers, while others are chosen based on target audiences and attendance.

Mr. Lalime suggested quarterly updates to track trends, and Mr. Santella supported the idea, recommending a focus on key indicators to minimize staff workload. Ms. D'Amore confirmed the department reviews outreach data quarterly and will align reporting frequency with the Board's preference.

VII. NORWALK SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT SUMMARY

Ms. Tomlinson provided an update on the Norwalk Public Health Approach to Suicide Prevention Grant. Ms. Tomlinson explained that the City received the grant in 2023 following outreach from the State Department of Public Health due to higher suicide rates in the area. The initial grant term ended August 31, 2025, and has been extended for another year to continue ongoing work with community partners.

Ms. Tomlinson summarized activities under the grant, including collaboration with organizations such as the Norwalk Parking Authority, CT State, the Sono Collection, and the Zero Suicide Institute. Initiatives included installing 988 Lifeline signage, hosting suicide prevention trainings, and presenting at the Connecticut Center for School Safety's regional conference.

She reported continued partnership with UConn to conduct an annual inventory and gap analysis of suicide prevention resources. The review found Norwalk strong in training and support services but identified gaps in peer-support referrals and youth urgent care access. The City also expanded its postvention plan, which coordinates response after an untimely death, with participation from police, hospitals, schools, human services, and behavioral health providers. Materials were translated into Spanish, and new grief and loss guides were created.

Ms. Tomlinson noted ongoing data monitoring through the State's surveillance systems and highlighted recent training efforts, including ASIST, QPR, and CALM. Since 2023, more than 700 community members and providers have been trained, with additional sessions planned for Norwalk Public Schools, Norwalk Hospital, CT State, and Catholic Charities. She also mentioned outreach events such as the Mental Health Walk, Fresh Check Day, and youth library programs, along with 988 awareness campaigns at train stations.

Dr. Frank Ehrlich suggested that reporting suspected suicidal behavior by healthcare providers should be mandated similar to child abuse cases. Ms. Tomlinson said the Zero Suicide Initiative aims to strengthen provider screening and referral practices.

Ms. D'Amore thanked Ms. Tomlinson for her presentation and commended the Department's continued efforts in suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

VIII. EPIDEMIOLOGY UPDATES

Mr. Weeks provided an update on current respiratory virus trends and local environmental conditions. He noted that the most recent CDC community snapshot data, updated as of late September, reflected increasing activity of respiratory viruses including COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. Wastewater data indicated rising local RSV presence and continued norovirus activity, consistent with seasonal trends.

Mr. Weeks reminded the Board that large social gatherings, such as upcoming Halloween events, can contribute to increased transmission. He reiterated standard public health guidance, including maintaining up-to-date immunizations, practicing good respiratory and hand hygiene, ensuring proper ventilation, staying home when ill, and following masking and distancing precautions as needed.

He also reported that Fairfield County remains under moderate drought conditions according to the State's October 23 update, with most of the region classified as abnormally dry. Residents were encouraged to continue conserving water and repairing leaks where possible. Additional updates will be provided once new data becomes available.

IX. REPORTS

A. Director's Report

No additional report was provided.

X. DISCUSSION

There was no further discussion.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. D'Amore adjourned at 9:16 a.m.