

**New Castle City Board of Health Meeting
October 29, 2024 -- 6 p.m.
1 Municipal Drive, New Castle, DE**

Members Present: Tish Gallagher, Chair
Jackie Metz, Vice Chair
Dr. David Bechtel
Jamielee Majewski
Susan McLaughlin

Also Present: Antonina Tantillo, City Administrator (*joined at 7:00 p.m.*)

Ms. Gallagher convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Agenda

There were no additions to the Agenda as written.

Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the Minutes of the April 30, 2024, Board of Health meeting as amended was made by Dr. Bechtel, seconded by Ms. Metz, and unanimously approved. Ms. McLaughlin and Majewski were not present at the April 30th meeting and abstained from the vote.

New Members

Ms. Gallagher introduced Ms. McLaughlin and Majewski, the newest members of the Board of Health. They each stated their background and qualifications. Ms. Gallagher and Metz and Dr. Bechtel each noted their background and qualifications as well.

Report from Code Enforcement Officer

Ms. Gallagher explained what the former Code Enforcement Officer reported on at the BOH meetings for the benefit of the new members.

Old Business

Article II – City Code

Ms. Gallagher reviewed Article II, noting that the Code was revised to require two (2) individuals with “medical education or experience in health care or community/public health”.

The Powers and Duties of the Board of Health were reviewed and suggestions to keep the BOH better informed were made:

- Item C:
 - Request to add the Board to the State/County email list to receive information of emerging diseases.
 - Request that the Board receive data on health issues (i.e., admissions of COVID, infectious diseases, etc.) from Christiana Care and St. Francis/Trinity Health Care.

Ms. Gallagher noted that in previous discussions, it was determined that the biggest role for the BOH was in the health promotion arena; mostly through articles in The Weekly. She added that many of the Powers and Duties of the Board of Health as specified in the Code are outdated or are no longer being actively done by the BOH and suggested that the Board discuss revisions to the Code with the City Administer.

Board of Health Meeting Schedule

Ms. Gallagher stated the BOH meets quarterly on the last Tuesday of the month; which can be confusing. She added that the City Administrator was amenable to changing the schedule to have the BOH meet quarterly on the 4th Tuesday. After discussion the members concurred and Ms. Gallagher will inform the City Administrator.

A motion to change the meeting date from the “last Tuesday of every 3rd month” to the “4th Tuesday of every 3rd month” was made by Ms. McLaughlin, seconded by Ms. Majewski, and unanimously carried.

Ms. Gallagher noted that the BOH meets in January, April, July, and October.

Focus for 2025

Ms. Gallagher noted that the BOH could choose a focus for the entire year, or focus on different issues periodically. During discussion a number of important health issues for periodic articles or events were identified. Ms. Gallagher noted that Councilperson Mattaway had spoken to the Board about his concern for drug and alcohol abuse and mental health in the community. It was noted that:

- The winter months are a critical time for mental health issues.
- The New Castle Police Department has a Peer Specialist for substance abuse.
- A Walk/Run for substance abuse is scheduled for the beginning of December in New Castle.
- An Attack Addiction event is scheduled at St. Peters in March, 2025.

It was suggested that the BOH have an information table during local events, i.e., National Night Out, Separation Day, etc.

Ms. Gallagher noted that the need for emotional support has been overwhelming for Paws For People, and Wilmington Manor School is seeing the same needs. She opined that Substance Abuse/Mental Health would be a good focus for 2025. Ms. McLaughlin added that the need is so great that it is difficult to get an appointment with a mental health professional.

Next Steps:

- Mses. Gallagher and Majewski will draft an article on mental health for The Weekly..
- Participate in local events (*Fall Fest on November 24th, CCD's Walk/Run in December*).
- Initiate an informational event for seniors at the New Castle Senior Center.
- Ms. McLaughlin will contact the Peer Specialist to have her come to the next BOH meeting.

There was further discussion of the information that would be available at a BOH table during local events, including:

- Brochures/pamphlets from the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.
- Narcan Kit for display and possible distribution of Narcan Leave-Behind Kits.
- Ms. Majewski will reach out to Captain Shughart about resources.

In addition to the focus on Substance Abuse and Mental Health, other health-related topics will be promoted throughout the year.

Mosquito Control Measures

Ms. Gallagher was unable to identify the exact composition of mosquito sprays, but anything that is sprayed must be “fit for animal and human exposure”.

New Business

Survey of residents to guide future BOH focus

Ms. Gallagher asked for the Board’s opinion of initiating a survey of residents to determine what areas of health they are interested in learning.

During discussion Ms. Gallagher noted that there is once again a medical office in the New Castle Senior Center staffed by a Nurse Practitioner who it was thought was under the authority of Dr. Padmalingam. Mses. McLaughlin and Gallagher will get more information and update the Board at the next meeting.

Article for The Weekly

Dr. Bechtel is still working on an article on RSV.

(Stenographer’s Note: Ms. Tantillo joined the meeting at 7:00 p.m.)

Immunizations

Dr. Bechtel explained that:

- According to the latest information that Dr. Bechtel has, the viruses chosen for this year’s flu vaccine are not necessarily the virus strains that are circulating. He added that the flu vaccine is approximately 40% effective. Dr. Bechtel expressed his opinion that it is still a good idea to get the flu vaccination. Dr. Bechtel also noted that the Flublok® vaccine is safe for individuals with egg allergy; and the Flu HD vaccine for age 65+ has 4X as much immunity as the regular vaccine.
- Dr. Bechtel identified some of the negatives side effects of the COVID shot for young people (blood clotting for young women; endocarditis for young men). Dr. Bechtel noted that Paxlovid is very effective. Dr. Bechtel said that not many side effects are being seen in age 30+ individuals.
- The RSV vaccine is now being recommended for individuals aged 75+ versus age 65+. Dr. Bechtel added that he has not been able to identify a reason for the change. There are

two (2) vaccines for RSV, and Dr. Bechtel stated that the latest data shows that the Pfizer vaccine has 2.5X as many serious side effects as the Galaxo vaccine.

During discussion, a concern that new mRNA technologies for vaccines has not been out very long; whereas, in the past vaccines were tested for years.

Questions for the City Administrator

- Ms. Tantillo stated that the Fall Fest has not yet been approved, and she is reviewing it with the applicant to determine the scope and scale of the event.
- Ms. Tantillo suggested that the BOH reach out to the Police Department regarding their partnership with Community Collaboration of Delaware.
- Ms. Tantillo stated that the next National Night Out will be held in early August 2025.
- When the new Code Enforcement Officer has settled in, Ms. Tantillo will speak with him about attending BOH meetings.
- Ms. Gallagher told Ms. Tantillo of the Board's decision and vote to change the meeting date to the 4th Tuesday of every third month (January, April, July, and October).
- Outdated items in Article II of the City Code were noted. Ms. Tantillo will review Article II of the City Code, and the BOH will send recommendations to update the information in the Code to Ms. Tantillo.

Next Meeting

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Gallagher called for a motion to adjourn.

A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Metz and seconded by Ms. McLaughlin. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer