

**Portage County Combined General Health District
Board Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2026
6:00 PM**



I. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

The Portage County Combined General Health District Board of Health met on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 999 East Main Street, Ravenna, OH, 44266. The meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM by Board President Ribelin.

Board Members in Attendance: Lucy Ribelin, President
Linda Grimm, Member
Diana Clarke, Member
Amy Everett, Member
James Bierlair, Vice President
Brock Kertoy, Member

Board Members Not in Attendance: Chad Delaney, Member
Dr. Philip Keyser, Member

Staff in Attendance: Becky Lehman, Health Commissioner
Sarah Meduri, Administrator & PIO
Christina Jewell, Administrative Assistant
Branden Burns, Director of Finance
Amy Cooper, Director of Community Health
Cynthia Hilbish, WIC Supervisor - Ravenna
Justin Rechichar, Director of Environmental Health
Natalie Menke, Environmental Health Supervisor
Mark Arredondo, Medical Director

District Advisory Council: Bruce Lange, Charlestown Township

Others: None

Media Present: None

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- A. Board of Health Meeting: On March 17, 2026, Board Member Bierlair presented a motion to accept the Board Meetings Minutes for February 17, 2026, seconded by Board Member Grimm.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Kertoy	Yes
Board Member Delaney	Absent	Board Member Clarke	Yes
Board Member Everett	Absent	Board Member Dr. Keyser	Absent

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

Mr. Bruce Lange of Charlestown Township addressed the Board regarding the upcoming event scheduled for the following evening. He reported strong anticipated attendance, noting that all 18 townships are expected to be represented, along with county commissioners and additional key stakeholders.

Mr. Lange expressed appreciation to Health District’s staff for their extensive planning efforts, including logistics, setup, coordination, and overall execution. He acknowledged that while he would be presenting, the success of the event is largely attributable to staff efforts.

Board members expressed appreciation for Mr. Langes’ continued partnership and engagement.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT: N/A

V. ACTION ITEMS:

B. Expenditure Ratifications: \$241,653.77

Invoice Batch No. 8481	\$ 4,582.48
Invoice Batch No. 8557	\$ 2,105.43
Invoice Batch No. 8571	\$ 2,062.31
Invoice Batch No. 8653	\$ 5,562.11
Invoice Batch No. 8654	\$ 193,741.42

Invoice Batch No. 8695	\$ 6,859.86
Invoice Batch No. 8715	\$ 5,213.88
Invoice Batch No. 8846	\$ 20,098.47
Invoice Batch No. 8852	\$ 1,427.81

The Board reviewed the ratification of payments. Mr. Burns highlighted invoice batch #8654, noting that it was larger than typical batches. This batch included the final payment on the agency’s mortgage.

Key points included:

- The building has now been paid in full
- Early payoff resulted in approximately \$105,000–\$107,000 in interest savings
- The agency is now debt-free with respect to the facility

Mr. Burns noted this as a significant financial milestone for the organization.

Board Member Clarke presented a motion to accept the above expenditures and ratify these expenses, seconded by Board Member Kertoy.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Kertoy	Yes
Board Member Delaney	Absent	Board Member Clarke	Yes
Board Member Everett	Absent	Board Member Dr. Keyser	Yes

C. Travel Expenditures

Mr. Burns presented the travel expenditure requests. The Board reviewed requests for staff attendance at professional conferences and trainings, including:

- OEHA (Ohio Environmental Health Association)
- NEHA (National Environmental Health Association)
- NACCHO (National Association of County and City Health Officials)

It was noted that many expenses are covered through grant funding or MAC funds. Some trainings have minimal or no cost. Board approval is required regardless of funding source.

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

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Kertoy	Yes
Board Member Delaney	Absent	Board Member Clarke	Yes
Board Member Everett	Absent	Board Member Dr. Keyser	Absent

D. Resolution #26-13 A Journal Entry Reversal / Expense Correction for Portage County Combined General Health District.

Mr. Burns requested approval for the journal entry reversal / expense corrections. He noted that the expenses were originally charged to the general fund and are being reallocated to appropriate grant funds.

A motion was presented by Board Member Kertoy to Approve Resolution #26-13, seconded by Board Member Clarke.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Kertoy	Yes
Board Member Delaney	Absent	Board Member Clarke	Yes
Board Member Everett	Absent	Board Member Dr. Keyser	Absent

E. Resolution #26-14 A Resolution to Approve Revisions to the Portage County Health District Overtime, Flex Time & Compensatory Time Section 5.1.

Ms. Meduri presented a proposed revision to the existing policy regarding compensatory (comp) time usage.

Proposed Change:

Employees will be required to use accrued comp time prior to utilizing vacation or personal leave.

Rationale:

- Reduces financial liability associated with accrued comp time payouts
- Encourages timely use of earned leave
- Promotes consistency and fairness across departments
- Aligns with recommendations from fiscal/payroll management

Discussion occurred regarding policy language (“expected” vs. “shall”), with clarification that the intent is to establish a standard expectation.

A motion was presented by Board Member Bierlair to Approve Resolution #26-14, seconded by Board Member Kertoy.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Kertoy	Yes
Board Member Delaney	Absent	Board Member Clarke	Yes
Board Member Everett	Yes	Board Member Dr. Keyser	Absent

- F. Resolution #26-15** A Resolution Declaring a Public Health Nuisance, Ordering Abatement of that Nuisance, and Approving the Civil Prosecution for Violation(s) of Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 3707.01. Located at 9274 Coit Rd., Shalersville Twp.

Mr. Rechichar, Environmental Health Director, presented a property located at 9274 Coit Road, Shalersville Township for declaration as a public nuisance.

Key details:

- Inspection conducted under an administrative search warrant
- Property conditions were described as severely deteriorated
- Evidence suggested possible fire damage and unsafe structural/environmental conditions
- Property deemed unfit and hazardous

Board members reviewed documentation and photos included in the packet.

A motion was presented by Board Member Clarke to Approve Variance #26-15, seconded by Board Member Bierlair.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Kertoy	Yes
Board Member Delaney	Absent	Board Member Clarke	Yes
Board Member Everett	Yes	Board Member Dr. Keyser	Absent

VI. DISCUSSIONS:

Administration:

Ms. Meduri shared her administration report with the board, noting comprehensive updates on staffing and operational activities, stating that the agency is currently experiencing a significant period of transition and recruitment across multiple positions. It was reported that the Director of Environmental Health, Justin Rechichar, has submitted his resignation and will be transitioning to a new role as Health Commissioner in Lorain County. In response, the position has been posted, and recruitment efforts are actively underway.

Ms. Meduri reported that a second-round interview has been scheduled for the Director of Nursing position, and a promising candidate has been identified who will be meeting with key members of the team. For the Marketing Coordinator position, multiple interviews have already been conducted, with additional interviews scheduled. It was noted that a previously extended offer was declined, requiring the process to restart to identify a suitable candidate.

Administration further explained that the Dietetic Technician position has been difficult to fill due to a lack of qualified applicants. To address this challenge, outreach efforts have been expanded to include colleges, universities, and additional recruitment platforms.

The Environmental Clerk position is expected to be posted soon, pending Board approval, and will likely generate a high volume of applicants based on past experience.

Additionally, staffing adjustments are underway at the Lisbon WIC clinic to address operational needs, including consideration of position restructuring to ensure adequate coverage.

Administration noted that there has been a high volume of applicants across open positions and that recruitment strategies have been expanded to improve candidate reach. These efforts include the use of LinkedIn, Indeed, CivicHR through county partnerships, and other targeted outreach methods. While some strong candidates have been identified, administration acknowledged ongoing concerns regarding salary competitiveness. These concerns are being carefully weighed against the need for fiscal responsibility, particularly in light of current uncertainties surrounding property tax revenues.

In addition to staffing updates, administration highlighted several programmatic and operational accomplishments and initiatives. The agency recently achieved Public Health Accreditation, which has been publicly announced and recognized as a significant milestone. Increased engagement with community organizations has also been a priority, including participation in the Ravenna Chamber of Commerce and workforce development initiatives, which are helping to strengthen local partnerships.

Preparation is currently underway for Public Health Week, with planned activities and outreach efforts in development. The agency is also transitioning its pop-up pantry from a traditional drive-through model to a market-style distribution model, which is intended to improve client experience and expand community partnerships.

Additionally, the agency's record retention schedule has been formally approved after an extended review and coordination process, marking the completion of a long-standing administrative priority.

Ms. Meduri shared Olivia Artman's Epidemiology report indicating that the city and township reports for epidemiology is currently in development and will include data and analysis related to maternal health, mental health, substance use, communicable disease, and animal bites. In addition, a NEOMED student research project analysis is underway to examine disparities in vaccination rates across different demographic groups. The department has also conducted both overdose and suicide fatality review board meetings, as well as a child fatality review board meeting, all of which were described as productive and informative. The completed epidemiological reports are expected to be

finalized and published by the end of March.

Finance:

Mr. Burns presented the cash basis report, stating that the ending cash balance for the month of February was approximately \$3.516 million. Overall, the agency's financial position remains on target and consistent with projected expectations. It was also noted that there has been an increase in interest income compared to prior periods, reflecting favorable earnings. Additionally, the first property tax settlement is expected to be received in the next reporting period, which will further impact on the agency's financial standing.

Environmental Health:

Ms. Menke reported that her staff recently participated in a two-day virtual mentor meeting, during which Nicole Lipchik attended and engaged in discussions related to program development for the upcoming year. As part of these efforts, the department applied to serve as a mentor site for up to four individuals and is currently awaiting a response regarding that request.

Ms. Menke noted that the new food licensing year officially began on March 2nd, as March 1st fell on a Sunday. With the start of the new licensing cycle, staff have been actively working in the field, conducting inspections and ensuring that all necessary documentation and regulatory requirements are being addressed. In conjunction with these activities, preparations are underway for the Food Safety Advisory Council meeting, which is held biannually and is scheduled to take place in April as part of the food renewal process. Staff are also preparing for upcoming approvals and seasonal camp renewals. Additionally, the department recently conducted its first mobile rodeo inspection event for fire-related food operations, during which food licenses were renewed and fire-related food safety requirements were addressed by Streetsboro City Fire Department.

Mr. Duck further reported that environmental programs related to water quality continue to operate effectively. While seasonal weather fluctuations briefly slowed some field activity, work has continued, including inspections and installations related to wells and septic systems. One staff member noted spending time in the field despite cold conditions, indicating that operations remain active and consistent.

On February 25th, a presentation was delivered to the Pathway Realtors Association in Kent, by Mr. Duck, focusing on septic systems. The presentation included an overview of septic system function, point-of-sale requirements, and the replacement process when systems fail. The presentation was well received, and additional outreach opportunities have emerged, as other realtor associations have expressed interest in similar educational sessions. This increased engagement reflects growing awareness and interest in septic regulations, particularly in light of ongoing legislative considerations, and staff indicated that they would continue to take advantage of these opportunities to provide education and guidance.

It was also reported that Will Duck participated in the WWETT Show (Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport) in Indianapolis on February 17th, where a presentation was delivered by Mr. Duck to approximately 95 attendees. Feedback from the session was very positive, and the Mr. Duck noted that the experience was both an honor and an opportunity to

represent the agency at a national level. Written evaluations and comments further confirmed that the presentation was well received.

Staffing and training efforts within the division continue, including onboarding and development of newer employees. One recently hired staff member, Dominic, has been actively training in water-related work and is gradually being introduced to septic system responsibilities. He has been working closely with experienced staff in a hands-on capacity to build knowledge and skills, and overall progress has been described as positive.

Mr. Rechichar stated that Ms. Lehman requested a list of involvement of Environmental Health staff in various committees and professional activities. A summary of staff participation was prepared to showcase the breadth of involvement beyond routine duties, demonstrating that multiple team members are contributing to regional and professional initiatives. Overall, the division was described as being in a strong and stable position with his upcoming departure.

An update was also provided regarding the Retail Food Program Standards. The department currently meets five of the nine voluntary standards based on FDA guidelines, which already places it among the top-performing jurisdictions in Ohio. With continued efforts and leadership in this area, there is an expectation that the department could achieve one to two additional standards in the near future, potentially reaching seven of the nine standards by the end of the year. This level of achievement is considered significant, as only a limited number of jurisdictions have ever met all nine standards.

Finally, progress was reported on internal data and technology improvements, including ongoing work to enhance GIS capabilities. Ms. Emily Speck is working to ensure that data systems are accurate, organized, and prepared for future public-facing applications. These improvements are expected to enhance transparency and provide valuable information related to wastewater, food safety, and other environmental health programs.

Ms. Ribelin, President of the Board of Health, expressed her sincere appreciation for his dedicated service to the district. She stated that his contributions have been greatly valued, that he will be missed by the Board and staff, and extended best wishes to him in his future endeavors.

Community Health:

Dr. Arredondo expressed his appreciation to Becky for her leadership and support in advancing clinical initiatives within the Health Department. He outlined plans for an upcoming event tentatively scheduled for Saturday, June 13, to be held through noon, which will focus on providing both sports physicals for younger individuals and work physicals for adolescents, generally ranging from ages 15 to 18. He noted that there is a significant community need for these services, particularly given financial barriers that families may face. Dr. Arredondo reported that four physicians have already committed to participating in this effort and that additional collaboration is underway with Job and Family Services and other community partners. He also mentioned outreach to Bill Russell from Coleman to provide information related to mental health services during the event. Dr. Arredondo emphasized the goal of expanding direct clinical services through the Health Department and expressed hope that the incoming Director of Nursing will help lead and sustain these efforts. He further highlighted the partnership with NEOMED and noted that this initiative reflects a long-standing vision of the Health Commissioner to provide more direct,

community-based care. The long-term goal is to expand services across all four quadrants of Portage County and potentially incorporate an electronic medical record system, such as eClinicalWorks, to support these services.

Ms. Cindy Hilbish provided an update on the Ohio WIC program, noting that a new federal food rule is being implemented statewide. This change will allow participants greater flexibility in their food packages, including the ability to substitute juice for increased fruit and vegetable benefits, incorporate canned fish to support healthier diets, and replace eggs with alternatives such as peanut butter and beans when appropriate. It was reported that approximately 3,200 participants will need to be seen in order to implement these changes, requiring dietitians to manually reassign each participant's food package. While this process does not involve recertification of eligibility, it is expected to be labor-intensive and may result in longer wait times for clients. To address this, staff from other divisions will assist by providing educational activities and engagement opportunities during appointments.

Additional updates from Ms. Amy Cooper included the submission of the Get Vaccinated Ohio grant, with programming efforts being led by Ms. Morgan Cole. Staff are working to expand outreach into preschools and daycare settings and are hopeful for a favorable funding outcome. Planning is also underway for the upcoming farmers market season, which is scheduled to begin on June 16th, and the agency's open house, which has been rescheduled to June 23rd to better align with summer activities. Ms. Lehman and Ms. Cooper will be attending a farmers market conference in Columbus to further strengthen programming and partnerships.

Ms. Ribelin shared that she is planning to attend a City Council meeting in April and inquired about the Cribs for Kids program. It was explained that the Health Department coordinates with Akron Children's Hospital to verify eligibility and ensure that participants have not previously received a crib. The process was described as having a quick turnaround time, although current participation numbers are low. Staff indicated that there are plans to enhance and promote the program moving forward. It was also noted that Sarah Meduri and Becky Lehman are available to attend the City Council meeting alongside Ms. Ribelin if needed.

Dr. Arredondo also provided an update on the department's partnership with NEOMED, specifically noting collaboration with the university's provost, Dr. Faison. He shared that Dr. Faison is unable to attend the April CHIP meeting but is expected to participate in July, with possible attendance in October. Dr. Arredondo expressed optimism that this partnership will help advance community health initiatives and strengthen ongoing planning efforts.

Health Commissioner:

Ms. Lehman shared that the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) has been officially finalized. It was shared that this has been a significant and complex undertaking requiring extensive coordination and effort over an extended period of time. Despite the challenges involved in completing the process, staff expressed enthusiasm and pride in reaching this milestone.

It was further noted that Ms. Cooper has already begun implementing and rolling out the finalized plan, and the agency is now transitioning into the next three-year cycle associated with the CHIP. The completion of the plan marks an important step forward in guiding community health priorities and strategic initiatives moving ahead.

VII. OLD BUSINESS: N/A

VIII. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Accept the Resignation of Rebecca Barreca, Director of Nursing Programs. Effective March 13, 2026.

Motion made with regrets, by Board Member Clarke
Motion seconded by Board Member Everett

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.

- b. Accept the Resignation of Justin Rechichar, Director of Environmental Health. Effective April 23, 2026.

Motion made with regrets, by Board Member Kertoy
Motion seconded by Board Member Bierlair

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.

- c. Accept the Resignation of Briana Robison, Health Professional 2, Effective March 12, 2026.

Motion made with regrets, by Board Member Bierlair
Motion seconded by Board Member Kertoy

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.

- d. Request to Post, Advertise & Hire a Full-Time Health Professional 2 (RD, LD) to Replace Briana Robison.

Motion made by Board Member Bierlair
Motion seconded by Board Member Kertoy

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.

- e. Request to Increase Amanda Casto, WIC Clinic Assistant at the Lisbon/Columbiana County Location from Part-Time to Full-Time. Effective March 30, 2026.

Motion made by Board Member Everett
Motion seconded by Board Member Kertoy

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.

- f. Permission to advertise, post and hire a Seasonal Worker for Mosquito Program for the Environmental Health Division, pending NOA.

Motion made by Board Member Kertoy
Motion seconded by Board Member Bierlair

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.

- g. Salary Ranges.

A discussion occurred regarding the salary ranges, during which it was noted that the updated salary range document had not been included in the Board packet, although copies were available at the meeting. Ms. Meduri clarified that the salary ranges being mentioned were previously approved at the end of the prior year and that no numerical changes had been made. Ms. Lehman stated that the only revision involved adding the “Dietetic Technician” position within the same line item as the “Nutritionist” classification. It was further explained that while the position could be posted and advertised, final hiring could not occur until the salary range was formally reflected and approved.

After brief discussion, it was determined that the updated salary range document would be tabled and brought back to the Board at the next meeting for formal approval.

Motion made by Board Member Kertoy to table “Salary Ranges” until the next board meeting.

Motion seconded by Board Member Bierlair

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.

- h. Annual Budget.

Mr. Burns presented the proposed 2027 annual budget, noting that the Health District is required to adopt its budget earlier than most governmental entities due to the potential for cost allocation to townships and municipalities, which must incorporate the Health District’s figures into their own budgeting processes. The proposed budget reflects

projected revenues and expenditures of approximately \$5.379 million, maintaining a zero-based budgeting approach to ensure that expenditures do not exceed anticipated revenues. It was explained that revenue projections were intentionally conservative, while expenditures were estimated as accurately as possible based on current information. The proposed budget reflects only a minimal increase over prior years, consistent with the agency’s goal of maintaining a lean and fiscally responsible operation. Further explanation was provided regarding revenue assumptions, including property tax collections, which are projected below the maximum estimated amounts due to historical trends indicating that full collections are not typically realized. Interest income was also discussed, with cautious projections despite recent increases. On the expenditure side, a notable capital expense was identified for roof replacement, estimated at approximately \$116,000, along with associated costs for contracted work. This project was described as necessary to maintain the facility following the recent payoff of the building.

Mr. Burns also reviewed the proposed 2027 employee salary budget, which includes all current staff positions as well as anticipated vacancies. It was noted that a placeholder allocation has been included to allow flexibility for potential salary adjustments, recognizing ongoing concerns about employee compensation levels.

Ms. Lehman emphasized that while no specific salary increases are being proposed at this time, the budget allows for adjustments if financially feasible, particularly depending on the future of property tax funding. It was further clarified that all salary adjustments would be brought back to the Board for formal approval at a later date.

During discussion, clarification was provided regarding position classifications within the WIC program, specifically the distinction between a “Dietetic Technician” and a “Registered Dietitian”, with adjustments to be reflected in the final documents.

A motion was presented by Board Member Kertoy to Approve Annual Budget, seconded by Board Member Everett.

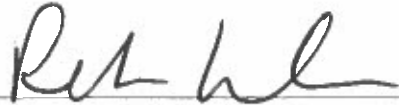
A vote on the motion is as follows:

Board Member Ribelin	Yes	Board Member Grimm	Yes
Board Member Bierlair	Yes	Board Member Kertoy	Yes
Board Member Delaney	Absent	Board Member Clarke	Yes
Board Member Everett	Yes	Board Member Dr. Keyser	Absent

IX. ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was moved to adjourn the meeting by Board Member Kertoy at 7:10 PM and seconded by Board Member Grimm

An “aye” vote was cast by all; a motion was carried.



Rebecca Lehman, MPH, MPA, CHES
Health Commissioner

