

**Portage County Combined General Health District  
Board Meeting Minutes  
April 21, 2026  
6:00 PM**



**I. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER**

The Portage County Combined General Health District Board of Health met on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 999 East Main Street, Ravenna, OH, 44266. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM by Board President Ribelin.

Board Members in Attendance: Lucy Ribelin, President  
Linda Grimm, Member  
Diana Clarke, Member  
Amy Everett, Member  
Dr. Philip Keyser, Member

Board Members Not in Attendance: James Bierlair, Vice President  
Chad Delaney, Member  
Brock Kertoy, Member

Staff in Attendance: Becky Lehman, Health Commissioner  
Sarah Meduri, Administrator & PIO  
Christina Jewell, Administrative Assistant  
Branden Burns, Director of Finance  
Justin Rechichar, Director of Environmental Health  
Natalie Menke, Environmental Health Supervisor  
William Duck, Environmental Health Supervisor

District Advisory Council: None

Others: Kent State University Students (Observing):  
Jared Perrin  
Justina Bowe

Media Present: None

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- A. Board of Health Meeting: On April 21, 2026, Board Member Dr. Keyser presented a motion to accept the Board Meetings Minutes for March 17, 2026, seconded by Board Member Everett.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

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

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

Mr. Lange was unable to attend the board meeting. Ms. Lehman shared that there is an upcoming Portage County Township Association meeting at the engineer’s office on May 16, 2026.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

During the public comment portion of the meeting, two Kent State students introduced themselves and explained that they were attending the meeting as part of a “Government in the Sunshine” assignment for a law, media, and journalism course. The students stated that they were observing the Board’s operations and processes and would later write an essay about their observations. Board members welcomed them and encouraged them to ask questions if they wanted additional information about the Board’s work.

**V. ACTION ITEMS:**

**B. Expenditure Ratifications: \$83,567.67**

Invoice Batch No. 8921	\$ 25,233.09
Invoice Batch No. 8972	\$ 777.48
Invoice Batch No. 8988	\$ 3,168.83
Invoice Batch No. 9043	\$ 1,628.14
Invoice Batch No. 9044	\$ 1,968.36
Invoice Batch No. 9107	\$ 3,654.03
Invoice Batch No. 9129	\$ 6,090.83
Invoice Batch No. 9216	\$ 6,327.21
Invoice Batch No. 9267	\$ 7,376.75
Invoice Batch No. 9286	\$ 2,252.00
Invoice Batch No. 9298	\$ 14,616.72
Invoice Batch No. 9362	\$ 10,474.23

The Board reviewed the ratification of payments.

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

A vote on the motion is as follows:

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

**C. Travel Expenditures**

Mr. Burns presented the travel expenditure requests. He explained that it was a particularly busy season for conferences, trainings, and meetings, including AOHC and OEHA events, WIC travel, and PHEP-related travel. Board members asked whether the office would remain staffed while employees were traveling, and he confirmed that leadership coverage would always be present in the building. One board member commented positively that many of the travel expenses were covered through grants rather than the general fund.

A motion was presented by Board Member Grimm to approve said travel expenditures, seconded by Board Member Everett.

A vote on the motion is as follows:

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

**D. Resolution #25-16 Amendment to the 2026 Portage County Combined General Health District Annual Appropriations Previously and to be Certified.**

Mr. Burns presented a budget amendment totaling \$36,607. During the discussion, he explained that part of the amendment included required fees that had to be paid to the Ohio Department of Health. Additional portions of the amendment involved adjustments to grant-related line items, including an anticipated allocation of approximately \$13,618 through the “Get Vaxed Ohio” funding source, which he plans to apply a portion toward salaries and wages for the nursing staff. Mr. Burns acknowledged that the projected amount was optimistic but stated he wanted to budget for the possibility of receiving the full allocation.

The amendment also increased appropriations for the CMH program because the program had been performing exceptionally well and was generating additional reimbursable grant revenue. Mr. Burns specifically praised team members involved with the CMH program

and noted that the program had significantly improved compared to where it stood two years earlier. He stated he hoped to continue returning to the Board with future requests for additional funding because of the program’s continued success and growth.

A motion was presented by Board Member Dr. Keyser to approve resolution #25-16, seconded by Board Member Clarke.

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

**E. Resolution #26-17 A Journal Entry Reversal / Expense Correction for Portage County Combined General Health District.**

Mr. Burns presented a journal entry reversal expense corrections related to payroll allocation changes. Mr. Burns explained that the corrections were necessary because of adjustments made through Payroll Change Authorization forms, commonly referred to as “PCAs.” These forms determine which grants or funding sources employee salaries and wages are charged against. During the discussion, he clarified that payroll allocation changes had been discussed previously with payroll personnel and accounting staff, but the updates were not processed in time to take effect during the intended payroll cycle. As a result, accounting staff needed to manually adjust the expenses to ensure that payroll costs were charged to the proper accounts beginning on the originally intended effective date. Noting that the corrections were primarily accounting adjustments and did not represent any new spending.

A motion was presented by Board Member Everett to approve resolution #25-17, seconded by Board Member Dr. Keyser.

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

**F. Resolution #26-18 A Resolution to Revise Fleet Gas Card Policy.**

Mr. Burns presented the revisions to the health district’s fleet gas policy. He explained that the current policy limited fuel purchases to no more than \$100 per transaction. However, because of increased fuel prices, some of the health district’s larger vehicles could no longer be filled within the existing limit. Mr. Burns noted that recent fill-ups were exceeding the limit slightly, often reaching approximately \$106 per transaction. Rather than repeatedly returning to the Board for small incremental increases, staff recommended increasing the transaction limit from \$100 to \$150 to provide additional flexibility for future fuel price increases.

Board members stated that the proposed increase appeared reasonable and asked whether receipts were still required for all purchases. In which, Mr. Burns confirmed that employees are required to submit receipts for every transaction and that the department also has electronic access to monitor all gas card activity and purchases through the backend system.

A motion was presented by Board Member Dr. Keyser to approve the revisions to resolution #25-18, seconded by Board Member Clarke.

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

- G. Resolution #26-19** Declaring a Public Health Nuisance, Ordering Abatement of that Nuisance, located at 3057 State Route 225, Palmyra Township and Approving the Civil Prosecution for Violation(s) of Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Chapter 3718 and Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3701-29 Regulating Sewage Treatment Systems.
- H. Resolution #26-20** Declaring a Public Health Nuisance, Ordering Abatement of that Nuisance, located at 4185 Rock Spring Road, Edinburg Township and Approving the Civil Prosecution for Violation(s) of Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Chapter 3718 and Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3701-29 Regulating Sewage Treatment Systems.
- I. Resolution #26-21** Declaring a Public Health Nuisance, Ordering Abatement of that Nuisance, located at 5168 John Thomas Road, Ravenna Township and Approving the Civil Prosecution for Violation(s) of Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Chapter 3718 and Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3701-29 Regulating Sewage Treatment Systems.
- J. Resolution #26-22** Declaring a Public Health Nuisance, Ordering Abatement of that Nuisance, located at 1367 State Route 183. Atwater Township and Approving the Civil Prosecution for Violation(s) of Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Chapter 3718 and Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3701-29 Regulating Sewage Treatment Systems.

Mr. Duck presented four separate properties identified as public health nuisances because of malfunctioning aeration and septic systems. He explained that all four properties involved aeration systems that no longer had required service contracts in place. When those contracts lapsed, the health department followed its normal compliance process by sending postcards and letters reminding property owners to renew service agreements. When no response was received, the department proceeded with inspections.

During the inspections, the inspectors discovered multiple problems that caused the systems to qualify as public health nuisances. Issues included failed pumps, malfunctioning aerators, and nonfunctioning UV lights. Staff stated that each property had received at least two notices of violation, while one property had received three notices, yet none of the property owners had contacted the department or taken sufficient action toward compliance.

Board members asked questions regarding how the inspection and enforcement process works. Mr. Duck explained that spray irrigation systems and aeration systems require ongoing monitoring because they discharge wastewater differently than traditional septic systems. Staff stated that when service contracts are not renewed, the department first sends reminder notices and warning letters before conducting inspections. The inspections themselves are intended only to verify whether systems are functioning properly and are not intended to replace regular maintenance performed by licensed service providers.

The Board also discussed whether financial assistance programs are available for homeowners who cannot afford repairs. Mr. Duck explained that some repair costs, such as replacement pumps or aeration motors, may qualify for assistance through existing loan programs, although service contract costs themselves are generally not covered. He further explained that if inspection fees or enforcement costs remain unpaid, the health department has statutory authority to certify those charges onto the property owner’s tax bill, effectively creating a lien-like obligation against the property.

Mr. Duck emphasized that the department makes significant efforts to educate and work with homeowners before formal enforcement becomes necessary. He stated that their goal is to encourage homeowners to maintain valid service contracts and prevent larger failures that become much more expensive to repair over time.

A motion was presented by Board Member Grimm to approve resolutions #26-19, #26-20, #26-21, and #26-22, seconded by Board Member Clarke.

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

**K. Resolution #26-23** The Portage County Board of Health Acceptance to Allow Rebecca Lehman, Health Commissioner, To Sign the Agreement with Healthspace GovTech Pending Contract Completion for Healthspace Cloud Suite Implementation.

Mr. Rechichar presented a contract resolution for environmental health. He stated that the health district’s current environmental health system, known as HDIS, was originally developed approximately 20 to 25 years ago and still operated on a DOS-based platform. Although the system functioned adequately at times, staff explained that it had become increasingly unreliable and difficult to support because only one technical support person remained with the company. Mr. Rechichar also explained that the current inspection process was cumbersome and inefficient. Inspectors currently perform inspections in the field and later must connect to the office system to synchronize data manually. This process frequently creates problems, including the risk of losing inspection records during synchronization. Mr. Rechichar stated that the department has discussed replacing the system for a long time because it no longer meets operational needs. The new HS GovTech system will provide cloud-based inspection capability, allowing environmental health staff

to complete and upload inspections in real time while still in the field. The software will also integrate with GIS mapping systems, ScanView, and other modernization initiatives the department has been implementing over the last several years. He described the new system as an important final step in the department's broader data modernization efforts. To reduce implementation problems, he explained that the health district plans to model portions of the new system after successful inspection modules already operating in other Ohio counties. Cuyahoga County's food inspection module and Marion County's septic system module were specifically referenced as examples of established, functional programs that could be adapted locally.

Board members asked whether additional software modules would need to be added later, and Mr. Rechichar explained that the contract already included nearly all environmental health programs, including food safety, plumbing, rabies, camps, private water systems, septic systems, vending, and other inspection categories. He also explained that the software would improve public access to inspection records, although they intended to continue exporting reports into Strategic Solutions because it provides fuller public reporting access. The contract included an estimated first-year cost of approximately \$29,900, which covered implementation and setup fees. Annual costs afterward were expected to increase by approximately six percent over the five-year term. He noted that the pricing had technically expired at the end of the previous year, but the vendor agreed to extend the pricing offer for the department.

Board members praised staff for researching successful implementations in other counties before selecting the software and acknowledged the importance of modernizing the department's technology infrastructure

A motion was presented by Board Member Dr. Keyser to approve resolution #25-23, seconded by Board Member Clarke.

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

- L. **Resolution #26-24** The Portage County Board of Health's Acceptance of the Agreement for Independent Contractor Services Between the Portage County Combined General Health District and Aaron Belknap to Provide Services for Certified Plumbing Inspections.

Ms. Lehman presented a contract resolution to the board regarding a certified plumbing inspector. She explained that Aaron Belknap, the department's certified plumbing inspector, had submitted his resignation because his private plumbing business had expanded significantly and he could no longer continue working full-time for the health district.

Although Aaron planned to leave his employee position but had agreed to continue

temporarily as a contract plumbing inspector while the department recruited and hired a permanent replacement. She stated that they were still finalizing the timing of his last official day as an employee and anticipated that his contractor role would begin immediately afterward to ensure continuity of services.

Board members discussed prior staffing transitions within the plumbing inspection program and noted that the department had previously experienced turnover in that position. Ms. Lehman explained that the health district already maintains an agreement with Trumbull County to utilize their plumbing inspector, if necessary, but relying heavily on outside county inspectors is more expensive. Retaining Aaron temporarily as a contractor would help minimize costs while also providing continuity and training assistance for any future hire.

She also confirmed that the plumbing inspector position had already been publicly posted and recruitment efforts were underway.

A motion was presented by Board Member Everett to approve resolution #25-24, seconded by Board Member Grimm.

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

## VI. DISCUSSIONS:

### Administration:

Ms. Meduri presented the Administration Report and stated that the department has experienced a particularly busy month. She remarked that leadership may have “jinxed” themselves after previously presenting statewide regarding the agency’s 89% employee retention rate, as the department is currently managing eight open positions. Despite these staffing challenges, she emphasized that employees have departed for positive reasons, including retirements, career advancement opportunities, and other professional endeavors.

Ms. Meduri reported that the department has begun seeing an increase in both the number and quality of applicants for open positions. She noted that the Environmental Clerk position alone received more than 225 applications and estimated that the department has processed over 800 applications across all current vacancies. She acknowledged the substantial administrative workload associated with organizing and processing applications and commended staff for managing those responsibilities while continuing daily operations. Ms. Meduri further stated that interviews are ongoing and that several highly qualified candidates are currently being considered for employment opportunities within the agency.

Ms. Meduri informed the Board that the Marketing Coordinator position had recently been filled through a transfer from the county. She introduced Sarah Power as the new coordinator and stated that she has already demonstrated enthusiasm, initiative, and innovative ideas. Ms. Meduri explained that Ms. Power will spend time shadowing multiple divisions and field staff to gain a comprehensive understanding of departmental programs and services. Leadership expressed optimism regarding the department's outreach and communication efforts over the next six to twelve months as a result of the new coordinator's contributions.

Ms. Meduri also reported that Amelia Donovan unexpectedly offboarded from her position as a Clinic Assistant, creating an additional vacancy that required immediate reposting. She further advised the Board that Justin's final day with the agency would be Thursday the 23rd and noted that the department is also preparing for two additional retirements at the end of the month. Additionally, Erin will be transitioning roles. Ms. Meduri stated that several employees are currently on FMLA leave, contributing to staffing shortages and increased operational strain. Despite these challenges, she praised the teamwork and collaboration demonstrated throughout the agency.

Ms. Meduri discussed the department's renewed focus on community outreach and engagement with local governments. She explained that the agency has been attending city council and township meetings throughout the county. She further stated that the agency created annual report summaries broken down to the township and city level in order to demonstrate the specific public health services being provided within each community. Ms. Meduri reported that the presentation delivered at the Ravenna City Council meeting was very well received and indicated that similar presentations are planned for additional municipalities, including Streetsboro and Aurora.

Ms. Meduri described Public Health Week as highly successful for the department and highlighted participation in the Kent State Public Health Career Fair and the university's 15-year Public Health anniversary celebration. She noted that Becky was featured in a live video presentation that generated significant positive engagement online. Ms. Meduri also reported that Matt Deevers presented and several community partners attended a Leadership Portage County leadership series event hosted at the health district, providing additional professional development opportunities for staff and partners.

Ms. Meduri provided an update regarding the American Heart Association initiative and stated that Karli, the department's team member in partnership with the American Heart Association and UH Portage Medical Center, has been working to re-establish partnerships with local libraries involving blood pressure cuff accessibility programs. She also noted that additional community outreach and health screening events are being planned.

Ms. Meduri further reported that the department's pop-up pantry served 252 families during the previous month. She stated that the May event would return to a market-style format and currently includes approximately 13 community partners and at least 15 to 16 resource tables. She explained that the department is intentionally working to become a centralized community resource hub where residents can access multiple services in one location. Ms. Meduri discussed ongoing efforts to expand partnerships and services, including re-establishing the diaper bank, bringing the Justice

Bus onsite to provide legal assistance resources, and partnering with the Dental AccessPointe Bus to improve access to dental care services.

Finally, Ms. Meduri announced that Olivia Artman, Epidemiologist, and Emily Speck, REHS, will participate in the next Leadership Portage County class, while Becky is scheduled to graduate from the program next month. She also reported that Olivia will be taking the Certified Disease Interventionist examination within the next two weeks. Ms. Meduri concluded her report by stating that all annual reports have been completed and uploaded to the department website and will soon be shared through the agency's social media platforms.

### **Finance:**

Mr. Burns presented the cash basis report and focused specifically on the department's first quarter financial comparison. He explained that the health district compares quarterly financial performance against the same quarter from the previous year in order to monitor trends and overall financial stability.

Mr. Burns reported that the department's unrestricted general fund balance increased by approximately \$284,460 during the first quarter of 2026. He explained that this increase was especially significant because the general fund represents unrestricted dollars that may be used for any purpose related to the mission and operations of the health district.

He further explained that, at the end of the first quarter, the department's total fund balance stood at approximately \$4.1 million, compared to approximately \$3.8 million at the same time during the previous year. However, Mr. Burns cautioned the Board against viewing the increase too simplistically. While the raw comparison reflected an increase of approximately \$339,000, he noted that the department had ended the previous fiscal year already carrying forward approximately \$255,000 in additional funds. Therefore, he stated that a more accurate "apples-to-apples" comparison showed the department was effectively up approximately \$83,000 year-to-date through the first quarter.

Mr. Burns explained that this financial improvement aligned with the department's long-term planning goals and efforts to build a financial cushion in the event property tax revenues were reduced in the future. He emphasized that the department hopes property tax losses never occur, but leadership is intentionally trying to strengthen the organization's financial position so that operations could remain stable if revenue challenges arise.

Mr. Burns also informed the Board that he had recently been elected President of the Finance Officers Association of Northeast Ohio. He acknowledged Brian Huff for nominating him for the position and joked that, as part of the arrangement, Mr. Huff would remain involved as Vice President. Mr. Burns stated that the new officers would be formally sworn-in, in May and noted that former Portage County official Brad Cromes would return to administer the oath of office.

Following the report, a Board member asked what factors had contributed to the department's improved financial position. Mr. Burns responded that the department has been aggressively controlling costs while also maximizing grant opportunities and reimbursement strategies. He

explained that when he first joined the organization, too many expenses were automatically being paid from the unrestricted general fund without evaluating whether grant funding could appropriately support those costs instead.

Mr. Burns stated that leadership has since worked diligently to identify expenses and personnel costs that could properly be allocated to grants. As an example, he explained that the department successfully advocated for certain administrative costs associated with the WIC program to be covered through the WIC grant, rather than relying solely on general funds. He noted that while dietitians and direct program staff were already grant-funded, additional administrative work related to recruiting, training, hiring, and fiscal management also supports those programs and therefore qualified for grant allocation. He specifically referenced efforts involving Ms. Meduri and Ms. Miley to appropriately shift eligible salary and wage expenses onto grant funding where permissible.

Mr. Burns also discussed cost-saving operational decisions. He provided the example of the department's copier replacement strategy, explaining that entering into a new copier lease would have cost approximately \$67,000, while purchasing the copiers outright cost approximately \$52,000 and allowed the department to retain ownership long-term. He stated that leadership continues evaluating operational practices and purchasing decisions in an effort to maximize savings and improve overall financial efficiency.

Mr. Burns concluded by emphasizing that the department is not claiming it would be fully unaffected by the loss of grant funding or property tax revenue. However, he stated that leadership is intentionally planning ahead so that, if future revenue reductions occur, the organization will be in the strongest financial position possible and will have contingency strategies already in place. Board members acknowledged the importance of maintaining property tax support while also recognizing the value of having a financial "Plan B" established for long-term stability.

### **Environmental Health:**

Mr. Duck began by discussing recent participation and presentation on water quality topics with a particular focus on customer service and communication within environmental health operations and the Ohio Environmental Health Association "OEHA" Conference. He stated that the presentation went well and described the opportunity as both professionally rewarding and beneficial for representing the health district at the state level.

Mr. Duck explained that the Water Quality Team has been taking advantage of favorable seasonal weather conditions to maximize field operations and inspections. He reported that ongoing development and construction activity throughout the county has kept the division very active with wastewater system inspections, House Bill reviews, stormwater-related work, and private well inspections. Staff noted that field activity has remained steady and that inspectors are continuing to manage a significant volume of environmental health work throughout the county.

Mr. Duck also highlighted staff development and training efforts. He specifically referenced Dominic DuPonty's progress in the Environmental Health division, noting that he has been conducting numerous compliance inspections involving NPDES and Class 1 systems. Mr. Duck

explained that the inspections have provided him with valuable hands-on experience and have significantly improved his understanding of wastewater systems and environmental compliance procedures. Mr. Duck emphasized that these learning opportunities are helping strengthen the department's future operational capacity.

Ms. Menke spoke on the mosquito surveillance and vector control program. She announced that another OEHA presentation would be delivered regarding the department's mosquito surveillance efforts, including how GIS technology is integrated into mosquito tracking and how the Ohio EPA mosquito patrol grant supports the program. Ms. Menke explained that the mosquito surveillance program originally began in 2017 and has evolved substantially since that time. She noted that the department's current program structure, technology usage, and operational sophistication are significantly more advanced than when the initiative was first established.

Food safety and licensing operations were discussed extensively. Ms. Menke reported that all brick-and-mortar food facility license renewals had been completed except for two seasonal facilities that are not required to pay licensing fees until they officially begin operations. She also announced that the department's final "mobile rodeo" event for mobile food vendors would be held the following Friday at the health district office. The mobile rodeo allows vendors to complete inspections and licensing requirements in a centralized and efficient setting before the busy festival season begins.

Ms. Menke described the success of previous mobile rodeo events, noting that approximately 15 vendors attended the prior session despite severe weather conditions that included heavy rain and cold temperatures. She stated that participation levels remained strong even under poor weather conditions, which they viewed as a positive sign of engagement and compliance among local mobile food operators.

Ms. Menke also reported that campground inspections would begin the following month and that licensing renewals for camps and related facilities were actively being processed. She explained that temporary food vendor applications and temporary campground requests were beginning to increase as the fair and festival season approaches. She advised the Board that seasonal inspection demands would continue increasing significantly over the coming months because of the growing number of temporary events and public gatherings throughout the county.

Ms. Menke discussed internal training and quality assurance efforts. She stated that all inspectors are actively working in the field conducting inspections and that additional emphasis has recently been placed on standardization and consistency across inspection staff. Survey inspections were completed for all food inspection staff in order to evaluate performance, assess field practices, and ensure that inspectors are conducting inspections and documenting violations in a consistent and uniform manner throughout the division.

Ms. Menke also announced that the health district would host a Tick Identification and Control educational program on May 21st in partnership with the OSU Extension Office and the State Veterinarian. Community members and Board members were invited to attend the event, which was scheduled to begin at approximately 5:30 p.m. She explained that informational flyers would

be distributed publicly to promote attendance and increase public awareness regarding tick-related health concerns.

Ms. Menke shared of an upcoming collaboration with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). She reported that the department had been selected to host an FDA Retail Food Specialist and another colleague who is currently undergoing standardization training. The FDA representatives will conduct onsite training activities within several local food facilities toward the end of June. She explained that the department would coordinate with participating food facilities in advance to obtain approval and cooperation for the training process. Environmental Health staff expressed excitement about the opportunity because it reflects recognition of the department's food safety program and will also allow local inspectors to observe FDA regional food inspection procedures firsthand.

The Board was also informed that the department's biannual Food Safety Advisory Council meeting would take place the following week on April 29. Ms. Menke explained that the council meetings continue to be held twice each year in order to maintain communication with stakeholders and provide ongoing discussion regarding food safety regulations, trends, and operational issues.

Mr. Rechichar shared his gratitude and appreciation to the Board for the significant accomplishments and statewide recognition achieved by the Environmental Health division over the past several years. He reflected on how the department has grown from having only a limited presence within professional organizations to becoming recognized at both the state and national levels. Specific examples included presentations delivered at national conferences, increasing participation in statewide leadership roles, and several prestigious professional awards.

Mr. Rechichar highlighted that Mr. Duck previously presented at the national Water and Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport "WWET" Conference and that Ms. Menke presented at the National Environmental Health Association "NEHA" National Environmental Health Conference. Ms. Speck currently serves as the Private Water Chair at the state level, while Ms. Mellott serves as Technical Chair of the Body Art Committee. He also announced that leadership positions within Environmental Health Associations had recently expanded, including appointment as President of the Association. Additionally, Mr. Rechichar recently received the "Outstanding Sanitarian of the Year" award for the State of Ohio as well as an unexpected "Journal Article of the Year" award for ArcGIS-related work submitted by the agency. He described these accomplishments as evidence of the division's tremendous growth and professional development over the last several years.

Mr. Rechichar reflected on how the Environmental Health division's onboarding training processes have evolved. It was explained that, in earlier years, new inspectors often received only minimal shadowing opportunities before being expected to work independently in the field. Staff humorously recalled being handed an inspection bag after only a few training inspections and being asked whether they felt prepared to work independently. In contrast, the department now has formalized onboarding programs, written training plans, standardized inspection procedures, and structured development expectations for new employees. He explained that new food inspectors now receive comprehensive onboarding guidance designed to help them become successful within

approximately two months. Specialized programs have also been developed for areas such as soil evaluations and wastewater inspections.

During the conclusion of the report, Mr. Rechichar formally announced that he would be leaving the department to become the Health Commissioner for Lorain County Public Health effective May 4, 2026. He expressed sincere appreciation for the opportunities, support, and professional experiences he received during his time with the agency. Mr. Rechichar thanked the Board and staff members for helping support the Environmental Health division's growth and modernization efforts over the past several years.

Board members responded publicly to thank Mr. Rechichar for his leadership and service to the department. They described him as a tremendous asset to the organization and expressed appreciation for everything he contributed to Environmental Health operations, staff development, and statewide recognition efforts. Board members also congratulated him on his new position and wished him success moving forward. Mr. Rechichar stated that although he would be leaving the department, he intends to remain available as a resource and encouraged staff to contact him in the future whenever assistance or guidance may be needed.

#### **Community Health & Health Commissioner:**

Ms. Lehman gave the Community Health & Health Commissioner's report. She first discussed the Healthy Eating Active Living "HEAL" grant that Ms. Cooper previously secured for the division. It was explained that, during the prior year, the grant supported a "Photovoice" project involving the Skeels community. Through the project, community members were encouraged to take photographs representing conditions and issues affecting health within their neighborhood. Those photographs were then used during a community meeting to help facilitate discussion about local concerns, barriers, and opportunities for improvement. She reported that the department successfully received a second phase of the grant and recently held the first steering committee meeting for the continuation project.

Ms. Lehman noted that Ms. Kristi Blazek-Hack, a Ravenna Township Trustee, attended the steering committee meeting and is actively participating on the committee. The project is currently focused on conducting surveys within the Skeels community regarding neighborhood safety and walkability. She explained that the surveys are intended to evaluate issues affecting residents' ability to safely walk within the community and will support broader walkability and safety studies moving forward.

The discussion then shifted to the annual "None for Under 21" event, which was held the previous Thursday at Kent State University. She reported that Ms. McCracken coordinated the event and did a remarkable job organizing the program. Approximately 2,000 students from 10 different schools attended the educational event. She stated that the speakers and presentations were extremely well received and described the program as a highly positive experience for participating students and schools. Several individuals present at the meeting also shared positive feedback regarding the event's impact and quality.

Ms. Lehman further reported that Ms. McCracken has also been working to re-energize the Safe Kids Coalition. Several new members have joined the coalition, and another meeting is expected to be scheduled in the near future as efforts continue to strengthen community involvement and child safety programming.

Updates were also provided regarding the recent rollout of a new WIC food package. She explained that there had initially been significant concern and uncertainty about how smoothly the rollout process would proceed. Leadership had prepared contingency plans, including the possibility of holding late-night clinics during June and July if operational issues arose. However, she reported that the implementation process has gone much more smoothly than anticipated, and WIC staff are now feeling relieved and confident that the transition is in good shape operationally.

The Board was reminded that the department's farmers market would return to the front lawn beginning June 9, 2026. She stated that participation and vendor interest have already exceeded the previous year's numbers, particularly among local farmers. Ms. Lehman explained that Ms. Cooper attended multiple farmers market conferences focused on strategies for strengthening market participation and community engagement, and leadership believes those efforts are already contributing positively to vendor recruitment and planning.

Ms. Lehman also discussed a new partnership initiative with PARTA focused on transportation access for lower-income residents. It was explained that the department recently met with PARTA to discuss transportation education, bus pass assistance, and voucher programs intended to help residents access community services and resources more easily. Ms. Lehman noted that the voucher system would operate through a cost-sharing arrangement in which both the health district, through grant funding, and PARTA would contribute funding toward transportation assistance.

Additional discussion focused on the department's upcoming open house event, which will now be held in conjunction with the farmers market during the summer rather than in April as done previously. Ms. Lehman initially referenced June 16th for the event date but later clarified that the open house itself would actually occur on June 23rd, while the farmers market would begin June 16, 2026. Ms. Lehman explained that numerous community partners had already signed up to participate and anticipated that participation would continue growing because of the new summer scheduling format.

Finally, she discussed the first meeting in the new cycle of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process, referred to during the meeting as the "CHIP" meetings. She stated that the meeting generated strong enthusiasm and excitement among participants regarding new community strategies and collaborative public health activities. It was also noted that Ms. Menke has become involved with the Population Health and Safety initiative and is contributing environmental health perspectives, including mosquito surveillance work, into broader population health discussions. Ms. Lehman expressed optimism about the increased collaboration occurring between environmental health and community health initiatives moving forward.

**VII. OLD BUSINESS:**

**a. Salary Ranges:**

Discussion and Possible Action – Item Previously Tabled on March 17, 2026.

A motion was presented by Board Member Everett to un-table the salary ranges previously tabled on March 17, 2026, seconded by Board Member Dr. Keyser.

Upon roll call, all members present voted “aye”; the motion carried.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Board Member Grimm and seconded by Board Member Everett to approve and ratify the salary ranges for audit purposes.

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

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Accept the Resignation of Melissa Colella, WIC Peer Helper at the WIC Lisbon Location in Columbiana County. Effective April 22 2026.

Motion made with regrets, by Board Member Clarke  
Motion seconded by Board Member Dr. Keyser

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

- b. Accept the Resignation of Amelia Donovan, WIC Clinic Assistant at the WIC Ravenna Location in Portage County. Effective April 6, 2026.

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

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

- d. Accept the Hiring of Sarah Power, Marketing Director for the Administration Division. Effective April 20, 2026.

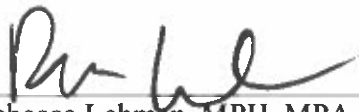
Motion made by Board Member Clarke  
Motion seconded by Board Member Dr. Keyser

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

**IX. ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Board Member Dr. Keyser at 7:05 PM and seconded by Board Member Grimm.

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



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Rebecca Lehman, MPH, MPA, CHES  
Health Commissioner

