

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
September 24, 2025

ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT: *To promote and protect health, enhance quality of life, and preserve the environment for everyone in Orange County.*

THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MET ON September 24, 2025, at the Southern Human Services Center, 2501 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill, NC.

BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBERS PRESENT: Alison Stuebe – Chair, Tony Whitaker – Vice Chair, Bruce Baldwin, Brian Crandell, Commissioner Amy Fowler, Davia Nickelson, Lee Pickett, Shielda Rodgers, and Rachel Royce.

BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBERS ABSENT: Aparna Jonnal.

STAFF PRESENT: Quintana Stewart, Health Director; Dana Crews, Community Health Services Director; Dr. Stephanie George, Dental Services Director; Victoria Hudson, Environmental Health Director; Ashley Rawlinson, Compliance Manager; Frederick Perschau, Financial and Administrative Services Director; Libbie Hough, Communications Manager; Thomas Privott, Environmental Health Supervisor; Melissa Clayton, Dental Assistant; Patricia Grayson-Phillips, Accounting Tech II; and Jean Phillips-Weiner, BOH Strategic Plan Manager.

GUESTS/VISITORS PRESENT: Inbar Fried.

I. Welcome New Employees

Quintana Stewart, Health Director, introduced the new employee in attendance: Melissa Clayton – Dental Assistant.

II. Public Comment for Items NOT on Printed Agenda: None.

III. Board Comments:

Dr. Rachel Royce

Dr. Royce shared that she is taking a class with the Town of Hillsborough called Government 101, and she recommended that any other Hillsborough resident consider enrolling. She said that last week, the class went to visit the town's service vehicles and learn more about the vehicles that they maintain to keep the town healthy, safe, and functioning. Individuals who work in Hillsborough but live elsewhere are also eligible to participate.

Dr. Pickett highly recommended the Citizen's Academy, which is a similar program but aimed countywide. In response to Dr. Stuebe's question, Ms. Stewart explained that the Health Department offers a session at the countywide program. Dr. Royce said that her class has given her the opportunity to consider how to educate the public about Health Department services.

Commissioner Amy Fowler

Commissioner Fowler noted that she has been giving a lot of vaccines at her practice this week and answering a lot of questions about them. She added that she recently received a thank you from a former patient's parent for continuing to follow and promote science.

Dr. Alison Stuebe

Dr. Stuebe commented positively on the flu vaccine drive held by the board in advance of the meeting and noted that it will be used in an educational campaign to help promote vaccines.

In response to Dr. Stuebe's question, Ms. Stewart replied that promoting the science and evidence around vaccines is the best way to support the Health Department around vaccine uptake at this time. She added that the COVID vaccine is not currently in stock at the Health Department but that they are encouraging people to get it at pharmacies. In response to Dr. Royce, Ms. Stewart said that materials promoting vaccines are being shared at community events, including the upcoming Hillsborough Last Friday event.

IV. Priority Committee Updates

Access to Care Committee

Dr. Pickett provided the update for the Access to Care Committee. The committee has been working on a resolution promoting access to public health resources for vulnerable populations considering current immigration enforcement policies, which they will present to the board tonight. The committee will next meet in mid-October.

Behavioral Health Committee

Dr. Baldwin provided the update for the Behavioral Health Committee. The committee met in early September and heard from Dr. Luke Smith from El Futuro, a community-based nonprofit organization that seeks to transform Latino mental health in a welcoming environment of healing and hope. They offer bilingual and culturally responsive mental health services including therapy, psychiatry, substance use treatment, and case management. El Futuro currently serves more than 2,500 Latino youth and adults per year; using telehealth, they can offer services across more than 53 counties. All clinicians and community health workers at El Futuro are required to speak Spanish, and they aim to increase the number of providers by either training native speakers as clinicians or teaching Spanish to licensed clinicians. One finding that Dr. Baldwin highlighted was the fact that immigrant families who maintain their language and culture typically have better mental and physical health compared to those who assimilate. The committee will next meet in early November.

Dr. Baldwin concluded by saying that the committee will be tabling at the September Hillsborough Last Friday event for Suicide Awareness Month. Ms. Stewart noted that the table will be shared with Orange Partnership, who will be promoting youth-focused suicide prevention resources. Commissioner Fowler said that the table will have resources about the 988 Suicide Prevention Lifeline as well as information for young people about how to help friends who may be struggling. Dr. Royce suggested also sharing Medicaid materials.

Connections to Community Support Committee

Dr. Stuebe provided the update for the Connections to Community Support Committee. The committee will present their current resolution draft in support of promoting affordable/attainable housing during the meeting tonight. The committee will next meet in early October.

Ad Hoc Committee on Well Rules

The committee will reconvene after the Board has received updates on the implications of the recent adjudication hearing decision.

V. Approval of the September 24, 2025, Agenda

Dr. Royce requested the addition of an action item for discussion of the vacant At-Large seat.

Motion to approve the amended agenda of the September 24, 2025 BOH meeting was made by Commissioner Amy Fowler, seconded by Dr. Lee Pickett, and carried without dissent.

VI. Approval of August 27, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2025 meeting was made by Commissioner Amy Fowler, seconded by Mr. Tony Whitaker, and carried without dissent.

VII. Educational Sessions

A. Impact of the Recent Adjudication Case

Victoria Hudson, Environmental Health Director, and Thomas Privott, Environmental Health Supervisor, presented on the implications of the recent adjudication decision. Some highlights of their presentation are below:

- The Orange County Board of Health heard an adjudication appeal in May of 2024 brought by Mr. Richard Gurlitz regarding the denial of a permit to build a carport due to its proximity to the property's well. The board's decision to sustain the denial went to district court, where it was reversed. In September of 2025, the Board of Health voted to issue a permit to Mr. Gurlitz allowing the construction of the proposed carport.
- The board's decision was reversed for two primary reasons: 1. There was a lack of evidence to support the need for the 50-foot setback required in Orange County compared to the 25-foot setback required by the state; and 2. The words "subject to termite treatment" in the Orange County Groundwater Protection Rules were not given adequate meaning, and exact words and precise definitions matter greatly in the legal sphere.
- There is a gap in the empirical evidence around setbacks and wells – currently, there is no published, peer-reviewed research on what is effective and safe. While this evidence gap may be filled in the future, to do so will require time and money.

VIII. Actions Items

A. Resolution on Access to Care

Ms. Phillips-Weiner presented The Resolution on Immigration Enforcement and Access to Public Health Resources on behalf of the Access to Care Committee. Ms. Phillips-Weiner explained that the resolution's purpose is to promote access to health-promoting public health resources for everyone.

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Feedback received from board members in advance of the meeting included that, as this is a fairly politicized topic, some of the news sources for the references may be seen as controversial or untrustworthy. Dr. Pickett said that she does not have a problem with the resources, as she feels that what may be controversial to some would be acceptable to others and vice versa; Dr. Stuebe noted that there is a wide gamut of sources cited, including Fox News, Newsweek, and the Atlantic, so she doesn't feel this is a problem unless someone had a specific complaint.

Ms. Phillips-Weiner added that she had also received feedback that the references and resources are a little long and these may benefit from being slimmed down. Dr. Stuebe noted that readers who like references will appreciate having a lot of them, while those who don't like references won't look at them, a point for which several other board members expressed support. Dr. Crandell commented that with many references, he feels like he cannot read or sometimes even access them all, to which Mr. Whitaker said that it is important to have a reference to support each of the claims the resolution is making. He added that he did not think it was necessary for board members to be familiar with the full details of each reference.

Mr. Whitaker commented on the phrasing of "a climate of fear has grown due to ICE activities, including multiple instances of detaining documented immigrants and U.S. citizens who were mistakenly believed to be undocumented immigrants," noting that this seemed a little qualitative and possibly inflammatory. Through discussion, the group suggested changing the phrasing to "increased ICE activities have included multiple instances of detaining documented immigrants and U.S. citizens who were mistakenly believed to be undocumented immigrants."

Dr. Baldwin observed that the capitalization of "health department" is not consistent and suggested ensuring that it is made clear when it is being used as a proper noun vs. health departments in general. Dr. Stuebe suggested using "a public health department" or "any public health department" when speaking generally.

The Access to Care Committee will revise the draft resolution based on this feedback and share it for further input in advance of the October meeting, where it will be presented for a vote. Ms. Phillips-Weiner invited board members to send any additional feedback to her by October 20th to allow time to compile and present to the full Board at the time of the vote.

B. Resolution on Affordable Housing Supply

Ms. Phillips-Weiner presented the Resolution Promoting the Development of Adequate Affordable Housing on behalf of the Connections to Community Support Committee.

Dr. Stuebe shared that she and Dr. Royce had discussed approaches to streamline the resolution prior to the meeting. Dr. Royce suggested creating four main whereas statements organized by key points – housing is a human right, housing is an issue in Orange County, being unhoused harms health, and being unhoused costs money – and including more details in bullet points within these. She also recommended removing eight of the "whereas" bullet points, which she felt were interesting but not relevant to the core message of the resolution.

Dr. Pickett shared minor corrections for two typos in the resolution.

Dr. Royce commented that some of the language felt more colorful than necessary, for example referring to the lack of affordable housing in Orange County as "a public health crisis." Through

discussion, the board agreed to revise the language to read as “a threat to public health.” Dr. Royce added that the term “public health interventions” at the end of the resolution is not defined; Dr. Stuebe mentioned that the intent of this comment was to suggest public health approaches should be used instead of punitive measures, as the committee did not want this resolution to be received as a suggestion to make people experiencing homelessness less visible through incarceration. Mr. Whitaker added that the phrase was meant to invoke that the issue of affordable housing should be treated with similar urgency to other public health issues, for example the COVID-19 pandemic. The group revised the phrase to read “best treated by developing holistic and comprehensive public health interventions.”

The Connections to Community Support Committee will revise the draft resolution based on this feedback and share it for further input in advance of the October meeting, where it will be presented for a vote. Ms. Phillips-Weiner invited board members to send any additional feedback to her by October 20th to allow time to compile and present to the full Board at the time of the vote.

C. BOH Policy Review and Approval

Ms. Phillips-Weiner presented the Board of Health Policies for review and approval.

Dr. Royce recommended a revision to I.C., Community Assessment Policy, suggesting following the lead of Chatham County in implementing a scientific advisory committee of at least three members, likely volunteers, to advise on the community health assessment process.

In response to Dr. Stuebe’s question about the implications of creating such a committee, Ms. Stewart said that staff would need to research this and recommended that Dr. Royce share her suggested edits to the policy with Ms. Phillips-Weiner to prepare for a future vote. Mr. Whitaker requested that the suggested edits include a short explanation of the reasons why implementing this committee would be better than the current approach.

Motion to approve the proposed policy modifications, excluding policy I.C, was made by Commissioner Amy Fowler, seconded by Dr. Davia Nickelson, and carried without dissent.

The approved policy changes are as follows:

1.0 Mission Statement and Scope of Services

- No Changes.

I.A. – Requests for Environmental Services and Assessments

- Some minor updates throughout for readability.
- Contemporized Environmental Health to focus this policy on the matters Environmental Health can address as opposed to every kind of possible environmental issue.
- Updated formatting to align with the formatting of the policy on policies.

I.B. – Fee and Eligibility Policy

- Some minor updates to wording and punctuation throughout, including substituting the word “client” for “patient”.
- **Section III.A.4.b:** Updated income verification details for Family Planning services.

- **Section IV:** Clarified eligibility for services for non-Orange County residents, added GIS mapping as a form of eligibility verification, and added information about service referrals for non-Orange County residents.
- **Section V:** Updated wording to clarify practices to ensure Family Planning Services are offered in an equitable and non-coercive manner.
- **Section V.H:** Clarified language about exceptions to the Fee and Eligibility Policy allowable by the Health Director.
- **Section VI:** Clarified language around Nutrition Services Fees.
- **Section VII.E:** Clarified language around the mailing of statements.

I.D. – Review of Reports and Documents

- Revised 2.d Board of Health Strategic Plan to reflect incorporation of the Board’s priorities and goals into the department strategic plan. The board approves and adopts the department plan and provides updates to the Board of Commissioners during the annual work session for boards and commissions.

I.E. – Operating Procedures BOH Manual

- No Content Changes. Formatting issues corrected.

I.E. – Operating Procedures BOH Manual – Appendix H – Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

- No Changes.

D. Discussion of Vacant Board Position

Dr. Stuebe acknowledged that there has been a delay in reviewing the applications for the vacant board position by the Ad-Hoc Nominating and Operating Procedures Committee consisting of Dr. Stuebe, Dr. Jonnal, Dr. Royce, and Mr. Whitaker. Ms. Stewart apologized for inadvertently sending the materials to Dr. Nickelson instead of Dr. Royce and said she would re-share the current list of applicants after the meeting.

In response to Dr. Steube’s question, Mr. Whitaker noted that, though there are many applications, they are short enough that he has been able to read through them all twice. He added that he felt it would not be hard to draft a list of top candidates and begin interviews.

IX. Reports and Discussion with Possible Action

A. Media Items

Libbie Hough, Communications Manager, presented the media packet to the board. Topics included: an interview with Dr. Dev Sangvai, Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on critical health issues in North Carolina, workers’ mental health in local detention centers, the business impact of Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) cuts to health research, and health care costs in light of the plan to raise insurance premiums for state employees in 2026.

The media items were presented in a new format this month, which consisted of a table with short summaries and links to the articles. Board members expressed support for this new format.

Ms. Hough shared that she would be using the photographs from the flu vaccine drive that the Board members participated in before the meeting to kick off a fall vaccine media campaign focusing on flu, COVID, and RSV. She requested a short statement from Dr. Stuebe as to why the Board decided that this was an important topic to spotlight.

Media items were in the packet, which focused on Orange County's events, our involvement in various efforts, and various public health topics.

B. Health Directors Report

Ms. Stewart presented her report to the Board. Below are brief highlights of her report.

- The elevator renovations at the Whitted Human Services Center are complete, so the October Board of Health meeting will be held in the Board of Health Conference Room at Whitted as is usual.
- The North Carolina Public Health Association (NCPHA) Fall Education Conference was held last week in Wilmington. Due to the heaviness of the current political climate, the event was less rejuvenating than it has been in past years, though there were plenty of opportunities for education and networking. Alex Rimmer, Environmental Health Supervisor, presented both a poster and an information session at the conference. Ms. Stewart added that there are plans to get an educational session about gun control and violence prevention on the agenda of an upcoming Board meeting.
- Ms. Stewart shared that the Health Department will be ordering COVID vaccines for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and that they will order COVID vaccines for individuals with private insurance once confirmation is received that the insurance companies will reimburse for them. In response to Dr. Royce's question about how an epidemic or pandemic would change the funding situation, Ms. Stewart explained that historically state resources are made available in an epidemic situation to mitigate the cost. She added that the National Adult Immunization Plan (NAIP) helps cover adults who may not be able to otherwise afford vaccines.
- Ms. Stewart shared that the annual Employee Appreciation Celebration was held in September, and staff from the Finance and Administrative Services Division won the pumpkin decorating contest; she included a photo of the winning pumpkin in her report.
- Dr. Stuebe noted that getting up and going to work in the current political climate can be hard and applauded everyone for the work that they do. She encouraged everyone to give themselves and each other grace.

X. Closed Session to Discuss Health Director's Annual Review

A motion to enter closed session at 8:41 p.m. to discuss the health director's annual review was made by Commissioner Amy Fowler, seconded by Dr. Lee Pickett, and carried without dissent.

During the closed session, the Board of Health discussed Quintana Stewart's job description and annual performance review.

A motion to end the closed session at 9:41 p.m. was made by Dr. Lee Pickett, seconded by Dr. Bruce Baldwin, and carried without dissent.

XI. Adjournment

A motion was made by Dr. Shielda Rodgers to adjourn the meeting at 9:41 p.m., was seconded by Dr. Lee Pickett, and carried without dissent.

The next Board of Health Meeting will be held October 29, 2025, at the Orange County Health Department, 300 West Tryon Street, Hillsborough, NC at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Quintana Stewart, MPA
Orange County Health Director
Secretary to the Board