



# CATTARAUGUS COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Cattaraugus County**  
Health Department  
Established 1923

*Mayor David L. Smith, President*

*Legislator Kelly Andreano, Vice-President*

*Joseph Bohan, MD*

*Zahid Chohan, MD*

*Thomas Spigel, MD*

*Kathryn Cooney Thrush, NP, MSN*

*Shane Pancio*

*Theresa Raftis*

*Legislator Ginger D. Schroder*

## MINUTES

February 7, 2025

The 929<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Cattaraugus County Board of Health (BOH) was held at the Old Library Restaurant on February 7, 2025.

*The following members were present:*

Joseph Bohan, MD

Zahid Chohan, MD

Thomas Spigel, MD

Legislator Kelly Andreano

Mayor David Smith

Theresa Raftis

Kathryn Cooney-Thrush, NP, MSN

*Also present were:*

Kevin D. Watkins, MD, MPH, Public Health Director

Ashley Smith, County Attorney

Legislator Richard Helmich (Virtual)

Bob Clarke, Olean Times Herald

Ray Jordan, Senior Public Health Sanitarian (Virtual)

Debra Lacher, Secretary to the Public Health Director

James Lawrence, Emergency Preparedness Director

Rick Miller, Catt Co News & Photos/Olean Star (Virtual)

Brooke Schnell, Supervising Community Health Nurse

Dave Porter, Hearing Officer

Robert Ring, Environmental Health Director

Mayor Smith welcomed everyone to the Board of Health (BOH) meeting, the roll was called, and a quorum was noted.

Mayor Smith asked for the report from the nominating committee who were to meet and present options for the President and Vice President for the upcoming year. Theresa Raftis stated that the nomination committee met and would like to nominate Mayor Smith as President, and Legislator Andreano as Vice President, the motion was seconded by Mrs. Cooney-Thrush, and unanimously approved.



Mayor Smith began the meeting by remarking on the recent passing of Sondra Fox, an esteemed member of the Board of Health from the time of her appointment in 1997 until her resignation on October 4, 2023. He stated that the BOH meeting was being held in her honor and a moment of silence was given.

Mayor Smith asked for a motion to approve the December 18, 2024 BOH meeting minutes. A motion was made by Leg. Andreano to approve the meeting minutes as presented, the motion was seconded by Ms. Raftis, and unanimously approved. Mayor Smith requested a motion to approve the Professional Advisory meeting minutes from October 16, 2024. A motion was made by Leg. Andreano to approve the Professional Advisory meeting minutes as presented, the motion was seconded by Ms. Raftis, and unanimously approved.

**DIRECTORS REPORT:** Dr. Watkins congratulated Mayor Smith and Leg. Andreano on their election. He stated that Mayor Smith who took the gavel after Dr. Bohan last year has really stepped up to the plate and has shown his dedication and insightfulness on health issues. He thanked him for a great first year, and stated he was looking forward to continuing working with him in 2025.

He also congratulated Leg. Andreano who has been an active member on the Board since 2020, He stated that she is the majority leader for the County Board of Legislators and serves as chair of the Human Services Committee. She has been a champion for public health issues and it has been great working with her as well.

He stated that he would also like to thank all of the Board members who have shown their dedication as board members, coming out, participating at the monthly meetings, and advising the department. He stated that the department could not do it without their support and he really appreciated all of them for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate on the Board.

Dr. Watkins stated that there were two action items that needed the Board's approval. First action item was the immunization fee schedule. He stated that the immunization fee schedule is presented each year due to the fluctuation in the cost of vaccines, and it is important to try to at least recoup the cost of the vaccines. He stated that there were several changes to the cost of vaccines in this year's proposed immunization fees compared to the 2024 approved immunization fees. A copy of the 2025 proposed schedule was shared with the Board members via email and a copy has been provided to those in attendance. He stated that there are (46) vaccines on the schedule. Based on actual cost, it is the departments recommendation that the fees of (32) vaccines be increased from last year and (6) vaccines be decreased. There are (8) vaccines whose cost remains the same as last years. He explained that a sliding fee scale has been created for patients who have no insurance or those who need to self-pay. This allows patients to be able to afford the department's services. The recommendation for the sliding fee scale is a (3%) increase over the actual cost. After sharing the information regarding the immunization fee schedule a motion was made by Dr. Chohan to accept the immunization fee schedule as presented, the motion was seconded by Ms. Raftis and unanimously approved.

Second action item: Dr. Watkins asked for the Board's approval to send before the County Legislature the department's 2024 uncollected debt to write off the department's accounts receivable books. He explained that the debt was sent to collections, but only less than (30%) of what is sent to collections is actually recouped.

The total amount to be written off is (\$6,076.65) this includes (\$2,668.00) for homecare, (\$3,089.78) for the clinic and (\$318.87) for family planning. The 2024 write off request is (\$4,869.51) lower than the 2023 approved write off, which was a total of (\$10,946.16). Leg. Andreano suggested that the fees for the Patient Review Instrument (PRI) and screens, which is a questionnaire assessment, and a NYS requirement for completion prior to entry into a nursing home or long-term care facility, be collected prior to the assessment. Dr. Watkins noted this request and stated he would see if the department could implement this going forward. After a discussion by the Board, many members felt that the amount being written off was a drop in the bucket compared to the revenue that is collected.

A motion was made by Dr. Chohan to send the write off request to the County Legislature, and request that they remove the 2024 debt off the departments account receivable books, the motion was seconded by Dr. Spigel and unanimously approved.

Dr. Watkins shared that a new Community Health Assessment (CHA), which is required by all Health Departments, is due to New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) by December 2025. He explained that the 2025-2030 CHA will be a joint effort once again with Olean General Hospital/Bradford Regional Medical Center, and the consulting group, Strategy Solutions, Inc. Local Health Departments and hospitals are encouraged to develop one assessment and one plan per county. He stated that by working together, it leverages the efforts and resources of the health organizations in a community toward shared health goals.

Dr. Watkins explained that the NYSDOH Prevention Agenda, which is NYS's Health Improvement Plan, is a tool for local health departments and hospitals to work from when developing their CHA, to identify strategies to improve the health of residents within their communities.

He went on to say that NYS's 2025-2030 Prevention Agenda outlines (24) key priorities to address health conditions, behaviors, and systemic issues such as poverty, education, housing, and access to quality health care. These (24) priorities were grouped into (5) social determinant of health domains; economic stability, social and community context, neighborhood and build environment, health care and quality, and education access and quality.

Dr. Watkins stated that there will be a 2025 community health needs assessment survey made up of social determinant of health questions. This survey will take approximately (5-10) minutes to complete and the completed surveys will be due back to the department by March 14, 2025. He stated he would send all board members a survey to complete.

Dr. Watkins updated the board on the bird flu, also known as H5N1, which is a type of influenza A virus that causes a highly infectious, severe respiratory disease in birds. Since 2022, there has been a wide geographic spread of this highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus amongst wild birds and poultry worldwide. He stated that the bird flu is carried by wild birds in their intestinal tract, the virus can be shed by these birds through various means, such as saliva, feces, and nasal secretions. The disease affects multiple internal organs with mortality up to (90% to 100%) in chickens within (48) hours. H5N1 virus amongst area's dairy cattle has been on the rise. Human cases of H5N1 avian influenzas occur occasionally, but numbers of human cases are increasing as well, but most importantly, it is difficult to transmit the infection from person to person. Mild signs and symptoms may include: a slight fever, (100 degrees) or greater, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, eye redness and irritation.

Dr. Watkins mentioned that a Westchester County park was recently closed due to suspicion of bird flu after (12) Canadian geese were found dead in a pond. Most human infections with bird flu have occurred after unprotected exposures to sick or dead infected poultry. He stated that if anyone must touch a sick or dead bird, they should wear gloves and a facemask. Place dead birds in a double bagged garbage bag. Throw away gloves and facemask after use. Wash hands well with soap and warm water. If someone has to milk their cows without gloves, they should also wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water.

Keep pets that go outdoors away from wild birds, poultry, and cattle and their environments, and prevent pets from eating dead birds or other animals. People should not prepare or eat uncooked or undercooked food or related uncooked food products, such as unpasteurized (raw) milk, raw cheeses, or beef from animals with suspected or confirmed HPAI A (H5N1) virus infection (avian influenza or bird flu).

Clinicians should contact NYSDOH laboratory to arrange testing for influenza A H5N1 virus. Collect recommended respiratory specimens using personal protective equipment (PPE). Consider starting empiric antiviral treatment (Tamiflu), and encourage the patient to isolate at home away from their household members and not go to work or school until it is determined that they do not have avian influenza A virus infection. Influenza antiviral post-exposure prophylaxis medication (Tamiflu) may be considered to prevent infection, particularly in those who had unprotected exposure to H5N1 virus infected birds or other animals.

The Health Department's family planning division is required to have an information and education (I&E) review committee, which the BOH members serve as. All materials distributed by the family planning division, print or electronic, made available to clients and potential clients, should be reviewed by the I&E committee. The Family Planning division would like to distribute two handbooks titled "The New Moms Handbook" and "My Pregnancy Handbook" to their clients. A copy of these handbooks was shared with those in attendance. Mayor Smith suggested that materials should be electronically sent prior to asking for approval but the discussion was that these books included a lot of material and may be difficult to send electronically. Dr. Bohan suggested that next time, books should be given out at the meeting prior to asking for approval so that members would have enough time to look them over. That being said Dr. Bohan made a motion to accept the handbooks for distribution, the motion was seconded by Ms. Raftis, and unanimously approved.

**ENFORCEMENT REPORT:** Mr. Porter presented the enforcement case from the administrative hearing that occurred on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 9:00AM, docket #25-001.

**Respondent:** Tiffany Graves-Decker (owner) Legends Bar & Grill, LLC., 19 Maple Avenue, Franklinville, NY 14737.

**Violations:** 10 NYCRR 14-1.190 respondent Legends Bar & Grill, LLC is operating without a permit from the CCHD.

Updated information provided to the Board that the owner Tiffany Graves-Decker did provide active workers compensation and disability insurance policies to Mr. Jordan, prior to the meeting. Therefore, a permit to operate was granted.

The Board held a discussion in light of this new additional information, Dr. Chohan made a motion to consider this case closed, the motion was seconded by Dr. Spigel, and unanimously approved.

**NURSING DIVISION REPORT:** Mrs. Schnell shared that the homecare census was currently (217). There were (83) admissions in December, of which (34) were readmissions, and (78) discharges were completed. For the month of January, there were (84) admissions of which (43) were readmissions, and (69) discharges were completed for the month.

Lead program update: In the month of December, there were (77) lead tests conducted, the highest elevated blood lead level (BLL) was a child with a BLL of (17.9ug/dl) [normal is < 5ug/dl], this level is down from (36.8ug/dl) in July of 2024; (1) child had a BLL of (6.5ug/dl), (1) child had a BLL of (6ug/dl), and (1) with a level of (5.6ug/dl), the remaining (73) children were (<5ug/dl).

In the month of January (96) lead tests were conducted, the highest BLL was (10.7ug/dl) a capillary retest the same day resulted in a BLL of (3.3ug/dl). Six children were between (9.1ug/dl) and (5.2ug/dl) and (89) children were (<5ug/dl). Total lead caseload is (67) children.

Dr. Spigel asked if anyone investigates the high lead sources of these results. Mrs. Schnell explained that an environmental health staff person is assigned to the home to investigate the source of the high lead. Typically, peeling paint is the source of lead that is found.

All staff assigned to the Salamanca office site at 69 Iroquois Drive has been temporarily moved to 4039 Route 219, Salamanca, NY. The site was inspected by a representative from the New York State Vaccines for Children (NYS VFC) program. The visit went smoothly and no concerns were noted. There will be another inspection once staff has returned to Iroquois Drive after the renovations are completed.

HIV testing; in December, there was (5) tests conducted in Olean; (0) in Salamanca and (1) in Machias, all results were negative. HIV testing; in January included (5) tests in Olean; (4) tests in Salamanca; and (2) tests in Machias, all results were negative.

In December, there were (7) rabies post-exposure vaccine series given, (6) due to a bat that tested positive for rabies and (1) stray cat scratch; in January there was (1) rabies post-exposure vaccine given due to a stray dog bite.

Communicable diseases: in December, there were (12) cases of Chlamydia; (1) case of Gonorrhea; (1) case of Hepatitis B not confirmed; (4) chronic cases of Hepatitis C; (1) case of strep. pneumo. invasive; (1) case of strep group B, invasive; (21) cases of influenza A; (2) cases of influenza B; (24) cases of RSV; and (12) cases of COVID-19; (1) case of pertussis in a sixteen-year-old; (1) case of yersiniosis; (1) case of campylobacteriosis; (13) cases of Lyme; (1) case of suspected anaplasmosis; and (2) cases of babesiosis.

Communicable diseases: in January, there were (5) cases of chlamydia; (1) case of syphilis; (1) case of salmonellosis; (2) cases of Hepatitis B; (1) case of chronic Hepatitis C; (1) case of strep group A, invasive; (1) case of strep. pneumo. invasive; (18) cases of probable Lyme; (1) case of anaplasmosis; (91) cases of influenza A; (40) cases of RSV; and (50) cases of COVID-19.

Dr. Chohan asked if the department was seeing an increase in the number of request for respiratory vaccines due to the rising cases of respiratory illnesses. Dr. Watkins responded that senior residents have been the largest number of recipients of the respiratory vaccines (COVID, Influenza and RSV) but the younger residents have been less receptive.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REPORT:** Mr. Ring shared that through the Lead Capacity Building Grant informational meetings are being held for contractors interested in doing lead abatement work. Classes have been scheduled for contractors in February and March for lead abatement and renovation, repair or painting (RRP). Currently staff is pre-screening for potential homeowner applicants that may benefit from the lead capacity grant once the application period has opened.

Dr. Bohan asked how many contractors are taking the classes. Mr. Ring replied that the classes can hold up to (16) people, and both classes are expected to be full.

The community development block grant was awarded to the Health Department in the amount of (\$500,00.00) for the years 2025-2026. The department have begun working through the administrative tasks. Once funding is released, the department will send out marketing flyers and notify residents on the waiting list or residents who has come to the department's attention as having a failed well or septic system and may qualify for this program. This program is also earmarked for households that fall into the low to moderate income category only.

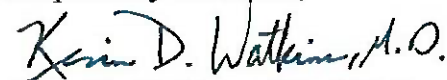
The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), who issues the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit, contracts with the CCHD to conduct routine annual inspections. These inspections include the review and inspection of existing septic systems that monitor over (1,000) gallons of sewage per day. Inspections are due by the end of March to ensure proper operation and maintenance.

**Old/New Business:** The BOH next meeting will be held at noon, on Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Smith reminded everyone that this meeting was held in the honor of Mrs. Sondra Fox.

A motion was made by Ms. Raftis to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Dr. Bohan and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin D. Watkins, M.D., M.P.H.  
Secretary to the Board of Health