



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

**MORGAN COUNTY BOARD OF
HEALTH MEETING MINUTES
May 15, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER:

At 8:00 a.m. President Elaine Flesher called the meeting to order. Mrs. Flesher welcomed today's guests and asked the Board members to introduce themselves.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mrs. Flesher with all participating.

ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Flesher called the roll as follows:

Rhonda Smith – Here; Dr. Julia Clemens – Here; Michael Huck – Here; Dr. Barbara Murrell – Here; Elaine Flesher – Here.

STAFF PRESENT:

Jeff Michaels, Administrator; Dr. Richard Clark, Health Commissioner; Lynn Mercer, Accreditation Coordinator; Jennifer Arnold, Director of Nursing; and Kim Foreman, Fiscal Specialist.

GUESTS:

Don Jones, State Representative; Steve Best, County Commissioner; Tom Jenkins, Chief of Police; John Finley, McConnelsville Mayor and Fire Chief; and Rick Welch, Prosecuting Attorney.

READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes of the April 17, 2025 Regular Session were reviewed. Dr. Murrell made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted and Mr. Huck seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Representative Jones shared that he has been very busy at the State House serving on various committees including Natural Resources, Finance, and Education committees. He has been at the table for budget meetings and the final version will be approved by the end of June. Mrs. Flesher stated that the health department has been experiencing budgetary issues with federal grants recently being taken away. She asked Mr. Michaels to elaborate.

Mr. Michaels thanked Representative Jones for attending today's meeting and Mr. Welch for



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

recommending the health department reach out to Representative Jones. Mr. Michaels stressed the importance of maintaining a competent public health workforce, but funding is needed to accomplish that. Recently, the health department lost an Enhanced Operations grant (EO23) that totaled over a million dollars.

Mrs. Fleisher stated the funding came from the CDC for infection control. With that money, the health department was able to correct some deficiencies in the building including adding touchless water faucets and toilets in the restrooms.

Mr. Michaels noted that prior to the funding cut, he had 16 staff members and now there are only 8 because some staff members were paid out of the EO23 grant. There was a new program approved by the State called "Morgan County Cares". The grant funds were to pay for the staff for that program. Now the program is on hold. The grant also paid for School Liaisons to do head lice checks and treatment, vision care and hearing assessments. Representative Jones asked when the grant money was lost. Mr. Michaels replied that it was cut off on March 23rd without advance notice. He further stated that he has heard that Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) funding may also be cut. Mrs. Fleisher stated that the PHEP program was initiated after 911 to prepare for large scale emergencies.

Representative Jones said that political officials who are not from Southeast Ohio do not understand the issues here. He asked if the health department has a levy. Mr. Michaels replied that he has tried to pass a levy twice and failed both times. Local financial support in Morgan County is not very good. The District Advisory Council (DAC) has not been willing to increase funds for the health department. Until a couple of years ago when they gave the health department a 3% increase, it had been 20 years since the health department had an increase in funds. At the DAC meeting in March, Mr. Michaels asked for a 6% increase, but the DAC refused to give any increase at all. With the loss of the grant funds, Mr. Michaels found it necessary to go to the Budget Commission and ask for help. The Budget Commission approved the 6% increase, which will begin in 2026. Dr. Clark noted that costs have gone up 12% over the last four years. Representative Jones asked what the health department's total budget is. Mr. Michaels stated the General Fund is \$300,000. That is supplemented by some grants such as the Tobacco Cessation grant, MRC grant, and Workforce Development grant. Those grants are reimbursable so funds must be available to spend before reimbursement is received. The money generated from fines and fees collected does not all stay with the health department. Some of that money has to go to the State.

Mrs. Fleisher stated that the health department recently became accredited and that is an expensive process as well. Representative Jones asked if that is through the Ohio Department of Health. Mrs. Mercer replied that it is through the Public Health Accreditation Board – a national organization.

Representative Jones said there is definitely disparities between counties. Unfortunately, most people don't know what the health department does. It takes a lot of educating the public. Some of his colleagues can't fathom that something like \$50,000 would make much difference to a county. He said he will talk to Senator Chavez and some other colleagues and see what can be done. He asked if Morgan County has WIC. Mrs. Fleisher said there is a WIC office, but it is run through Washington County. Representative Jones asked if there are doctors in the county. Mr. Huck replied that there are no practicing physicians in the county. Dr. Clark lives in Fairfield County. Dr. Murrell lives in Morgan County, but she is retired. The coroner is in Cincinnati. Representative Jones asked what dollar amount would make things easier. Dr. Clark said at least 30% more in funding. He said it is difficult to hire



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

good employees or keep them once they are hired because the health department can't afford to pay them enough.

Representative Jones reiterated that he would talk to his colleagues and see what can be done to assist with funding. Mrs. Flesher thanked him for coming. Mr. Michaels and Representative Jones exchanged phone numbers.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mrs. Flesher stated that she, Mr. Michaels, Dr. Murrell and Mrs. Mercer attended the County Commissioners meeting this week. She asked Commissioner Best what his take on the meeting was. Commissioner Best said he thought it was a good meeting. He feels it is all about communication and everyone needs to pull together in the same direction. Mrs. Flesher noted that she asked Mr. Michaels to schedule another meeting with the commissioners to clarify the 6% increase that the Budget Commission approved. She said Randy Williams (County Auditor) said it would not come out until 2026. Mrs. Flesher said she wants to emphasize that as an independent board, they would like the commissioners to refer people to the health department if they have questions regarding the health department. She said the Board of Health would never attempt to answer questions on behalf of the commissioners and they would expect the same courtesy if someone asked the commissioners questions about the health department.

Dr. Murrell asked Commissioner Best if he felt all of the commissioner's questions got answered. Commissioner Best said he did. He said he appreciated the health department coming to the commissioner's meeting and welcomed them to come anytime. Mr. Michaels said he understood that the commissioners felt slighted because they weren't given a heads up about the layoffs, but it was a very emotional time as he was trying to meet with the Board, staff, and labor attorneys to map out the layoffs. He honestly didn't think about the commissioners at that time.

Mr. Michaels asked if there is training for Township Trustees so they understand their role in financially supporting the health department. The trustee who attended this week's commissioner's meeting was off on his estimate of the cost of the 6% increase to his township. It will actually only be about \$79. Commissioner Best said the commissioners talked about that after the meeting and they came to the same conclusion.

Mayor Finley said he would like to discuss the building on Main Street that needs to be condemned. The building is owned by David Becker and he doesn't tend to take care of his properties. The property in question is actually four buildings all hooked together on 5th and Main. The building is unsafe. Sub-par construction, electrical and plumbing work has been done. There is no fire alarm system or firewalls. Mr. Becker transfers the deed from one LLC to another. A man from Franklin County just recently purchased the building. Mr. Becker gave him paperwork that wasn't accurate. Most of the apartments are not even habitable. Mayor Finley said he talked to a tenant that said rats are chewing on her furniture. Chief Jenkins said he knows that at least three apartments are currently occupied.

Mayor Finley said as Fire Chief, he has told his firefighters not to enter the building in the event of a fire because the building isn't safe. The engineer's report state that the building isn't safe. Slate is



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

falling off the roof and rotten boards are falling off the building. HUD won't rent to anyone there due to safety issues. People continue to rent there because they have nowhere else to go and are locked in to a one-year lease. Mayor Finley has contacted Jason Baughman with the Mid-East Ohio Building Department for assistance. Mr. Baughman is running it by his legal department to see if anything can be done. The mayor wants the building condemned. Prosecutor Welch said he would have to review the engineer's report, but it is possible that this constitutes abnormal dangerous conditions. If that's the case, it can be condemned. Mrs. Smith asked who is responsible for finding homes for the tenants if the building is condemned and who is responsible for the demolition costs. The mayor replied the individuals are responsible for finding their own homes. The owner would be responsible for the cost of demolition. Prosecutor Welch agreed that the owner would have to pay for demolition.

Dr. Clark said it sounds to him like all of the issues are structural. Prosecutor Welch stated that if the building is occupied, the Board of Health can consider it a public nuisance and condemn it as a danger to public health. They can evict the tenants and have the building razed.

Mayor Finley said 58 Oakwood Drive was condemned by the health department a couple of years ago. The guy moved out and sold it. People are living in it now.

Mrs. Flesher asked if the consensus is to have the Environmental department inspect for infestations or would the board prefer to make a motion to abate the nuisance. Prosecutor Welch said the property should be inspected first and the findings documented. A discussion took place regarding the authority of the Board of Health to condemn a building. Prosecutor Welch reiterated that if it is a matter of public health the Board is authorized to condemn the property.

Dr. Murrell made a motion to have the Environmental Department do an inspection of 86 W Main Street McConnelsville to corroborate the Engineer's Report. Mrs. Smith seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Michaels said another property that become an issue is 154 S. Kennebec. This property is owned by Community Action. There is an issue with trash, sewage, and plumbing at that location. Prosecutor Welch said the health department can order the tenants to evict and order the owner to abate the nuisance. They can be cited into court if necessary.

Dr. Murrell made a motion to have the Environmental Department do an inspection of 154 S. Kennebec McConnelsville. Mrs. Smith seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mrs. Flesher said an emergency board meeting could be held to address the issues after the inspections are completed.

Police Chief Jenkins said he has another property that needs to be looked at. The police department issued a search warrant for 137 ½ W. Liberty. The place was dirty, infested with bugs, and there were cat feces everywhere.

Dr. Murrell made a motion to have the Environmental Department do an inspection of 137 ½ W. Liberty McConnelsville. Mrs. Smith seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

Representative Jones said it might be a good idea for representatives of the health department to attend Township Trustee meetings and share a one-page summary of what the health department has been doing. People are not aware of things like these property issues that the health department does.

Commissioner Best said he wanted to let the health department know that the commissioners accepted a quote for a new fire alarm system for \$17,000. He also noted that the new siding installation should start soon.

Mayor Finley noted that he is also the EMS Chief so if the health department needs anything to please let him know. He shared that Jake Woodward is leaving the department to take a job in Columbus. Mr. Michaels said Jake has been very supportive of the health department and he will be missed.

Mayor Finley and Police Chief Jenkins left the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mrs. Flesher asked the Board if they would like to table the Virtual Meetings Policy draft discussion until the next meeting. The Board agreed to table the discussion.

EXPENSES AND BALANCES REVIEW/APPROVAL:

The Board reviewed the Expenses and Balances. Mrs. Foreman said she has been working on balancing with the county. Salaries, OPERS, Medicare, etc. are still out of balance. She is trying to get a print-out of just the health department's information. Currently the county can only print out a list of all county employees and their salaries. They do not want to share that information. Mrs. Foreman wants to see if they can manually pull out the health department information if they can't do it through their system.

Mr. Michaels noted that the County Commissioners reviewed the health department's expenses on Monday and asked why five "printers" were purchased. Those were actually badge makers and were purchased through the MRC grant to be shared with other counties.

Mrs. Flesher asked why the commissioners would be reviewing the health department's expenses. Commissioner Best said the Auditor's Office won't pay the bills until the Commissioners approve the expenses. Mrs. Flesher said the Board of Health has already approved it and it does not need to be approved by the Commissioners. She asked if they also review payroll. Commissioner Best said they do. Mrs. Flesher said the ORC says the expenses and payroll have to be sent to the Auditor's Office, but it doesn't say the Commissioners have to approve it. She and Mr. Michaels will look into this further.

Mrs. Smith inquired about different phone lines listed in the expense report. Mrs. Foreman explained that there are two cell phones that the Director of Nursing and the Environmental Department utilize in addition to the regular phone lines. It is a little over \$50 a month for each cell phone.

Dr. Clemens made a motion to approve the Expenses and Balances. Mr. Huck seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

BOARD ORIENTATION REVIEW AND CEUs:

Jennifer Arnold, the Director of Nursing, presented information on the MRC STTRONG grant. She explained what it is, what it does, and how someone can volunteer to assist. Mrs. Arnold said she currently has seven volunteers for the program.

Mrs. Smith asked what would happen when the grant expires at the end of May. Mr. Michaels said he may be able to get smaller grants to keep portions of the program going. “Stop the Bleed” and NARCAN distribution are important programs.

Mrs. Arnold shared information about the Ohio Buckles Buckeyes program. This program provides car seats and booster seats to income eligible individuals to reduce injuries and/or deaths. Education is provided to parents on how to install car seats and best practices for car seat safety. Health department staff will also do car seat checks if someone brings theirs in. Parents are taught to follow height and weight requirements for car seats/booster seats and to look for the expiration date on their car seat. If they have a car accident, by law the car seat must be replaced.

The Board thanked Jennifer for the information.

Commissioner Best said he had some good news. Heather Hill brought Mike Norman to the Commissioners meeting and shared that he is assessing needs in Morgan County to possibly build a medical building.

Representative Jones, Commissioner Best, Prosecutor Welch, Fiscal Specialist Kim Foreman, and Director of Nursing Jennifer Arnold left the meeting at 10:28 a.m.

ACCREDITATION REPORT: (handout)

HEALTH COMMISSIONER/MEDICAL DIRECTOR REPORT: (verbal)

Dr. Clark had nothing to report.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT: (handout)

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING AND EPIDEMIOLOGY REPORTS: (Handouts)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REPORTS: (Handouts)

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

At 10:29 a.m. Dr. Murrell made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion and/or compensation. Mrs. Smith seconded the motion.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

Roll call vote:

Mrs. Smith – aye; Dr. Murrell – aye; Dr. Clemens – aye; Mr. Huck – aye; Mrs. Flesher – aye

Dr. Clark left the meeting at 10:46 a.m.


The Board returned to regular session at 10:54 a.m. with no action taken.

Mr. Michaels inquired about the date for the next meeting. The third Thursday of June is Juneteenth.

Mrs. Smith made a motion to move the Board of Health meeting to June 12th due to the Juneteenth holiday. Dr. Murrell seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mrs. Smith made a motion to adjourn at 10:59 a.m. The next Board meeting will be held Thursday, June 12th at 8:00 a.m.



Elaine Flesher, President



Richard Clark, MD-HC, Secretary



Jeff Michaels, Administrator