



COUNTY OF DUTCHESS
BOARD OF HEALTH

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 20, 2026

The regular monthly meeting of the Dutchess County Board of Health was held virtually on Microsoft Teams and at the Dutchess County Department of Health (DOH), 85 Civic Center Plaza – Suite 106, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 on the above date.

PRESENT: Jeanean Aming, Psych. NP
Amy Cocina, MD
Alexander Cohen, MD
Laura Fil, MD
John Fallon, NP (Virtual)
David McNary, Vice President (Virtual)
Melissa Nelson-Perron, MD, President
Rachana Tyagi, MD

DOH STAFF: Livia Santiago-Rosado, MD,MPH, FACEP, DOH Commissioner
Anthony Ruggiero, MPA, Assistant Commissioner
Jenean M. Williams-Green (Virtual)

ABSENT: Lisa Kaul, Legislative Rep.

CALL TO ORDER: Dr. Melissa Nelson-Perron called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM – A quorum was declared. Motion to call the meeting order made by David McNary and seconded by Dr. Alex Cohen.

MINUTES: The minutes for January 15, 2026, were approved with no corrections. The motion was made by David McNary, seconded by Dr. Laura Fil and approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

Question #1 from Dr. Amy Cocina:

Dr. Cocina asked whether an online collaborative STI reporting form exists. Dr. Santiago explained that no online form is available and that laboratories and physicians are still legally obligated to report STI cases. She noted that for DOH, treatment details can be given verbally to public health advisors, who then complete the required documentation. Also mentioned that reporting delays often stem from local health departments lacking direct access to electronic medical records. She is advocating for state regulations that would require health systems to share EMR data with public health agencies to better support essential public health operations like infection control, conducting contact tracing, reviewing records for noncommunicable disease certifications etc.

Question #2: from Dr. Amy Cocina:

Orange County is no longer requiring providers to report latent TB, only cases with abnormal chest X-rays that may indicate active disease. Dr. Amy Cocina asked whether this practice is standard and noted that local colleges screen many high-risk students, including international students, and positive tests are not uncommon.

Dr. Santiago explained that primary care manages latent TB, and public health only becomes involved when there is active or suspected active TB. Active pulmonary TB is always under the local health department's responsibility. Latent TB is not reported or followed, except when the person is a contact of an active case—in those situations, public health ensures both the active case and exposed contacts complete treatment. Due to high case volume in 2024, the department limited follow-up to active TB and latent cases linked to known exposures. They also monitor some extrapulmonary TB cases, mainly to ensure they don't progress to pulmonary disease.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: Dr. Santiago reported on the following...

Restaurant Incentive Program: Dr. Santiago met with Jennifer Conflitti and obtained a full list of county restaurants. They plan to work with the sanitarians, who already have relationships with these establishments, to select a diverse group of restaurants—including different sizes, cuisines, and even food trucks for focus groups. The goal is to gather input from these businesses, discuss proposed rubrics, and bring that feedback back to the Board.

The Dental Health event is scheduled for Saturday, February 21st. The invite has been pushed out. Promotion has been strong, and about 35 people have already pre-registered, with capacity for around 200. Screenings take about five minutes and can handle two children at a time, so there may still be some waiting. Colgate will be providing supplies, there will be snacks, small giveaways, and cartoons playing in the auditorium while children wait.

Colorectal Cancer Screening: Discussed a potential project to expand colorectal cancer screening across Westchester, Putnam, and Dutchess counties. Dr. Santiago has a meeting with Vassar Brothers tomorrow to discuss next steps, and Northwell is already engaged on the Westchester side. A Colorectal Cancer Summit is planned for March, where representatives from all three counties will be on the panel. Much of the activity is driven by rising colorectal cancer rates in people under 45. Even though screening guidelines now start at 45, more cases are appearing in individuals in their mid-30s and early 40s. The goal is to explore ways to expand screening access for younger adults and strengthen education around when symptoms or family history should prompt earlier diagnostic evaluation. Briefly discussed the possibility of offering Cologuard to a younger population and the need for a plan to manage positive results, including follow-up testing, and hospital capacity.

Upcoming Fit Dutchess Stakeholders Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for this Friday, February 20th. Mentioned the planning of phase two of the Dutchess Youth Kitchen which will be a four-week pilot program in May. An incoming intern with instructional design experience may be able to help turn the program materials being developed into a full module that can serve as a toolkit for school districts—complete with recipes, activities, games, and ingredient lists—so teachers can implement the program independently.

Briefly mentioned the Public Health Innovation Lab (PHIL) program. One of the program's interns, who continued his work through the summer even beyond his academic requirements, is now authoring a publication based on his DOH experience. The paper is being co-authored with Dr. Santiago and Dr. Bradley, President of Vassar College, and reflects high-quality work the department is proud to support.

Another intern has been deeply involved in the dental health project. She compiled a comprehensive list of dentists in the county who accept Medicaid, and the finalized list may be ready for the upcoming dental health event.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT: Doug McHoul has resigned from the Board and has been replaced by Legislator Lisa Kaul, who represents District 6 in the Town of Poughkeepsie. She was unable to attend today's meeting but is enthusiastic about joining the Board and has a strong interest in health-related issues.

OLD BUSINESS:

Next steps with Chamber of Commerce: Dr. Santiago reported that once the focus groups are structured and scheduled, Board of Health members could support them by listening, helping facilitate, and reinforcing the broader community goals of the work. She will keep the Board updated as plans develop and share additional opportunities to participate.

2026 Public Health Partnership Awards: Just a reminder that the Board will hold a vote on the nominees received. Nominee submissions have been emailed to everyone to review prior to the March 19th meeting.

Question re: County Department of Transportation's survey: Dr. Amy Cocina asked about the transportation survey released by the County Department of Transportation and raised concerns about whether bus routes adequately serve hospitals and other healthcare sites. Anthony Ruggiero explained that Dutchess County's public transit operates as a hail-and-ride system. While there are designated stops, riders can be picked up or dropped off anywhere it is safe for the bus to pull over—including locations like doctors' offices—providing more flexible access than fixed-stop routes.

Dr. Santiago noted that Putnam County recently launched a micro-transit system using small vehicles that operate on demand—similar to a county-run rideshare—at standard bus fares. The service has increased ridership and interest despite higher operating costs. Hours run Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–6 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m., with low-cost ride options and monthly subscription plans for students, seniors, and riders with disabilities.

Dr. Santiago noted that transportation remains a major barrier to accessing healthcare and even basic needs like supermarkets, particularly in rural areas. She has discussed this with the Assistant County Executive and suggested inviting the Department of Transportation to give a presentation to the Board.


NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING: The next meeting will be on **Thursday, March 19th, 2026, at 4:00 pm.**

A motion was made by Dr. Rachana Tyagi to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. Amy Cocina, and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 pm.

Minutes signed by:



President/Vice President Signature



Jenean M. Williams-Green
Recording Secretary Signature

2026 EXECUTIVE POSITIONS FOR THE BOARD OF HEALTH

Dr. Melissa Nelson-Perron – President
David McNary – Vice President