



COUNTY OF DUTCHESS
BOARD OF HEALTH

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 18th, 2025

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
David McNary, Vice President
Melissa Nelson-Perron, MD, President
Rachana Tyagi, MD (Virtual)

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

ABSENT: Doug McHoul, 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.

MINUTES: The minutes for November 20, 2025, were approved with no corrections. The motion was made by Dr. Alex Cohen, seconded by Dr. Laura Fil and approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: Natasha McPherson, Public Health Education Coordinator, was invited to give an update on oral health projects the Department of Health is considering.

Dr. Nelson-Perron gave a brief recap of the 2024 Dental Health Initiative and the proclamation from former Mayor Marc Nelson proclaiming February Dental Health Awareness Month.

Natasha shared details about the Children’s Dental Health Day, which is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, February 21st, from 10 am to 2 pm at the Family Partnership Center. The Department of Health is partnering with Colgate to bring a mobile dental unit, aiming to screen 100 kids. Screenings take 3–4 minutes and include a brushing check and a report card for parents. Families will get referrals if needed. An intern from Vassar is creating a list of local dentists who accept Medicaid/Medicare and offer sliding-scale fees. Natasha mentioned having healthy snacks and possibly a movie in the

auditorium etc.. Partners include DOH, Colgate, Family Partnership Center, and hopefully the Board of Health. Natasha is also trying to reach out to the Dental Society of Dutchess County and plans to include Sun River Health. Will try and get Educational materials from the ADA, and Colgate will provide toothbrushes and dental care packets.

The event aligns with the NYS Department of Health Year 14 Prevention Initiative, which promotes fluoride varnish for children during routine pediatric visits. Previous initiative topics included “warming/cooling centers” and “walkability and bike-ability”.

John Fallon asked about age ranges for the Colgate van event and fluoride varnish application.

- **Colgate van event:** Children 12 and under.
- **Fluoride varnish:** For those under 18 but mainly ages 0–5 (baby teeth).

Dr. Santiago added that some of what the State Health Department discussed in earlier meetings was the importance of starting oral health early. Severe decay in baby teeth can lead to abscesses and affect permanent tooth development. In the past, fluoride varnish was a non-clinical step often done by teachers or school nurses.

The State would like Natasha to host a webinar or training for providers, and she will need assistance recruiting pediatricians and educating families about the program.

Dr. Cocina shared information about a recent study linking low maternal vitamin D levels during pregnancy to higher rates of cavities in young children.

The Feb 21st event is tentative until the county and Colgate sign an agreement, which is currently being reviewed by the County Attorney’s Office. The Family Partnership Center is holding the date. Everything needs to be finalized by Jan 9th for Colgate to proceed.

Reminder to reach out to Mayor Yvonne Flowers (City of Poughkeepsie).

New BOH Schedule: Board of Health meeting dates have been updated for 2026. There is no meeting the month of July. Will discuss the month of August as it gets closer.

Board of Health Vote (2026 President/Vice President): At the next meeting, we will vote on the 2026 President and Vice President positions—whether to keep the current officers in place or if anyone else is interested in the roles.

2026 Public Health Partnership Awards: Board members received the instructions for selecting the 2026 Public Health Partnership Awardee as well as the nomination form. Briefly discussed means of getting the word out (i.e.: the website, listservs like School Superintendents, public relations contacts for Mid-Hudson Regional and Nuvance, Dutchess Delivery etc.)

- **Proposed timeline:** Announcements via website, email etc. to go out early January. As nominations come in, vote in February. Presentation of the award - during Public Health Partnership week, which is the 1st week of April.

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

- **Health Fair:** The Health Fair date has been changed from April 11th to May 2nd and will take place at Dutchess Community College.
- **Budget Process:** The department's budget process is complete, and there were no major surprises or issues.
- **Grant Application:** The Department applied for Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant, which is worth \$1.6 million over five years. This was a major effort involving about 10 staff members working intensively for several weeks. The application required gathering multiple components, including letters of commitment from school districts and community organizations that will partner with us. The goal was to demonstrate strong community support for the initiative. A decision on the grant is expected in early February.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Remove president's report from the agenda.

OLD BUSINESS: Dr. Tyagi briefly reported regarding virtual attendance counting toward a quorum and malpractice coverage for volunteer physicians...

- *Concerning Resolution for Malpractice for Volunteer Physicians:* Counties may pay for volunteer physician programs, but it's unclear if they provide malpractice insurance. Current indications suggest no county funding for insurance. An alternative is through the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), which does provide malpractice coverage for its members. To be covered under MRC a physician must join the MRC. Membership requires signing up and completing orientation (courses are optional and not extensive). Wendy Cady oversees the MRC program. Dr. Nelson-Perron will reach out to Wendy to get more information on joining the MRC.
- *Concerning Resolution for Virtual Attendance:* During reference committee meetings, a physician from a northern county mentioned that their county uses a legal exception. Dutchess County's attorney does not think there is an exception in the law.

Dr. Nelson-Perron commented that communications have improved significantly, especially through the WhatsApp group, which helps in establishing a quorum early. The system has worked well for last-minute emergencies.

Both discussions will be removed from the agenda.

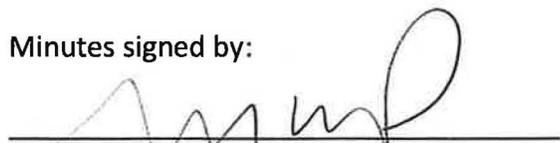
Chamber of Commerce Invite: Dr. Cocina enquired about prior discussions to invite the Chamber of Commerce President to a meeting. Dr. Santiago explained that the purpose for inviting them was to discuss the possibility of an incentive program for restaurants to offer healthier menu options (lower sugar, less processed, lower calorie density) without restricting existing offerings. Anthony Ruggiero will reach out to the Chamber of Commerce to invite them to a meeting.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT: No report at this time.

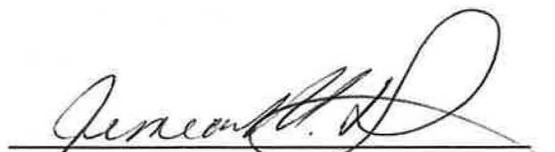
NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING: The next meeting will be on **Thursday, January 15th, 2025, at 4:00 pm.**

A motion was made by David McNary to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. Nelson-Perron, and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 pm.

Minutes signed by:



President/Vice President Signature



Jenean M. Williams-Green
Recording Secretary Signature

2025 EXECUTIVE POSITIONS FOR THE BOARD OF HEALTH

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