

Board of Health Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2026, 6:00 PM, In Person

Present: Chair, Dr. Darnell Young, Commissioner, Dr. Ada Fenick, Commissioner, Dr. David Cantonwine, Commissioner; Dr. Greg Gonsalves, Commissioner, Dr. Tamiko Jackson-McArthur, Commissioner, Dr. Alice Forrester, Commissioner

Absent: None

Staff: Maritza Bond, MPH, MDiv, Director of Health

Guest: None

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:17 PM by Dr. Darnell Young, Chair Board of Public Health Commissioner. A quorum was confirmed.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the October 8, 2025, meeting were presented for review. A motion to approve the minutes was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

III. Public Comments or Statements

The public portion of the meeting was open for comments or statements. No members of the public were present on Zoom or in attendance, and no comments were received.

IV. Updates: Maritza Bond, Director of Health

A. Health Administration Updates

Personnel Updates:

- Sanitarian vacancies remain ongoing. Several offers were extended; three candidates declined, including one individual who resigned on her first day back from maternity leave after accepting another position.
- Recruitment for Public Health Nurses remains active. Temporary agency staffing continues to support service coverage.
- The eligible list for the Bilingual Administrative Assistant position has been exhausted; the department is awaiting Human Resources approval for a new examination and certified list.
- The Lead Inspector position is vacant following the prior employee's departure to the fire department.
- Two offers have been extended under the Immunization Grant and are pending acceptance; recruitment continues for the remaining positions.

A motion was made to approve the personnel report, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Discussion:

Commissioners discussed ongoing workforce recruitment challenges and potential pipeline strategies, including partnerships with Southern Connecticut State University and a community college-to-BSN pathway. Director Bond noted that school nursing acuity requires experienced staff, while partnerships may strengthen longer-term workforce pipelines.

Administration, Funding, and Planning:

- The department implemented online payment capability for tobacco licensing and is transitioning additional licensing services to the City's online payment platform.
- The Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) are underway and anticipated for completion in January 2026. Finalized documents will be shared upon execution.
- Remaining ARPA funds are being finalized and will be used to advance and update the Workforce Development Plan to meet accreditation expectations.

B. Department Program Updates

School Nursing/Student Health Compliance:

- Pre-K influenza mandate efforts continue, with approximately 160 students remaining to achieve compliance.
- Compliance exceeds 90 percent for mandated grades (K, 7, and 10).
- Commissioners discussed statutory coverage requirements and how compliance applies across varying school infrastructures.

Health & Wellness Clinic/Service Capacity:

- The clinic reported more than 1,300 visits in 2025, nearly 1,400 total, with the majority of patients uninsured.
- A review of clinic billing and service options is underway to increase revenue and expand billable services.
- Director Bond noted preparations for potential increased demand should community health centers experience financial strain; the City and department have an existing memorandum of understanding for space previously discussed publicly.
- Clinic staffing includes a Medical Director, two APRNs, and nursing staff. Capacity can be scaled during peak periods, particularly around back-to-school.
- Commissioners discussed clinic capacity, average daily visit volume, and distinctions between clinician-required visits and nurse-driven services such as immunizations and PPD testing.

Epidemiology/Communicable Disease Monitoring:

- Routine surveillance and monitoring for infectious diseases and respiratory illnesses continue.
- No significant events were reported. Discussion included a surveillance item reflecting a dengue case and the importance of monitoring travel-related illness trends.
- Five active tuberculosis cases were reported; all individuals are compliant with treatment regimens, with no violations noted.

Health Programs/Overdose Prevention & Harm Reduction:

- The department reviewed overdose dashboards, including suspected overdoses, emergency department visits, monthly and annual trends, geographic distribution, demographics, naloxone distribution, and time-of-day patterns.
- Staffing updates included one staff member returning and another transitioning to a different role; a navigator vacancy is expected to be reported at the next meeting.
- A Harm Reduction Workgroup will convene this quarter, co-chaired by Director Bond and Carlos Sosa (CSA/Eliza), to share best practices and improve outcomes.

Injury & Violence Prevention:

- Highlights included participation in a college fair.
- Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training data and engagement were reviewed, with interest expressed in continued expansion, including engagement with a law school.

Ryan White Program:

- A site visit is scheduled for June 2026.
- The Program Manager will begin maternity leave soon; a transition plan is in place.
- Provider quality assurance performance remains strong, with no corrective actions for one locality and only minor actions elsewhere.
- Viral load suppression is approximately 95 percent.
- Expenditures are at 63 percent, with full expenditure anticipated by the fiscal year end in February.

Environmental Health:

- Nearly 99 percent compliance was reported among tobacco retailers.
- The Healthy Homes grant is sunsetting; grant close-out activities are underway, and no new funding opportunity is currently available at this time.
- Approximately 2,500 food inspections are required annually; sanitarian shortages continue to impact inspection capacity.

- Director Bond will present the department's tobacco retailer dashboard to Police Commissioner Ronnell Higgins and noted state-level interest in adopting streamlined approaches.
- Cannabis dispensaries are regulated by the state; the department's purview relates to tobacco retail compliance.

Emergency Preparedness:

Signature page updates and minor plan revisions were completed to align with accreditation requirements; no major operational changes were reported.

Communications:

- Nearly 99 percent compliance was reported among tobacco retailers.
- The Healthy Homes grant is sunsetting; grant close-out activities are underway, and no new funding opportunity is currently available at this time.
- Approximately 2,500 food inspections are required annually; sanitarian shortages continue to impact inspection capacity.
- Director Bond will present the department's tobacco retailer dashboard to Police Commissioner Ronnell Higgins and noted state-level interest in adopting streamlined approaches.
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Vital Statistics:

- A new short-form death certificate was implemented to preserve privacy when the cause of death is not required.
- The online appointment system continues to improve delivery service; staff performance was recognized.

C. FY27 Budget Planning Consideration

Director Bond summarized the City budget process (submission to OMB, Mayor review, and Board of Alders/Finance Committee hearings typically around March). The department requested targeted enhancements while maintaining a conservative request posture. More details will be shared once the mayor's review is complete.

Union negotiations: Fiscal year 2026 was noted as a year of entering labor negotiations; all department employees are unionized except the Director.

D. Accreditation and Strategic Plan Implementation Updates

Director Bond reviewed the department's Strategic Plan framework and confirmed progress on accreditation uploads (50%+). The Director proposed changing monthly reporting to a goal-aligned format tied to Strategic Plan objectives and community priorities (CHA/CHIP), while maintaining periodic communicable disease/surveillance reporting (e.g., every 3–6 months). The Board expressed support and interest in periodic surveillance updates.

E. Legislative and Policy Priorities

Director Bond shared that the 2026 legislative session begins in February (short session). She will bring forward department priorities through the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health and provide monthly updates. She noted she may reach out to commissioners for testimony based on expertise when relevant issues arise.

F. Executive Session

The Board entered Executive Session. During discussion in executive session, a motion was made by Dr. Young and seconded by Dr. Forrester to appoint Maritza Bond as Health Director. The motion was approved. The Board reconvened in regular session.

V. Old Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

VI. New Business

Commissioners discussed progress toward allowing Community Health Workers (CHWs) to bill statewide, including certification and state plan implementation considerations, and how this could support sustainable services and workforce capacity.

VII. Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2026. The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 PM. Chair Dr. Young moved to adjourn, and Dr. Forrester seconded the motion.

Action Items

Director Bond will send the Board a link to sign up for Yale Testing Center/listserv alerts regarding trends in substances identified in the community drug supply.

Lorraine Reed

Lorraine Reed
Administrative Assistant

January 12, 2026

Date

Approved:



Dr. Darnell Young, Chair
Board of Health Commissioners

January 12, 2026

Date