

**NORTHEAST TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES  
May 29, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Northeast Texas Public Health District Board of Directors was held on May 29, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., 315 North Broadway, Genecov Room, Tyler, Texas with the following present:

Board Members:	Laura Newsome, Chair	
	Jessica Bowen, MSN, R.N.	absent
	Kent Boozer, D.D.S., Sec.	absent
	Jeremy Butler	
	Cynthia Ball, D.O.	absent
	Scott Williams	
	Nancy Rangel	absent
	Pam Cunningham	
	Mike McCrady	

Chief Executive Officer:	George T. Roberts, Jr.	
Smith County Health Authority:	Valerie Smith, M.D.	
Chief Financial Officer:	Lawanda Owens	
Public Health Emergency Preparedness Director:	Russell Hopkins	
Immunizations/TB Program Director:	Sylvia Warren, R.N.	
Environmental Health Director:	Ginger Points, R.S.	
Community Outreach Director:	Terrence Ates	
Vital Statistics Director:	Rosie Meza	absent
Human Resources Director:	Dawn Strickland	absent
Interim Laboratory Director:	Amanda Catlin	
WIC Director:	Tecora Smith	absent
Legal:	Sharon Roberts	
Recorder:	Janie Jolly	
Guests:	Dr. Alaa Riha	absent
	Dr. Catherine Goetz	
	Dr. Liz Villalobos	
	Dr. Srishti Goel	
	Dr. Fariba Yazdanpanah	
	Alex de Ravel	
	Dr. Michelle Crum	
	Amna Elbadawi	
	Gracie Dickey	
	Jessica Sexton	

The meeting was called to order by Laura Newsome, Chair, at 5:04 p.m.

## **INVOCATION- PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the invocation was given by George Roberts.

## **HEALTH AUTHORITY REPORT**

Dr. Smith gave the Health Authority report to the Board. Dr. Smith updated the Board on the West Texas Measles Outbreak as of May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The outbreak counties are Cochran, Dawson, Gaines, Lamar, Lubbock, Terry, and Yoakum. There are 729 identified cases and 94 hospitalizations. Two deaths have been reported in unvaccinated schoolchildren. Dr. Smith reported that respiratory diseases such as COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV are trending downward. The rate of emergency department visits and hospitalizations are also trending downward, as well as deaths.

Dr. Smith spoke about Cyclospora, an intestinal parasite. Cyclospora is caused by contaminated water and food such as cilantro, broccoli, parsley, salad mix, raspberries, basil, snow peas, and lettuce. The clinical symptoms include diarrheal illness that lasts more than a few days, accompanied by severe loss of appetite and increased fatigue. The outbreak season typically runs from May-August. In 2024 there were 400+ cases in Texas.

Finally, Dr. Smith gave a COVID-19 vaccine update. She reported the announcement by HHS Secretary Robert Kennedy Jr., who recommends that the COVID-19 vaccine no longer be given to healthy children and pregnant women. Dr. Smith stated that this is the first time a vaccine recommendation has been released without ACIP guidance since its inception. There is a need for further clarification.

The Board thanked Dr. Smith for her presentation.

## **MINUTES**

Motion made by Mike McCrady to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2025, regular meeting; seconded by Jeremy Butler motion carried; approved as presented.

## **MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT**

For the month of April 2025, we had revenues of \$1,123,643, which was \$136,473 under budget. Expenses were \$1,158,459 which was \$135,851 under budget. Our net income for the month of April 2025 was \$34,816, which was \$622 under budget.

For FY 2025, we have revenues of \$8,269,211 which was \$80,423 over budget. Expenses were \$7,990,370 which was \$79,301 over budget. Our net income for the first 7 months of FY2025 was \$278,841, which was \$1,122 over budget.

Motion by Jeremy Butler to approve the April 2025 financial report; seconded by Scott Williams motion carried; approved as presented.

## **PRESENTATION: “EAST TEXAS WASTEWATER MONITORING PROGRAM**

Dr. Michelle Crum, PhD Administrative Lab Director, Public Health Lab of East Texas gave a presentation to the Board on an overview of The Wastewater Monitoring Program of East Texas. She began by discussing the Public Health Laboratory of East Texas, (PHLET), and the Laboratory Response Network, (LRN). The CDC funded LRN reference laboratory focuses on public health preparedness provided testing for agents of bioterrorism to clinical laboratories and law enforcement agencies serving 35 counties in East Texas. The PHLET Lab began wastewater surveillance of SARS CoV-2 in Fall 2021 to benefit population health of East Texans.

Large-scale wastewater surveillance can be used to help communities monitor infection dynamics for SARS-CoV-2 and other microbes of concern. PHLET began a pilot study in the Fall 2021. The data revealed that Clinical and Wastewater showed a consistent and predictive trend. The Wastewater Monitoring Program of East Texas now includes a dashboard with content pertaining to a dashboard platform, dashboard components, and dashboard utility.

Dr. Crum asked the question, “Why a Dashboard?” She stated that the dashboard is designed to make data accessible for public health leaders, community educators, and the general public. The dashboard overview contains a visual walkthrough with data filters representing region, virus, and time. There are trend lines and risk indicators and a summary table showing symbolic/categorical outputs.

Dr. Crum spoke about forecasting vision and future directions for Wastewater Monitoring. She stated that there is an INSIGHTNET Partnership within UT Austin Center for Pandemic Decision Science and a collaboration with UT Tyler Institute for Health Innovation, Data Science and Research. A pilot study will begin Fall 2025 to track Flu Clinical Data integrated with wastewater data for East Texas, Region 4/5.

Dr. Crum asked, “What’s Next?” She stated, that this includes expansion to new sites/pathogens, better integration with local response systems, opportunities for public feedback or education tool and finally, a flu forecasting hub partnership with UT Austin Center for Pandemic Decision Science.

Dr. Crum concluded her presentation by emphasizing NET Health’s role in the path forward. She commented on how the dashboard enables action, with the next steps being, outreach, media, and feedback loop. Dr. Crum said that NET Health provides vital leadership moving forward. Dr. Crum’s call to action is to share the dashboard. The role of NET Health and PHLET will be:

- Translate insights into public messaging
- Provide interactive features that will explain dashboard components
- Give timely updates for schools, clinics, physicians and community

- Provide health education

The Board thanked Dr. Crum for her presentation.

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT**

Mr. Roberts gave his report to the Board. Mr. Roberts thanked the Board for their participation and their attendance tonight. He then gave an update on the Fit City Tyler Celebration Event held at True Vine Brewery on May 20, 2025, and thanked Laura Newsome for attending. He stated that the event was very successful, from the great event venue to great sponsors. Mr. Roberts stated that 4 individuals came forth to give their personal weight loss testimony which was very impactful. Prizes were awarded to individuals losing various percentages of weight, with the grand prize being \$5,000. Approximately 1,000 people weighed in and of that number, 61% weighed out, with over 5,000 pounds of weight being lost!

Mr. Roberts spoke about the upcoming Doc Ballard Award nomination/presentation. He ask for two volunteers from the Board to be on the selection committee for this year's Doc Ballard Awardee. Jeremy Butler and Dr. Mike McCrady volunteered.

Mr. Roberts concluded his report by acknowledging Alaa Rijan and Catherine Goertz, both graduating from the UT Tyler Preventive Medicine Residency Program.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The regular meeting of the Northeast Texas Public Health District Board of Directors adjourned at 6:27 pm, and Laura Newsome, Chair, stated the Board would immediately convene in Executive Session. Any vote or action taken will be made when the Board returns to open session.

The Board reconvened in open session at 6:43 pm, and Ms. Newsome stated that no action was taken in Executive Session.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

**THE NEXT NET HEALTH BOARD MEETING IS TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 2025.**



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Jamie Jolly, Recorder



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Kent Boozer, Secretary  
NET Health Board of Directors