

Monroe County Board of Health (BOH) Meeting Minutes -June 1, 2026

111 Westfall Road, Room 964, 3:30-5pm

Minutes

BOH in Attendance		DPH Attendance
Theresa Green	Rashid Muhammad	Marielena Vélez de Brown
Emma Forbes-Jones	Sarah Fletcher	Meaghan McDermott - Zoom
Erin Graupman	Dina Johnson	Tarilynn Forney
Celia McIntosh		Mel Schwartz
Linda Clark		MCDPH: Bridget Cook Guests: Tracy Jong, Adam Cavalier
Mike Weston		

The meeting was called to order by Theresa Green at 3:34pm.

Introductions and General Announcements

President Green welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the academic year. There will be no board meetings in July and August and the next BOH meeting will take place on September 14, 2026.

Review and Approval of Minutes

May minutes were approved without changes by a motion brought forth by Celia McIntosh and seconded by Dina Johnson. Unanimous approval.

Clean Indoor Air Act Exemption Application to the Board of Health Vote

- The board heard a variance petition from Havana Moe's Cigar Lounge LLC pursuant to Monroe County Sanitary Code §569-52.5. The Applicant seeks a variance to permit indoor smoking at the cigar bar at 125 East Ave Rochester, NY 14604 following a potential change of ownership.
- **Discussion and Vote by board members.**
Theresa Green made a motion to Approve the Application with Conditions as written which was seconded by Rasid Muhammad. Five board members voted in favor, while three board members voted against the motion. The motion passed and the variance was granted with conditions.

Commissioner's Report – Dr. Marielena Vélez de Brown

- Dr. Vélez de Brown announced the New York State budget has passed. The Healthy Neighborhood Program was retained in the budget along with 3 full time positions in the county.

- Dr. Vélez de Brown discussed the Ebola outbreak that is mostly occurring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda. Uganda reported 5 confirmed cases and one death. The DRC reported 119 suspected deaths, 10 confirmed deaths and more than 900 cases. Ebola has a 50% death rate. It's affecting 20–40-year-olds with 2/3 being women. Sociological reasons include the close proximity of women to persons dying of Ebola and the preparations of bodies for burial. Ebola is unlike an air-borne disease and one must come into contact with blood or bodily secretions to be infected. Two people have returned to Monroe County from Uganda and were determined to be very low risk, no quarantine required. PCR testing for Ebola is required due to symptoms overlapping with Malaria. Two hospitals in New York are designated as Ebola Treatment facilities -Bellview Hospital in NYC and Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY. At this time EMS staff do not have the equipment to properly protect themselves and the ambulances from Ebola, were a case to come to Monroe County, and there are currently no grants for training and equipment,
- Dr. Vélez de Brown stated, from an infection control standpoint, the FIFA World Games in Toronto, Canada pose a much closer concern for measles transmission due to many unvaccinated people traveling. The Monroe County Public Health website has credible resources on all infectious diseases. It was requested, for transparency, to add information on Ebola for public knowledge and the Commissioner agreed.
- Dr. Vélez de Brown discussed how the Environmental Health (EH) department inspections for Children's Camps, Temporary food vendors and Rabies is at peak season from now until the snow falls. EH evaluated 1,800 cases of potential Rabies exposure last year, and follows strict guidelines for post-exposure prophylaxis. Rabies cases are referred to the Wilson Center and Rochester Regional for treatment. The EH department has recently had one retirement and two full-time positions vacated by employees who took positions with the State. This is a difficult time to be short staffed.
- Dr. Vélez de Brown shared positive news regarding the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) deployment at the Rochester City School District. A positive meeting between our Epidemiology team and RCSD resulted in deployment during Social Studies classes before the end of the 2025-26 school year. We are looking forward to the final report that summarizes all data. Future YRBS's will contain questions about new nicotine pouches like ZYN.

Rochester Food Policy Council Presentation

Aidan Lebacher-Smith: Chief of Staff at FoodLink

Nathaniel Mish: Chair of Rochester Food Policy Council

- Presenters described a quality food system as farm to fork, dirt to dirt. A sustainable and visible healthy food system encompasses the goals of social equity and human health, economic vitality, and environmental health. The Food Policy Council is collaborative of community members and stakeholders to rethink past institutional approaches to food

systems by centering resident voices in decision making. Residents are “context experts” and the council meets community members on their terms.

- Administrative members of the Rochester Food Policy Council (FPC) consist of FoodLink, Common Ground Health and the City of Rochester. Members attend full FPC meetings, engage community and communicate work, prioritize issues and identify/advocate opportunities for change.
- FPC policy goals are to advocate for institutional changes to support an equitable food system.
- FPC projects include supporting organizations and individuals filling a gap or meeting an immediate need.
- FPC partnerships bring together different individuals and groups who might not otherwise be connected.
- Priority areas for the FPC are 1. Municipal plans and policies 2. Urban agriculture & community gardens 3. Youth food and programs.
- During summer, FPC partners with FoodLink, RCSD, Summer Meals and the City of Rochester to assure year-round meal access for children. Rochester city residents are the 5th poorest in the nation, 2nd highest child poverty rate in the US at 46%. 18% of children in Monroe County are deemed food insecure. 89% of RCSD children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The Summer Meals program reaches less than a quarter of students who participate in free/reduced meals during the school year. Summer Meals are free breakfast and lunch for ages 2-18. No paperwork is required. The meals are funded by the USDA and NYS Education Department.
- Thousands are losing SNAP benefits from recent federal changes to the eligibility requirements. Go to: [SaveMySNAP.org](https://www.savemy SNAP.org) and visit the new “Find Food Near Me Map” on the [FoodLink.org](https://www.FoodLink.org) website and visit [SummerMealsRoc.org](https://www.SummerMealsRoc.org) or call 211 for further help.

Board of Health Membership status

- Sarah Fletcher’s appointment runs until 08/31/2026, although many commented that didn’t seem accurate. Theresa will check and reach out to the mayor’s office for reappointment. Theresa Green and Erin Graupman memberships will expire in fall 2027.
- A motion was made by Emma Forbes-Jones to close the meeting which was seconded by Mike Weston and approved unanimously.

Next meeting: September 14, 2026. 111 Westfall Road CR964