

ERIE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
September 15, 2026

PRESENT: Robert Free, Vice President, Food & Beverages, Bisons
Gale Burstein, M.D., Erie County Commissioner of Health
Marilyn Tuberdyck, BOH Member
Dolores Funke, BOH Member
Dino Marrocco, BOH Member
Robert Kaplan M.D., BOH Member

GUEST: Danielle Rovillo, Health Equity

REVIEW OF MINUTES May 5, 2026

Rob motioned to approve the minutes – minutes approved.

I. Food Policy Council

a. Overview

- i. Danielle Rovillo from the Food Policy Council provided an overview of the Council and its ongoing initiatives.
- ii. The Food Policy Council is a subcommittee of the Erie County Board of Health and has been affiliated with the Board for approximately 12–13 years.
- iii. The Council is connected to the Board through the Erie County Sanitary Code.
- iv. Its mission is to promote and support food equity throughout Erie County.
- v. The Council's work is supported through grant funding.

a. Current Initiatives

- i. The Council highlighted a new initiative designed to help residents locate fresh food resources within the community. This effort is connected with Erie Grown, which maintains an interactive map of local farmers markets, farm stands, and other fresh food resources to improve access to healthy foods across the county.

b. Food Allergen Discussion

- i. The Council discussed concerns regarding severe food allergies, particularly peanut and soy allergies, and the potential risks associated with airborne allergens at public events.
- ii. A recommendation was presented to encourage event organizers and permitted food vendors to provide allergen disclosures whenever food is being served. While no formal action was taken, the discussion emphasized increasing public awareness and improving safety for individuals with severe food allergies.

c. State of the County Address

- i. The Commissioner highlighted several public health initiatives mentioned during the County Executive's State of the County Address.
- ii. Two county food-related initiatives were recognized as priorities.

- iii. A legislative request has been made for approximately \$1 million to continue supporting the county's preschool initiative.

I. Commissioner's Update – Dr. Gale Burstein

The Commissioner provided several public health updates:

- a. Respiratory Illnesses
 - i. The 2025–2026 influenza season has concluded, and masking requirements for staff have ended.
 - ii. Influenza activity has declined significantly within Erie County; however, pediatric influenza-related deaths continue to be reported across New York State.
 - iii. The remaining influenza cases are primarily Influenza B.
 - iv. Erie County experienced elevated RSV activity throughout the winter and spring months. Due to continued transmission, the RSV vaccination period was extended through April 30.
- b. Meningitis
 - i. Health officials are monitoring an unusual strain of meningitis (referred to during the meeting as "Meningitis Z").
 - ii. The Erie County Department of Health is working closely with the New York State Department of Health, which has developed a new diagnostic test for the strain.
 - iii. At this time, no vaccine is available.
- c. Opioid Surveillance
 - i. Both fatal and non-fatal opioid overdoses continue to decline within Erie County.
 - ii. It was noted that changes in the local drug supply may be contributing to this trend, although additional monitoring is ongoing.

I. Other Business

- a. An issue regarding the Board of Health Ethics Form was discussed. Additional follow-up will occur as needed.
- b. Next Meeting
- c. The next Erie County Board of Health meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2026.