

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

PORTSMOUTH

Health Department

Charting a Course for Good Health

Portsmouth Health Department
1701 High Street, Suite 102
Portsmouth, VA 23704
(757) 393-8585
FAX: (757) 393-8027

Kavita Imrit-Thomas, DO, FACP, FIDSA,
FAIHM, AAHIV, Dip in Obesity Medicine
Health Director

WIC PROGRAM
1701 High Street, Suite 102
Portsmouth, VA 23704
(757) 393-5340
FAX : (757) 673-2018

Portsmouth Community Health Advisory Council

Wednesday, April 23, 2025
12:00pm – 2:00pm

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions:

Dr. Melody Armstrong, DNP, called the meeting to order and introductions were made of all members present in the room or online.

Members Present:

Member	Organization
Dr. Melody Armstrong, DNP	Norfolk State University
James Overton	Portsmouth Civic Leagues
Ray Smith	Portsmouth Civic Leagues
Gina Harris	City of Portsmouth Resilience Officer
Amy Paulson	Healthy Portsmouth Coalition
Avanti Allen-Benson	Portsmouth Health Department
Dr. Kavita Imrit-Thomas, DO	Director, Portsmouth Health Department
Dwight Richards	Portsmouth Health Department
Stephen Williams	Portsmouth Health Department
Michelle Winz	Portsmouth Health Department
Lee Dear	Community Member
Johnita Coston	Asst. Portsmouth City Attorney
Dr. Cynthia Burwell,	Norfolk State University
Rev. Suzanne Stierwalt	St. Andrew Lutheran Church

Review and Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the January 15th, 2025, meeting were reviewed, and amendments were made to correct a minor error. Amy Paulson motioned to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Gina Harris. The motion passed unanimously.



Impact of Federal Funding on Public Health

Dr. Imrit-Thomas presented the impact that federal funding cuts are having on the agency and the status of other grants under consideration. All discretionary spending is currently paused. Mrs. Allen-Benson reported that with the loss of staffing, current staff members have stepped up to fill the gap and continue to serve the community. Impacted programs include disease control and tobacco cessation.

Other areas impacted by the federal cuts include the loss of several CDC resource websites and availability of printed materials.

Civic league representatives suggested that the community needs to be informed about the impact of the federal cuts on the health department and the city even as increased demands for services are expected through the summer and fall seasons.

Harm Reduction Efforts & Partnerships

Michelle Winz presented current harm reduction efforts and some associated results. Overall, substance overdose deaths for 2024 have gone down, compared to 2023. This work is inclusive of the efforts made by the Peer Recovery Specialist and Overdose Prevention Coordinator.

Biennial Board Nomination/Vote

The biennial voting of officers was conducted. James Overton motioned to nominate Dr. Melody Armstrong and Rev. Suzanne Stierwalt counsel chairperson and vice chairperson, respectively. The motion was seconded by Ray Smith. All members, present and not employed by the Portsmouth Health Department, voted and unanimously to approve the motion. Their two-year term will be effective at the start of the next quarter, July 1, 2025.

Old Business:

Accreditation Finalized

Dwight Richards presented the final decision and plaque from the Public Health Accreditation Board. The accreditation is good for the next five years with annual reports due each year.

Follow-up/Reports:

Ray Smith reported a coalition of 15 of 39 civic leagues across the city agreed to work together to better represent the voices of the community.

Dr. Imrit-Thomas reported that Portsmouth City Manager will be hosting a Government 101 series aimed at educating citizens about the various city departments and the work they do.

Portsmouth Health Department – Internal Use Only

Reverend Stierwalt announced the National Day of Prayer event scheduled for City Park on May 1, 2025.

Amy Paulson reported on activities involving the Healthy Portsmouth Coalition, including the Bon Secours imaging center that was scheduled to be open in early May. Healthy Portsmouth have conducted about 900 blood pressure screenings to date. A regional Stop Syphilis conference is scheduled for April 29, 2025, at ODU student center. Healthy Portsmouth Faith-based Coalition is seeking faith partners.

New Business:

PCHAC By-Laws Review (Tabled)

Members

Next Meeting:

100:00 am – 12:00 pm

July 16, 2025

Next Meeting:

The next council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 16th, 2025.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at: 2:04pm.