

Talking Points on Proposed Environmental Health Charter Change

Background: The Department of Environmental Health was created through a Charter amendment in 1996 precipitated by a change in state law that made Denver General Hospital and its' clinics an independent entity, the Denver Health and Hospital Authority. The new department was assigned many health-related functions previously housed under the former Department of Health and Hospitals. DEH and DDHA split public health duties, with DEH having responsibility for regulatory health functions like food safety inspections, animal control and coroner and DHHA managing public health services like medical investigation of disease, immunization clinics and disease control. DEH acts as the county public health entity and is designated as the official public health agency for the county through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The City contracts with DHHA annually through an Operating Agreement for their services.

The name "Department of Environmental Health" has sometimes been misleading to the public and partner entities. It does not adequately convey the public health responsibilities of the department. Through conversations with partners including DHHA, we have determined it is in the City's best interest to update the department name to better reflect the duties.

Two Changes being proposed:

- Change of Department name to Department of Public Health and Environment
 - Clearly identifies for the public and other partners which city agency addresses public health regulation
 - Better aligns with other county departments and the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment
 - Better reflects the regulatory duties of the department
 - Ensures opportunities to pursue funding streams related to public health functions under our purview

- Expand Board from 5 positions to 9
 - Issues under the department's purview have expanded in number and complexity over time requiring broader perspective
 - Additional seats will improve diversity of appointments to allow for a wider array of expertise in board subject matter
 - Aligns with other peer communities of our size
 - Addresses challenges with meeting quorum

These changes will not remove, change or add any powers or duties and are essentially clean-up/best practice items.