

Series 390: Board of Health Records, 1929-1991 (gaps)

By Gloria Walters, 2016

9 cubic ft. Arranged chronologically for subseries 1 and 2; alphabetically for subseries 3 and 4

Background

With the passage of New York State Public Health Law 20-b in 1929, counties in New York State were to receive state aid for establishing health districts. On December 23, 1929, the Westchester County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to establish the Westchester County Health District, and all village and town boards of health were abolished. Initially, all city-level boards of health (White Plains, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle and Yonkers), were kept intact, pending consent by the local officials to join the County Health District. With final certification from the State Commissioner of Health, the Committee on Budget and Appropriation recommended the establishment of a County Board of Health to oversee the new Health District, passed a resolution to appropriate \$50,000 for the District, and was instructed to request state funding. A six member board was appointed, with Herbert C. Gerlach, a member of the Board of Supervisors, as *ex officio*.

The Westchester County Board of Health held its first meeting on January 7, 1930. George J. Werner was elected Chairman of the Board, and Dr. Matthias Nichol Jr. appointed Health Officer (see Highlights of Minutes, Box 26). In early years, meetings addressed administrative matters such as appointments, staffing and budgets. Later meetings saw the enactment of resolutions, regulations, adoption of codes, and dealt with various public health issues. Two major codes were passed during the years covered by this collection. At the April 7, 1932 meeting, the Board of Health passed the Westchester County Sanitary Code, which set standards for the enforcement of the state sanitary code in the County. On July 12, 1979, "Article 20: Anti-Smoking-Clean Indoor Air," was adopted.

Appointments of all Commissioners of the County Department of Health and Health Officers, their attendance at meetings, and presentations to the Board are documented in this collection. A notable Board member was Nelson A. Rockefeller, then future governor of New York, who served on the Board from 1933 to 1952. As of 2016, the Board of Health has 13 members.

Scope and Content Note:

The Westchester County Board of Health collection covers the years 1929 through 1991 and consists of four subseries: Original Minutes, Minutes and Background Materials, Administrative Records, and Anti-Smoking Code. The collection documents the efforts of the Board of Health and the Westchester County Department of Health to develop effective policies and enforce health laws and regulations. Subjects and topics in this series include preventive care, population health issues such as community health, child health, infant mortality, epidemics, diseases and morbidity, animal control, sexually transmitted diseases, vaccinations, food hygiene, mental health, air pollution, health education, smoking, legal rulings, building

standards, and nursing and hospital programs. Types of materials found in this collection include minutes and agendas, narrative reports, budget reports, resolutions, correspondence, letters, petitions, legal opinions, newspaper articles, a small number of photographs, and hearings reports on violations of the Westchester County Sanitary Code.

Please note: Several items (primarily in the Administrative Records subseries) are restricted.

Subseries: Minutes (1930-1988)

This subseries contains the original signed minutes of the Westchester County Board of Health, as well as proceedings of annual meetings, agendas, resolutions, budget reports, and annual and narrative reports. Minutes were signed by the Deputy Commissioner or the Secretary of the Board, and absentee members from Board meetings were noted. The minutes are filed chronologically by meeting date, and were assigned a meeting date number. Gaps in meeting date numbers appear in the 1960s and 1970s. Beginning in 1973, resolutions were filed separately in folders, and materials were filed in reverse chronological order.

Subseries: Minutes and Background Materials (1968-1991)

This subseries includes copies of minutes (occasionally signed), copies of court hearing officers' reports, inspections, investigations of complaints against violators of the sanitary code, agendas and resolutions. Hearings in folders may not match a list that appeared on the agenda. The names of respondents in sanitary cases were published in local newspapers. Beginning in 1975, attendance records of Board of Health meetings can be found before the January folder. Folders were labeled "Board of Health Minutes and Hearings" in 1989. The Office of Annual Affairs and Bureau of Disease Control provided monthly morbidity reports to the Board in 1990 that illustrate concerns on population health. Anti-smoking in the workplace and clean air issues are mentioned in this subseries.

Subseries: Administrative Records (1929-1987) [Restricted folders in Boxes 26 and 27]

This subseries consists of materials maintained by the Westchester County Board of Health to administer policies and programs. Files on local health boards that were abolished following the establishment of the County Health District are included, as well as committee reports, correspondence and memoranda, appointments, budget reports, departmental reports from the County department of health and other agencies, legal matters, and information on neighborhood health centers in the county. A summary of the minutes can be found in the folder "Highlights of the Westchester County Board of Health Minutes from 1929-1980" (Box 26).

Subseries: Anti-Smoking Code (1977-1984)

This subseries contains materials generated by the Board Committee, with oversight in the adoption and execution of an anti-smoking code for Westchester County, and later revisions of the code, Article 20: Anti-Smoking-Clean Indoor Air. Revisions and amendments to the Smoking Code included requests for variances from the smoking code. William C. Schraft Jr. was the Chairman of the Smoking Revision Committee of the Board of Health. Types of items in this subseries include petitions, letters for and

complaints against the code, drafts of the smoking code, brochures prepared for dissemination of the code to companies, restaurants, public and government facilities, news releases, newspaper articles on the final amendment, and background and support materials from other counties that adopted a smoking code. The box storing these items was labeled "Smoking," and was not part of the Board of Health accession.

Related Series: **Series 145**, Board of Supervisors Proceedings, 1772-1969; **Series 147**, Board of Legislators Proceedings, 1970-1988, 1990-2007; **Series 197**, Health Department Annual and Statistical Reports, 1930-1988 (gaps); **Series 198**, Health Department Publications, 1930-1941, 1955; **Series 199**, Environmental Health Services Annual Reports, 1960-1973; **Series 208**, Sanitary Sewer Commission Annual Reports, 1930-1932.