

**KITSAP PUBLIC HEALTH BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
November 1, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Mayor Greg Wheeler at 12:33 p.m.

Chair Wheeler acknowledged that the Kitsap Peninsula is home of sovereign Indian nations, namely the Suquamish and Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribes.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Mayor Rob Putaansuu moved and Commissioner Rob Gelder seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the October 4, 2022, regular meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

The November consent agenda included the following contracts:

- 2221 Amendment 1 (2298), *Kitsap County Prosecuting Attorney, Legal Services*
- 2233 Amendment 1 (2295), *Kitsap County, GIS Services*
- 2289, *Tetra Tech, COVID-19 After Action Review (AAR) and Improvement Plan (IP)*
- 2296, *Olympic Educational Service District, Head Start*

Mayor Putaansuu moved and Member Drayton Jackson seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda, including the Contracts Update and Warrant and Electronic Funds Transfer Registers. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Young, a resident of Bremerton, approached the board regarding her concerns about St. Michael Medical Center (SMMC). Ms. Young stated SMMC temporarily lost accreditation and said the Joint Commission posted to their website a list of 39 areas that need correction before SMMC receives accreditation again. She said the list includes infection control, staffing, and safety and maintenance of equipment, among others. She said she hopes these issues are resolved in a timely manner. Ms. Young stated that we have one hospital in our county and said it has to succeed. Under the current circumstances, she said she doesn't feel comfortable or safe going to SMMC.

Kelsey Irby said she is the emergency department charge nurse that made a phone call to CENCOM on October 8th that got a lot of publicity for requesting help from the fire department for an overwhelmed emergency department. She said, "We are not okay at the hospital. Nurses are not okay. Staffing is not okay. Patients are not okay." She said the current situation is a source of never-ending frustration for staff, patients and doctors. She said the situation at SMMC is currently incredibly unsafe. Ms. Irby said the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) have been onsite and thoroughly investigating downtime procedures. She offered to provide additional information to the board for boots on the ground information and said she is working

toward making the hospital better. Lastly, she added that she was asked to speak on behalf of the staff.

Robert Jennings said he would like to address health options on the Kitsap Peninsula. He said some concerns were brought to his attention by the Kitsap Sun article that quoted the Central Kitsap Fire Chief about emergency room delays and the excessive amount of time it is taking at the hospital for fire and EMS to turn over patients to the hospital for care. Since then, he said he has come across information anecdotally. He said SMMC, being catholic oriented, is not able to manage end of life care wishes or certain maternity care. He said an acquaintance shared that their spouse was in the hospital with do-not-resuscitate (DNR) paperwork in place and the spouse was asked to leave the room. When they returned there was obvious evidence of lifesaving care being provided in direct contradiction to the DNR. Mr. Jennings said he is concerned and would like to hear the Health District's options on what other care might be available to Kitsap County that is secular in nature.

There were no public comments.

HEALTH OFFICER/ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Update:

Mr. Keith Grellner, Administrator, informed the board that Kitsap Public Health District is preparing for strategic planning. He said the Health District's previous strategic plan was developed in 2011, updated in 2016 and ended in 2021. Mr. Grellner said that, as the agency moves out of pandemic work, it is looking to start the strategic planning process again. He said board members will receive an email from Siri Kushner around November 14 with a survey to solicit input and provide an opportunity to volunteer to participate in the strategic planning process. He reminded the board that the strategic plan will go to the full board for approval.

There were no further comments.

Health Officer Update:

Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer, thanked the public commenters for their input and said he knows it was difficult to work as a charge nurse, especially over the last 3 years. He said he will add more to that topic during that item on the agenda.

Dr. Morrow gave a presentation that covered Ebola awareness and plans, respiratory viral illness and pediatric service strain, COVID-19, monkeypox and some recent developments in the Health District.

First, Dr. Morrow gave an overview of the current Ebola situation in Uganda. There have been at least 4 travelers from that region who have traveled to Washington State and are being monitored by public health, though none are located in Kitsap County. He said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been hosting information calls and preparing providers for a potential Ebola outbreak. Kitsap public Health has attended CDC, DOH and Northwest Health Response Network updates and is meeting internally to review current plans.

Next, Dr. Morrow provided an update on respiratory illness. He said respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity is extremely elevated compared to 2016-2017, which was a bad flu season. He said high levels of RSV are impacting hospitals across the country and in Washington State. He encouraged everyone to get their family's vaccinations, especially flu shots, up to date as soon as possible. He said immunizations in Kitsap have taken a hit since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Next, Dr. Morrow said COVID-19 is transitioning from pandemic levels to epidemic levels. He said endemic levels are flat and steady with some bumps or spikes in levels. The Governor's state of emergency declaration expired at midnight on October 31, which has resulted in a few changes. DOH has worked to ensure that current guidance communicated to schools and healthcare is in alignment with the CDC guidelines. He said if people have questions or issues, please contact the Health District for subject matter expertise and guidance.

Next, Dr. Morrow said monkeypox is also on the decline. He said public health getting information and vaccines out has been beneficial to this decline. He said monkeypox is not gone, but it is decreasing enough to end the endemic in the US.

Lastly, Dr. Morrow shared some updates of new and ongoing work at the Health District:

- Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) Accreditation ongoing
- Strategic Planning
 - Starting soon
- Immunization and Vaccine Preventable Disease Program Development
 - Health District team's experience during COVID-19 pandemic is informing the way the Health District collaborates with community partners to get the community vaccinated. Additionally, the Health District is using surveillance data to understand the gaps that need to be addressed.
- Injury Prevention and Child Death Reviews
 - Looks at years of lost life prior to age 65 by preventable deaths and accidents
 - And resuming child death reviews to analyze preventable deaths and determine quality improvements
- Healthcare system assessments

Member Jackson said the youth respiratory illness rates are like nothing we've seen before in Kitsap. He asked what can be done, from a parent's perspective, to protect kids from getting sick. Dr. Morrow said RSV is a common childhood illness that is not vaccine preventable, and most kids typically get it before age two. RSV rates are higher this year because nobody had it for the last three years due to non-pharmaceutical interventions taken for the COVID-19 pandemic, like wearing a mask, staying home when sick, and personal hygiene, also prevented other respiratory illnesses from spreading. He said RSV will still circulate but we want to minimize it.

Member Tara Kirk Sell asked if the hospital, SMMC, is able to manage Ebola case in normal circumstances, and noted the board just received some public comments saying our hospital can't

handle routine efforts at the moment. Dr. Morrow said, in normal circumstance, if a traveler returning from Uganda, who was under monitoring in Kitsap County, got sick, public health would send them to SMMC where they would be in an isolation room and undergo testing through the public health lab. He said these plans and systems are defined. If someone at SMMC tested positive for Ebola, they would be transported to Providence Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane, which is one of very few hospitals in the country that are fully set up and ready to treat confirmed Ebola cases. He added that most people who have been tested for Ebola in Washington State have been negative.

Member Steve Kutz noted it also takes special protective equipment to deal with Ebola cases. He asked if SMMC has appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for this. Dr. Morrow said Ebola is transmitted through physical contact and said the PPE required is gloves and gowns, which need to be impermeable to liquids. He said it is easier to contain than airborne infectious diseases, like COVID-19.

There were no further comments.

APPROVAL OF 2023 LEGISLATIVE & RULEMAKING PRIORITIES

Mr. Grellner presented the Health District's revised 2023 Legislative and Rulemaking Priorities. The original version was presented at last month's meeting and only minor edits have been made since then. He said the Health District will continue to provide legislative updates to the board and will seek board approval before advocating for or against any new items not covered by this document.

2023 Legislative Policy Priorities include:

Public Health Funding

- Support maintaining existing levels of funding for FPHS
- Support exploring a dedicated revenue source for FPHS
- Support ongoing and additional funds for communicable disease investigation, such as COVID-19, monkeypox virus (MPV) or sexually transmitted infections
- Support ongoing funds for commercial tobacco and vaping prevention

Public Health Authority

- Oppose efforts to reduce or eliminate local public health authority
- Oppose bills that include unfunded mandates to local public health authority

Environmental Health

- Oppose bills that reduce commercial kitchen facility requirements or that allow food intended to be sold to the public to be prepared in a non-commercial kitchen
- Support efforts to restrict the use of pool-sharing apps in Washington State

Member Kutz moved and Commissioner Gelder seconded the motion to approve the 2023 Legislative and Rulemaking Priorities.

Commissioner Gelder asked what a pool sharing app is. Mr. Grellner said it is similar to Airbnb where a company created a platform for individuals to list private pools that others can rent. However, Mr. Grellner noted that public pools are held to different standards than private pools. Public pools are required, before construction, to have engineering plans approved by DOH and annual inspections by the local public health jurisdiction. With this new app, private pools are being rented out to the public with none of the normal oversight required of public pools. He said state attorneys are currently communicating with the creators of this app. Kitsap Public Health is waiting to see what happens there before taking next steps. Mr. Grellner noted that two Kitsap County residential pools are currently listed on the site.

Drayton asked if this has one more meeting for approval. Keith said he is asking board to approve today but noted the document can be brought back to the board and amended at any time.

Mayor Becky Erickson said she would like the board to be informed on legislative updates with a standing agenda item for each board meeting.

The motion approved unanimously.

There was no further comment.

RESOLUTION 2022-09, APPROVING 2023 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION SERVICE FEES

Mr. John Kiess, Environmental Health Director, approached the board regarding proposed environmental health fee schedule adjustments for 2023. He reminded the board that it approved a new fee structure in 2017 that would increase the environmental health hourly rate over the next two years and include Consumer Price Index (CPI) escalators for the following years. In 2019, the board approved a resolution amending that the Health District would not need to automatically incorporate CPI increases and could increase or decrease or hold specific fees as needed. In 2020, the board approved a resolution to reduce the fees for Food and Living Environment program due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food establishments.

Mr. Kiess presented Attachment 5 of the board packet, to highlight the historical Hourly Rate / CPI in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

An analysis of fees found that the Solid and Hazardous Waste (SHW) and Drinking Water and Onsite Sewage (DWOS) programs were generally in excellent financial condition. However, the Food and Living Environment (FLE) is at a \$300k deficit in the 2023 budget. The agency discussed a need to increase fees for the FLE program to address this gap in funding with the board's Finance Committee. Additional administrative changes are also proposed to simplify the fee structure. Mr. Kiess also noted some specific fee changes for food plan reviews, which he

said are significantly out of alignment from the cost of providing that service. The agency would also like to reduce fees in the SHW and DWOS programs. Mr. Kiess noted some efficiencies that have been realized in those two programs and the agency wants to pass those savings on to the community. The board's Finance Committee supports these changes.

Mr. Kiess said, though the CPI this year is at 9.1%, the Finance Committee recommends a 6% increase in FLE fees, which would address \$54,000 of increased revenue to offset some of the \$300K deficit. Additionally, the Finance Committee recommends that a CPI collar system be applied for all future fee schedules 2024 through 2026 with a range of 3-6%. He said this would better address the food program deficit going forward.

The Health District and Finance Committee recommend adoption of Resolution 2022-09, Approving 2023 Environmental Health Division Service Fees.

Mr. Grellner reminded the board that only elected board members can vote on fee changes. Additionally, he noted, even with collar system, if the Health District has fees that don't need to be raised or could be decreased, the Health District can adjust as needed as part of this resolution.

Mayor Putaansuu asked for confirmation that these fees were halted in 2020 due to the pandemic and the agency is now looking at operations beyond the pandemic. Mr. Kiess confirmed and said the Health District didn't increase fees in 2020 and 2021 but noted it has impacted the agency's cost revenue and service model.

Mayor Erickson moved and Mayor Putaansuu seconded the motion to approve Resolution 2022-09, Approving 2023 Environmental Health Division Service Fees.

Mayor Erickson provided additional information about the collar recommendation. She said this gives some flexibility, but also keeps the fees in a manageable place. She said public government should not be making a profit from fees but does need to collect fees to meet the service needs.

Councilmember Kirsten Hytopoulos thanked the committee for their work and said this resolution resolves her concerns.

The motion was approved unanimously by elected members.

There were no further comments.

DRAFT 2023 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Keith Grellner, Administrator, reminded the board that the Health District budgets on an annual basis. He presented the Draft 2023 Budget to the board and noted it includes a comparison with the current year's budget for reference. He said the Finance Committee has had two opportunities to review this budget draft and are in favor of it. He said the full board can

provide input to the Health District over next week before they finalize the document to bring to the full board in December for approval.

In summary:

- The budget is balanced at \$18.9M with the use of \$2M of Unrestricted/Undesignated Reserve Funds and about \$900K of Restricted/Designated Reserve Funds (Tuberculosis, Drinking Water/Onsite Sewage, and Solid/Hazardous Waste) *if needed*.
- No increase in rates/contributions are being requested from Health Board member jurisdictions.
- The Health District's fund balance is healthy at about \$8.7M and meets/exceeds the Board Budget Policy requirement of a minimum of two months of operating expenses, or about \$3.1M.
- The budget includes the use of \$2.4M of Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) funding from the state, and additional FPHS funding is expected in the second half of 2023.
- Staffing is currently projected at about 139 Full-Time Equivalents (FTE). Personnel costs comprise 81% of proposed expenditures.
- The budget contains Environmental Health fee increases for the Food Program and decreases for the Drinking Water/Onsite Sewage Program.
- Two major community investments are included in the draft budget: capital and operational funding of \$200K for the Peninsula Community Health Services Respite Care Facility, and placeholder funding for a local healthcare system assessment study as recommended by the Finance Committee on September 21, 2022.

The Health District is seeking comment and/or direction from the Health Board on the draft budget so that it may prepare and present a final 2023 Budget to the board for approval during the regular December 6, 2022, meeting. Input can also be emailed to Mr. Grellner after this meeting. Mr. Grellner said, per state law, all board members can vote on the Health District budget.

Member Jackson asked about staffing changes in budget. He asked specifically about clarification of moving COVID staff to other programs and whether this will use COVID funding or other funding. Mr. Grellner confirmed both counts. Mr. Grellner said additional federal funds available through 2024 in the budget will allow the Health District to move COVID staff to other programs. Mr. Grellner said the Health District hired a lot of high quality COVID employees that can now do work in other programs.

Member Sell asked what the child death review process is. Mr. Grellner said state law authorizes the local health jurisdiction and the local health officer to convene a panel to review child death certificates to identify issues in the community that may need to be addressed to prevent unnecessary child injury and deaths. The Health District used to do this for several years, but due to lack of resources, and that this was not a mandated program, it was cut in 2016 because the Health District couldn't fund it. This line item in the 2023 budget will restart the work.

Member Kutz said there are some opioid settlement dollars coming to our county soon and asked if there are plans to have a community conversation and if information could be shared with the Tribes. He said the Suquamish tribe is trying to look at a way to use these dollars system-wide to create change rather than parse the dollars out and each agency have less to work with. Mr. Grellner said Kitsap County was one of the litigants in the lawsuit and is receiving those dollars. He believes the county and the cities are discussing this process now.

Mayor Putaansuu said the City of Port Chard participated in the settlements but noted funds will flow through the county. Mayor Wheeler said there are several pages of specific funds eligible for these funds. He said there has been some conversations about how to use the funds to create the most impact.

There were no further comments.

LOCAL HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT CONCERNS

Chair Wheeler said the Board has set aside 45 minutes for discussion today with St. Michael Medical Center (SMMC) and the county's fire chiefs. He offered 15 minutes to each SMMC and the fire chiefs to give a presentation and allowed for 15 minutes of board discussion after.

Dr. Morrow thanked everyone from the fire district and SMMC for joining the board today. He reminded everyone that local public health has no regulatory authority over medical providers or systems. However, he also said one function of local public health is to provide accurate, timely, statewide, and locally relevant information to community in the healthcare system and participate in local, regional, and state level planning efforts to improve quality and effectiveness, reduce health care costs, and improve population health.

Dr. Morrow encouraged board members to review the PowerPoint in the board packet titled "Overview on Access to Healthcare in Kitsap." This data shows that Kitsap, like many other communities in the state, has sectors in the healthcare delivery system that are underserved and struggling to provide safe and high-quality care. He said these vulnerabilities existed before COVID, but the pandemic has severely strained and challenged our healthcare and public health workforce.

Dr. Morrow said Kitsap is underserved in areas like primary care, obstetrics, and hospital beds by 30-50% below state numbers. He said we know that when primary care is difficult to access, people use EMS and the emergency departments (ED) for care they can't access elsewhere. He encouraged board members to visit the Health District website and read the [Kitsap Public Health Core Indicators and Disparities Report](#) for additional information on changing demographics and health impacts in Kitsap.

Dr. Morrow noted that a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) was included in the board packet. At the board's request, this work will focus on better understanding the healthcare system in Kitsap. He said there is a lot of work happening right now to fully understand the strengths and

weaknesses of health and human services in Kitsap County. Kitsap Public Health District, Kitsap Community Resources, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health Systems and others are all working on assessments and reports to gather and analyze this information. The RFP will find a way to bring all these efforts together to create one detailed analysis of health systems in Kitsap.

Dr. Morrow welcomed fire chiefs Dan Smith (North Kitsap), Hank Teran (Bainbridge Island), Jay Christian (Central Kitsap), Pat McGanney (Bremerton), Jeff Faucett (South Kitsap), Jim Gillard (Poulsbo) and Dr. Joe Hoffman, Medical Director for Kitsap County EMS. He also welcomed Chad Melton, President of SMMC.

Member Jackson asked if Board members can email questions after this meeting, if time runs out for discussion, and get answers that way. Mayor Wheeler confirmed and said this conversation does not need to be limited to this meeting.

Chief Gillard started by recognizing SMMC for playing a huge role in the safety of our community. He also wanted to recognize the incredible work being done by the staff in the ED and said they continue to provide a high level of care to our community. He said the fire chiefs are asking for the Health Board's help in resolving this issue with the ED. The fire chiefs are aware that they alone cannot force change at a private company that may be necessary to find solutions to issues occurring in the ED. He said the fire chiefs continue to meet with SMMC, are actively engaged, and want to work collaboratively. However, he said, over the past several months of working together, the fire chiefs and SMMC have not been able to resolve the issues.

Chief Gillard said that, in June of 2022, the fire chiefs started to receive information from staff about a marked increase in SMMC ED staff being unable to provide care to patients arriving with the EMS units. In July, EMS began measuring these delays. These are called "Walls" or "ED Wait Times". At this time, the fire chiefs began engaging with SMMC leadership to try to resolve EMS' concerns. While EMS vehicles are at an ED waiting for a patient to be seen, the EMS staff and vehicle cannot go on other emergency calls. Additionally, this means that while patients are still in EMS care awaiting intake to the ED, they are not receiving the prompt care and medical evaluations they need.

Chief Gillard said that, in the last three months since EMS started tracking the data, they have found that over 10% of transports results in care wait times over 30 minutes, multiple instances of over 2 hours, and recorded times of up to 6-hour delays of EMS stuck monitoring patients waiting for ED staff to take over care. He said this doesn't just affect EMS and knows this affects anyone trying to get care at the ED during that time. He said SMMC is not alone in experiencing this problem in the state. However, he said some other medical facilities, like St. Anthony's are not encountering this issue. EMS has found the issue locally with SMMC is intermittent and due to low staffing. Recently the Kitsap County EMS Council authorized Dr. Hoffman to file a formal complaint with Washington State Department of Health (DOH) to get them engaged in finding a solution.

Dr. Hoffman said this issue is not exclusive to us in Kitsap County and said it is a common issue for many rural counties. His first concern is the patients receiving delayed transition of care at

SMMC. He said sometimes care is being administered inside the medical center, in hallways, etc., by EMTs and paramedics rather than ED staff. He said this creates an operation and preparatory issue of not being ready for the next call. He said it becomes an even bigger issue when you have 2-4 units being stacked up outside the ED waiting to get patients seen and being taken off calls. He said the issue has become extreme and now he is looking for some solutions and thinking outside the box to address this issue.

Mr. Melton, SMMC CEO, said he appreciated everyone for their input. Mr. Melton agreed with Chief Gillard that sometimes there is a delay in 10% of transport patients. He also SMMC receives about 21,000 EMS visits per year, which includes Kitsap and Mason Counties and said SMMC's ED. He said, for ED visits, SMMC is one of the top seven busiest hospitals in Washington State. Mr. Melton said SMMC built the new hospital with 52 ED bays, and noted that, as he left for this meeting today, 35 of those rooms were currently boarding patients.

Mr. Melton said some of the issues seen in the ED are a symptom of problems that need to be addressed in the county. He agrees that there have been days with delays and days with significant staffing challenges. In response to staffing issues, he said SMMC recently negotiated a new agreement with the hospital's labor union, UFCW, and had some of the highest nursing rates in the state. He said over the next few years, there will be a 30% increase to staffing salaries. He said he also knows staff burnout is a big issue right now. He said staff who pick up extra weekday shifts right now make an additional \$40/hour and an additional \$80/hour on picked-up weekend shifts. He said SMMC is spending as much money as it can without putting the healthcare system of the county in financial jeopardy long term.

Mr. Melton said that only about 40% of ED staff live in Kitsap, and the rest live across the water. He said, in order for the hospital and workforce to improve, SMMC needs to come up with a workforce development plan. He said another important factor is patients being discharged from the facility. He said, when compared to the national average, patients at SMMC are staying two days longer than what Medicare says is the benchmark for patients within the hospital. Leadership is doing a listening session with the 3rd floor of the hospital (long stay patients whose family can no longer care for them, or those who do not have family to care for them.) He said it is the hospital's responsibility to care for these individuals whether they have an acute or non-acute condition.

Lastly, Mr. Melton said he understands where Chief Gillard and Dr. Hoffman are coming from and respects their opinions. He said he knows they're working with SMMC to collaborate and make a difference.

Chair Wheeler invited the fire chiefs and SMMC staff to stay for the rest of the board discussion. He said he would like to hear a clear path for how the board can be involved going forward.

Member Jackson said the fire chiefs said they don't have authority to tell the hospital to do anything. He asked what position or authority the board has to provide guidance on this issue. Mr. Grellner said one potential option is for the Board to draft a resolution of support for the fire chiefs and SMMC to go forward with resolving this issue. He said the board would need help

from both parties to craft that resolution and said the Health District is happy to craft it and bring back to the board at Chair's request.

Mayor Erickson asked the fire chiefs and Mr. Melton why, during the times of surge, patients aren't being diverted to other hospitals, like St. Anthony's, for example. Mr. Melton says the hospital has been diverting more in recent months than ever before. He said SMMC tracks the diversion numbers and noted there is an escalation process to divert that factors in the number of patients in the waiting room and the percentage of open beds in the ED. He said this past week, St. Anthony's experienced a surge and diverted patients for 12 hours. He said between Tacoma General and St. Josephs, SMMC sees as many patients as both hospitals combined and said that when a large hospital like SMMC diverts, it creates downstream issues. He said one of the main things the EMS taskforce is working on right now is looking at the process and ways to divert sooner and move through the process faster.

Chief Gillard said improvement to diversion is one of the fire chiefs' major asks of SMMC. He said they understand SMMC has a lot of challenges that they are trying to overcome. Chief Gillard said that EMS would like to get clear and honest information from SMMC about their capacity to care for a patient. Previously, he said SMMC was not telling EMS this information and hasn't shared when the ED goes to divert mode or is over capacity. He said there were several instances in which the ED charge nurse told EMS that they had requested to go on divert but it was denied by administration. EMS has offered to share data on EMS calls with SMMC to help inform them of incoming patients and start balancing the load for diversion. There are many things that can be done better with increased communication. Chief Gillard said that when patients need care, EMS needs to divert to closest available hospital to provide care. He said EMS has started diverting to other hospitals when EMS share within their network that there are long wait times at SMMC.

Dr. Hoffman said hospitals used to divert for smaller issues than they do now. He said he appreciates the hospital members who have been part of the discussion. He said EMS could use real time information to make informed decisions each day, especially as it pertains to capacity issues.

Mayor Erickson said she hopes that through this meeting we can find a way to reach a solution.

Mayor Putaansuu said he had a family member recently needing emergency medical services, and knowing of current SMMC issues, went to St. Anthony's instead, but still encountered a several hour wait. He said his family member stayed in the ED for 3 days because there wasn't a bed in the hospital. He said this is a systemic problem and the fundamental problem is a lack of sufficient number of professionals in this community. He said we have a community college with a good nursing program and asked if this is enough capacity to staff our local hospital. He said we need to work together and communicate better.

Member Sell said there's been a lot of great discussion today and some recommended solutions. She says this is a systemic problem that requires policy changes. She asked if there are legislative changes the board could ask for.

Member Jackson asked if there is a retention problem for nurses. Mr. Melton said turnover rates of nurses went up significantly during the COVID pandemic. He said a lot of nurses took travel contracts to serve higher need areas, but this has recently lowered. He noted a 21% overall turnover rate for all of SMMC compared to 30% nationally. But because we are in a rural environment, there is a smaller professional pool to hire from., and every person that leaves the local medical network to go work in the bigger cities, causes greater concern for our small community. He said Olympic College (OC) has 70 current seats today and have asked for 90-100, and a significantly higher number of applicants. He said it's not just nursing, there are vacancies throughout all the different positions of SMMC. He said a primary question that should be asked is how Virginia Mason Franciscan Health (SMMC's parent company) can invest in OC and pull dollars from the state to create a stronger workforce development program in Kitsap.

Mayor Putaansuu asked how this can happen. Mr. Melton said SMMC has been meeting with OC monthly and looking at what programs and funding needs are required to improve education of certified medical professionals and working on developing a business plan.

Member Jackson said the state has altered some licensing requirements and asked if SMMC has seen the benefits of that. Mr. Melton said they have not yet but are working with local elected officials to make a plan for drawing on that funding.

Member Kutz asked if ED physicians are employed by SMMC or contracted. Mr. Melton confirmed emergency physicians are contracted not employed by SMMC.

Additionally, Member Kutz asked if members in the south end of the county and neighboring Mason County could be regularly diverted south rather than go to SMMC. He said he is currently trying to hire nurses and knows how difficult it is. He added that a lot of nurses have left because of issues that arose during the pandemic.

Mayor Wheeler said he read the letter Dr. Hoffman sent to DOH. He noted this issue poses an immediate threat to the safety of the community. He said he ended his emergency proclamation for COVID last night, so Bremerton can no longer convert parking lots to vaccination clinics. However, he said we are on notice that we are on the verge of a crisis, and if something else happens again that stretches our capacity thin, we need to have a plan and be able to meet the needs of our community. He said this isn't taken lightly and noted the regionalization of healthcare services.

Chair Wheeler asked if the board supports the creation of a resolution supporting the needs of EMS and SMMC to find a solution.

Mr. Grellner said the Health District is ready to draft a resolution. He noted a resolution doesn't hold any legal authority, but it makes a public statement on behalf of the board. He said the Health Board and the Health District have no legal authority to act on this.

Mayor Erickson asked what the goal of this resolution is. She asked for clarification on the position of the Board.

Dr. Hoffman said the purpose of the EMS letter to DOH is to voice concern that the EMS patient who arrives by EMS transportation is treated differently than the patient who arrives by private transportation. Because that patient is currently under the EMT care on the gurney, their care in the ED is delayed. He said the primary issue is that this is not in the interest of the patient. The secondary issue is that the EMS crew taking care of a patient at the ED is out of service to continue serving the public.

Chair Wheeler said the letter to DOH notified them of a serious concern in the community.

Member Jackson said there is nothing that can be done until SMMC completes an assessment and shares this information with the Health Board and EMS. He said we need to know what we're working with find a solution. Mr. Melton said SMMC needs the Health Board, as a collaborative party, to help SMMC and EMS discuss issues, share information and make progress. Mr. Melton said he can commit to this board that SMMC will share information and work with EMS to make progress. He said 90% of individuals in the hospital are discharged. He said over 80% of the patients at ED do not need to be in ED but noted the ED does not turn anyone away as part of a fundamental belief in the mission of the organization. Lastly, he said SMMC was told they would receive a copy of the letter before it was submitted, but he has not yet seen it.

Chief Gillard asked the board to keep this taskforce accountable and have information submitted to the board every one to two months. He agreed with Mr. Melton that there is too much reliance on ED, but it is due to lack of urgent cares and other clinics that can provide earlier care before entering ED.

Mr. Melton said SMMC fully supports the Health District's proposal to do a full assessment of the county's health care and needs. He said this assessment should be fully transparent. Additionally, he said SMMC is currently doing a physician needs analysis. The last time one was completed was 2019. Every 3 years, the agency does a community health needs assessment as a not-for-profit organization. He said SMMC plans to collaborate with Dr. Morrow and the Health District team to bring all this information to the table.

Councilmember Hytopoulos expressed support for a resolution but said it doesn't sound like the board is ready to take that step.

Chair Wheeler agreed that he doesn't see a direct next step yet, but he encouraged continued collaboration.

Member Kutz said the board has an RFP to do a deeper dive and assessment. He heard from Mr. Melton that many of the people who show up at ED don't need to be there. He said we have inadequate urgent care in the community and the solution is broader than just focusing on the ED.

Chair wheeler noted the budget includes a comprehensive look at community healthcare.

Member Kutz recommended asking Navy hospital to keep longer hours.

Mayor Erickson requested an invitation to the next meeting between the fire chiefs and SMMC. She said all of our citizens need to know we are trying to solve this problem.

Councilmember Hytopoulos asked for clarification about board support for or against resolution.

Chair Wheeler asked the board to indicate support for or against resolution.

Mayor Putaansuu said the resolution would need to be created with the context that there needs to be improved communication between EMS and SMMC.

Mayor Erickson said the letter needs to be emailed to the full board for review.

Chair Wheeler said he sees no indication that a resolution shouldn't be created. He said comments on the letter should be sent to Health District.

There was no further comment.

ADJOURN

There was no further business; the meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm.



Robert Gelder
Kitsap Public Health Board



Keith Grellner
Administrator

Board Members Present: *Mayor* Becky Erickson; *Councilperson* Kirsten Hytopoulos; *Member* Drayton Jackson, *Member* Stephen Kutz, *Mayor* Robert Putaansuu; *Member* Tara Kirk Sell; *Mayor* Greg Wheeler.

Board Members Absent: *Member* Michael Watson.

Community Members Present: Allen Howe, *Self*; Kelsey Irby, *Self*; Katherine Mahoney, *Virginia Mason Franciscan Health*; Chad Melton, *St. Michael Medical Center*; Susan Young, *Self*.

Staff Present: James Archer, *Accounting Assistant, Finance and Accounting*; Angie Berger, *Administrative Assistant, Administration*; Maria Furgus, *Community Engagement Specialist, Equity Program*; Keith Grellner, *Administrator, Administration*; Karen Holt, *Program Manager*,

Kitsap Public Health Board
Regular Meeting
November 1, 2022
Page 15 of 15

Human Resources; John Kiess, Director, Environmental Health Division; Sarah Kinnear, Community Liaison, Chronic Disease Prevention; Melissa Laird, Manager, Accounting and Finance; Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer, Administration; Laura Westervelt, Environmental Health Specialist 1, Water Pollution Identification and Correction; Erica Whares, Community Liaison, Chronic Disease Prevention.

Zoom Attendees: *See attached.*

Kitsap Public Health Board Meeting (Virtual Attendance)

Webinar ID	Actual Start Time	Attendee Count
861 8605 2497	11/1/2022 12:10	63

NAME	NAME	JOINED BY PHONE
Alena Schroeder	Kelsey Stedman (she/her)	13607282027
Ally Power (she/her)	Kitsap Public Health PCH	
Amanda Tjemsland (she/her)	Laura	
Angie Berger (she / her)	Lexi Tiemeyer	
Anne Blair	Lisa Warren	
Anne Burns	Mac Murray	
Anne M	marci burkel (she/her)	
Anne Presson	Michelle McMillan	
April Fisk	Nancy Acosta	
Bremerton Fire	Nancy RN Kitsap A<C	
Brian nielson	npilling	
Carin Onarheim	Ornela Abazi	
Carollynn Zimmers	Pam Keeley# RN	
Charlotte Garrido	Patty Lyman	
Chief Faucett (Jeff Faucett)	Rachel Perry	
Dana Bierman	Robert - Silverdale	
Dave	Rudy Baum	
Dawn Morris	Sarah Kinnear	
Dayna Katula	Shannon Schroeder	
Erin Larsen-Cooper	Stacey Smith	
Fergus Maria (She/Her/Ella)	Stephanie	
Gabby Hadly	Steve Brown	
Gus Bell (Bremerton# WA)	Susan Brooks-Young	
Hank Teran	Suzanne Plemmons	
Hannah Vinyard	Tameka Phelps	
Jan Wendt	Tom	
Janet Wyatt (she/her)	Victoria Lehto	
Jeanell Rasmussen	Wendy Jones she/her	
Jeff Coughlin	Winnie	
jennifer pancholi	Xinia Ebbay	
Jewel Shepherd-Sampson	Yolanda Fong	
Jim Gillard		
Joe Hoffman		
Kari Hunter		
Karina Mazur# she/her		
Katie Sprague		
Katy Crabtree (Rep. Kilmer) she/her		