

**KITSAP PUBLIC HEALTH BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
Regular Meeting  
April 2, 2024**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tara Sell at 10:30 a.m.

Board members each provided a brief introduction.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mayor Becky Erickson moved and Commissioner Christine Rolfes seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the March 5, 2024, regular meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

The April consent agenda included the following contracts:

- 2203, Amendment 17, *Washington State Department of Health, Consolidated Contract*

Dr. Michael Watson moved and Mayor Erickson seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Tom Slyter, Alliance for Equitable Healthcare, commended the Board for the efforts and resources being used to address homelessness, substance use disorder, and mental health. He asked the Board if there is one office coordinating the efforts of various agencies. Chair Sell noted that an answer will be provided at a later time.

**HEALTH OFFICER/ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Administrator Update:

Yolanda Fong, Administrator, shared three updates:

- The request for proposals for classification system design and salary schedule research has been completed. The Health District selected Compensation Connections, a Washington-based firm who has worked with other public agencies throughout the state. The contract is being developed and the work will begin soon.
- This month's meeting materials contain three submissions for written public comment and are available for the Board's reference.
- The National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH) will be holding another annual conference this year in Nashville, Tennessee. Member Drayton Jackson attended the conference in 2023 and discussed the valuable information he gleaned from the experience.

There was no further comment.

Health Officer Update:

Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer, provided the Board with several updates:

- It is National Public Health Week and the 2024 theme is, “Protecting, Connecting, and Thriving. We are all public health.” Dr. Morrow noted that public health is not a specific agency or program but all of society working collectively to keep communities healthy.
- The Health District is beginning the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process, a community-driven planning process which aims to address the three priority areas identified through the Community Health Assessment (CHA): healthcare, mental and behavioral health, and housing and homelessness.
- Dr. Morrow emphasized the importance of collaboration between partners to reach the mutual objective of a healthy public. He acknowledged the work that is being done throughout the community to advance that goal.
- The Health District is launching a healthcare action collaborative to improve funding, map assets, identify gaps, implement key strategies, and track progress on the recommendations brought forth by the Johns Hopkins healthcare assessment. The Board will receive regular reports on the collaborative’s progress.
- The number of emergency department (ED) visits by Medicaid beneficiaries is still higher in Kitsap than across Washington State. EDs are the most expensive place to receive care, but they are where people go when they do not have other options. This data highlights the importance of community paramedic programs, as well as expanding and funding primary care, mental health services, and substance treatment services.
- There is increasing national recognition that communities need better integration and funding of primary care, public health, and community-based organizations. Policy-related work is ongoing to strengthen each of those components, which has positively impacted the work of Peninsula Community Health Services, Kitsap Mental Health Services, and other primary care and preventative clinics.

Board members discussed Dr. Morrow’s update and asked clarifying questions.

There was no further comment.

**HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN KITSAP  
REPORT**

Board members were given the opportunity to discuss the Johns Hopkins presentation regarding the Healthcare System Challenges and Opportunities in Kitsap report.

Several Board members agreed that the report is a tool that will be used to develop and implement strategies to address the report’s findings. The response will need to be community-driven and collaboration among partners will be crucial.

There was no further comment.

## **KITSAP MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PRESENTATION**

Monica Bernhard, Chief Executive Officer of Kitsap Mental Health Services (KMHS), shared a presentation that outlined the services provided by KMHS and highlighted areas of improvement:

- Comprehensive recovery-oriented services, including mental health services for youth and adults, wrap-around services, school-based programs, housing and employment support, 24/7 programs, and designated crisis responder (DCR) services.
- KMHS served 4,005 non-duplicated clients from across Kitsap County in 2023 and there has been a steady increase in average annual occupancy rate for 24/7 programs.
- Clinical staff are compassionate, committed, and highly trained. KMHS has seen a steady improvement in staff retention.
- A 29% increase in overall employee growth since 2021.
- Diverse clients and staff which accurately represent the county's demographics.
- General and specialized evidence-based practices and training.
- KMHS faces several challenges, including staff recruitment, high acuity cases, high caseloads, the voluntary nature of mental health services, a historically underfunded system, significant administrative burdens due to legal and insurance requirements, and the lack of licensing to provide care to medically acute individuals.

Ms. Bernhard outlined the future of KMHS, including expansion plans, the launch of Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Services, the launch of a community education series, the offer of free or low-cost community training in mental health topics, the transition to a Certified Community Behavioral Health Center, and facility accreditation efforts that will allow 24/7 programs to serve Medicare and commercial insurance clients.

After discussing Ms. Bernhard's presentation and asking clarifying questions, the Board thanked her for the work KMHS does in Kitsap.

There was no further comment.

## **CONNECTING COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO CARE REPORT**

Bonnie Obremski, Communications Specialist with Olympic Community of Health (OCH), provided the Board with a presentation outlining OCH's Connecting Community Members to Care report. Ms. Obremski explained that OCH aims to improve individual and population health and advance equity by addressing the determinants of health. During her presentation, Ms. Obremski noted:

- Strategies employed by OCH include convening, funding, coordinating, advocacy, engagement, data sharing, transparency, communication, and place-based approaches.
- The report demonstrates the value and impact of local programs, elevates creative ideas, advocates for sustainable solutions, provides a tool for partners and decision-makers, and

supports regional efforts to meet the needs of individuals. Local programs include community paramedicine, co-response, and mobile-integrated health care.

- The role of first responders has moved from acute intervention for emergent needs to a high volume of non-emergent calls. This is resulting in increased costs and taxation on limited emergency resources. Additionally, ED utilization is high due to limited resources in primary care, specialty care, behavioral health, and resources for aging adults.
- Community paramedicine programs are gaining popularity and, as of 2023, there were more than 400 programs across 40 states. Similar programs in Kitsap were able to reduce stress on emergency services, increase collaboration across disciplines and programs, and tailor services to fit the skills of the available workforce. Program challenges included an increased administrative burden; high caseloads; limited and insecure funding; and inconsistent standards, training, and measures of success across programs.
- OCH suggests that programs invite elected officials to see the work first-hand, track quantitative and qualitative data, collaborate with partners, coordinate with similar programs to standardize data collection and analysis, conduct community assessments, use a broad spectrum of data to inform program planning, plan for program expansions over time to meet increasing referrals, and consider incorporating telehealth.

Ms. Obremski concluded her presentation by calling to action community partners, elected officials, and the state Department of Health and she shared the specific strategies recommended by OCH to help connect community members to care.

Mayor Wheeler thanked Ms. Obremski and OCH for focusing on the efforts of first responders, noting that the strain on first responders is the biggest challenge experienced by elected officials.

There was no further comment.

## **ST. MICHAEL MEDICAL CENTER SERVICES PRESENTATION**

Chad Melton, President of St. Michael Medical Center (SMMC), provided the Board with information on SMMC services:

- SMMC is a 336-bed medical center that has a level two trauma center, cancer center, and medical pavilion. They are expanding access to primary care with new programs and clinics, as well as 24/7 hybrid care through their ED and urgent care facilities.
- The hospital is expanding the medical tower, providing 74 additional acute care beds to support more acute services in Kitsap and decompress emergency room boarding.
- Operational improvements are evidenced by the “A” Leapfrog safety grade, 4-star rating by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, improved patient experience, addition of 100 new registered nurses in 2023, and decreased staff turnover.
- SMMC has invested in Kitsap by providing \$2.5 million in charity care and \$37.5 million in uncompensated care, as well as partnering with community-based organizations to provide or donate services to the community.
- Olympic College and Kitsap County have partnered with SMMC to help increase the healthcare workforce. SMMC is also working to advance health equity.

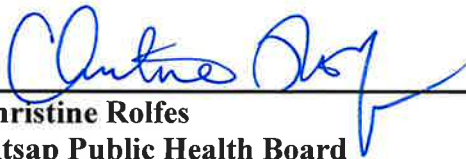
In discussing the challenges faced by SMMC, Mr. Melton noted that staffing, workforce development, post-acute care, increasing costs of care, inadequate reimbursements, and physician recruitment all pose significant challenges. He concluded his presentation by emphasizing his appreciation of the Board.

The Board then discussed aspects of Mr. Melton's presentation and thanked him for his time.

There was no further comment.

### ADJOURN

There was no further business; the meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

  
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**Christine Rolfes**  
**Kitsap Public Health Board**

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**Yolanda Fong**  
**Administrator**

**Board Members Present:** *Mayor* Becky Erickson; *Member* Drayton Jackson; *Member* Stephen Kutz; *Councilperson* Ashley Mathews; *Mayor* Rob Putaansuu; *Commissioner* Christine Rolfes; *Member* Dr. Tara Sell; *Member* Jolene Sullivan; *Member* Dr. Michael Watson; *Mayor* Greg Wheeler.

**Board Members Absent:** None.

**Community Members Present:** Monica Bernhard, *Kitsap Mental Health Services*; Stephanie Christensen, *Virginia Mason Franciscan Health*; Casey Jinks, *Kitsap County Sheriff's Office*; Chad Melton, *SMMC*; Bonnie Obremski, *Olympic Community of Health*; Tom Slyter, *Alliance for Equitable Healthcare*.

**Scribe:** Margo Chang, *Management Analyst, Kitsap Public Health District*.

**Staff Present:** Angie Berger, *Management Analyst, Administration*; Yolanda Fong, *Administrator, Administration*; Adrienne Hampton, *Policy, Planning, and Innovation Analyst, Administration*; Siri Kushner, *Director, Public Health Infrastructure Division*; Dr. Gib Morrow, *Health Officer, Administration*; Gabreiel Outlaw-Spencer, *Public Health Educator, Parent Child Health*; and Laura Westervelt, *Environmental Health Specialist 2-RS, Pollution Identification and Correction*.