



# Municipality of Anchorage

Dave Bronson, Mayor

## Health and Human Services Commission

**MEETING MINUTES ~ July 13, 2022**

**5:30 p.m. – Teams Meeting**

### **Attendance**

**Commissioners present:** Donna Mears (Vice Chair); Matthew Thomas, Gabe Garcia, Gerry York, Shawn Degler

**Commissioners absent:** Kati Ward-Hamer (Chair) (E); Stephanie Berglund (E), Sarah Slater (E)

**Staff:** Judy Atkins, Administrative Support, Joe Gerace, Director, Kimberly Rash, Deputy Director, Terrence Shanigan, Division Manager

### **Call to Order**

Vice Chair Mears called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. with a quorum.

### **Roll Call - Introductions**

### **Approval of Agenda**

Chair called for approval of the agenda as presented. Motion to approve by Commissioner Degler, seconded by Commissioner Thomas. **Hearing no objections, motion passed.**

### **Approval of Minutes**

Move to approve the January 12, 2022 minutes as presented, Commissioner York; seconded by Commissioner Degler. **Hearing no objection, the motion passed.**

### **Public Comment**

### **AHD Staff Report – Joe Gerace**

Director Gerace stressed the importance of fully staffed Commissions. Terms expire in 90 days, and he urged those members whose terms expire this year to reapply if they would like to continue. There are no active applications on file for the Health Commission at this time. Ms. Atkins will send out the link to Commissioners Ward-Hamer and Thomas.

### **Old Business**

### **New Business**

**Retreat/Planning Session.** Vice Chair opened the floor to discussion.

Opportunity: Director Gerace commented on the increase in STIs, and other infectious diseases being reported. Community partners such as STAR and AWAIC are reporting an increase in domestic violence and drug use.

Opportunity: In the last couple of years, physicians have noticed that patients have developed a reluctance to go in for routine or basic screening exams. Several 'missed' cancers from the first year of the pandemic were caught last year.

Opportunity: Loss of trust due to people not being able to be with loved ones when ill. Now that we are moving forward, how do we allow people to be part of normal passages of life and not make people feel like they have no voice or power. How can it be done better?

Opportunity: Mental health illness.

Opportunity: Across the nation, corporate offices, unwilling to cut their profit margins, cut their staff, forcing many to look at changing their job or a different career. It is very hard to attract specialists to Alaska. Many health care facilities in Alaska do not have enough staff, including the health department.

AHD Goal: Being able to get out into the community, building trust and relationships. The health department is ground zero and has the ability to do some of the real work it takes to ensure people receive access to health care needs. How can that happen? By changing the way we do business. The mobile clinic is used mainly for communicable disease outreach. It could be used for other screenings and physicals for example. Get back to the core business of public health by offering diabetes screenings, A1C screenings, blood pressure checks; address issues such as childhood obesity, vaping, sleep apnea. Ensure citizens know that the Anchorage Health Department is more than communicable diseases.

Commissioner Homework: Look at what other agencies are doing and brainstorm actionable items. Advocate for grant requirement to be changed. Lobby and address legislative issues.

In Person Meetings. Most of the municipal boards and commissions now meet in person; most state and federal meetings are also held in person. Historically the commission met at the AHD building in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor conference room. This allows the public better access. The commission agreed to do a hybrid meeting of in person/virtual starting in September.

Reforming Committees – Topic tabled.

### **Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Garcia suggested that the Alaska Black Caucus be invited to provide a presentation at the September meeting, speaking to an assessment of black Alaskans prepared recently. Commissioners agreed; he will facilitate that happening.

### **Next Meeting**

Move to adjourn, Commissioner Degler; seconded by Commissioner Garcia. **Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 6:44 pm;** the next meeting will be held Wednesday, September 14, 2022, at 825 L Street, Room 423 and on Microsoft Teams from 5:30-7:00 pm.