



Municipality of Anchorage

Suzanne LaFrance, Mayor

Health and Human Services Commission

SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES ~ September 11, 2024

5:30 p.m. – Hybrid Meeting

Attendance:

Commissioners present: Matt Heilala, Chair, Melissa Skarbek, Vice Chair, Donna Mears, Matthew Thomas, Ben Mishler

Commissioners absent: Andrea Mocerri, John McCormick, Tori Dallas

Staff: Judy Atkins, Administrative Support, Kimberly Rash, Acting Director

Call to Order

Chair Heilala called the meeting to order at **5:38** p.m. with a quorum.

Roll Call

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

Move to approve the July 10, 2024, minutes as presented by Commissioner Mears; seconded by Commissioner Mishler. **Hearing no objections, the motion passed.**

Public Comment

AHD Staff Report – Kimberly Rash, Acting Director

Acting Director Rash provided highlights and statistics for August 2024 AHD programs. Ms. Rash reported that a Chief Medical Officer has been identified, Dr. George Conway. He has been in Anchorage many years, has a public health background and previously worked for the CDC. Approval goes through the mayor and finally the Assembly. No issues are foreseen. The Safety Center responded to 1,107 calls. Environmental has a lot of retirements so quota of work has been less than required. It takes 6 months to onboard people, so they are prioritizing the inspections done. WIC total participants were 3,847. Alcohol tax dollars go towards the healthy food boxes, distributed to clients through the Fresh Bucks program. Breastfeeding Peer Program has 3 contracted counselors on staff. There are active cases of pertussis in community, going through the school district. 131 routine vaccinations were given; we have not received the RSV vaccines yet. 600 OTC COVID-19 test kits were received; they will be given out for free. The Opioid task Force is buying distribution boxes to be placed around the city for people to access Narcan more easily. HIV-over 8,000 condoms distributed.

Continuing Business

Sunset Audit. The municipality has completed their three-year audit of this commission and have recommended reauthorization. The report has been submitted to the October 8th Assembly agenda for approval.

Commission Vacancies. There is one open position, and all appointments are on hold until further notice.

Vaccine Hesitancy. The following statement was submitted to the members for approval:

"The Municipal Health and Human Services Commission would like to raise awareness regarding a trending rise in certain heretofore community eradicated diseases such as Measles..... others?. The Commission recognizes that mistakes were made during the COVID-19 pandemic which have contributed to vaccine hesitancy and a rapid increase in non-vaccinated populations nationwide. The department encourages healthy skepticism as a cornerstone of responsible parenting and a reasoning citizenry. We encourage those with questions to seek information with their trusted healthcare provider to assess the costs and benefits of these decisions."

Discussion regarding where we would like this statement to go, and what outcomes we would like to see. Decided to table this discussion until Chief Medical Officer on staff for consultation. Trust in public health is the issue.

Lead Testing Protocols. The following statement was submitted to the members for approval:

"The Anchorage Public Health Department strongly supports increased access to lead testing. Lead exposure poses significant health risks, particularly to children. We are committed to raising awareness and implementing comprehensive testing protocols to ensure the safety and well-being of our community. By expanding testing availability and educating residents, we can effectively address and mitigate the dangers of lead exposure. The Municipal Health and Human Services Commission fully supports these efforts."

Discussion regarding whether to write letter to Mayor or do resolution/memorandum.

Decided to table this discussion until Chief Medical Officer on staff for consultation.

HHAND Commission Meeting Report – Melissa Skarbek. Jessica Parks, COO for Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) attended this meeting also. Commissioner Skarbek spoke with her and gained insights about the homeless information management system (HMIS) which contains a host of data on all topics relating to homelessness. (available on the ACEH website). As there is a commission actively dealing with the homelessness situation, we will continue to keep information at the forefront however not take this topic on actively. Suggested that Ms. Parks be invited to the next meeting.

New Business

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Mears commented that a large state and city issue of concern currently is the outmigration of people. Staff are hard to find and retain. Additionally, Medicaid reimbursement rates are low.

Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 6:55; the next meeting will be held Wednesday, November 13, 2024.