



North Carolina

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION

Accreditation Special Board Meeting Wednesday, August 25, 2021 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Zoom

Board Members Present:

Teresa Ellen, Chair
Dr. Susan Little
Benjamin Tillett
David Stanley
Bertadean Baker
Kevin Austin
Virginia Niehaus
John Rouse
Dr. Calvert Jeffers
Jerry Parks
Dr. Connette McMahon
Fleming El-Amin

Board Members Not Present:

Barbara Beatty
Dr. Anna Schenck
Dr. Rhonda Stephens

Legal Counsel:

Anne Brown

Staff Present:

Amy Belflower Thomas
Margaret Benson Nemitz
Lori Rhew
Ali Zuercher

Welcome

Board Chair Teresa Ellen welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that we would adjust the original agenda such that the Pamlico County Judicial Petition conversation happens first in order to accommodate attendee availability.

Closed Session

Board Chair Ellen entertained a motion to move into closed session to receive advice from counsel regarding a legal matter. **Dr. Susan Little made a motion to move into closed session, seconded by Board Member David Stanley. The motion passed unanimously. All Board members, Administrator Amy Belflower Thomas, Program Staff Margaret Benson Nemitz, and Legal Counsel Anne Brown moved into closed session.**

Program Staff Lori Rhew and Ali Zuercher remained in the open session to welcome any guests.

Board Member John Rouse made a motion to return to open session following the discussion with legal counsel, seconded by Board Member David Stanley. The motion passed unanimously, and the board returned to open session.

Pamlico County Judicial Petition

Board Chair Ellen entertained a motion to approve the consent order for a stay release for Pamlico County Health Department's accreditation as presented by the Board's Legal Counsel. Board Member Jerry Parks moved the motion, seconded by Board Member Bertadean Baker. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Members voted as follows:

Dr. Susan Little - yes

Virginia Niehaus - yes
David Stanley - yes
Teresa Ellen - yes
Benjamin Tillett - yes
Kevin Austin - yes
John Rouse- yes
Dr. Calvert Jeffers - yes
Fleming El-Amin - yes
Jerry Parks - yes
Bertadean Baker - yes

Board Member Dr. Connette McMahon was no longer present so did not participate in the vote.

Board Chair Ellen entertained a motion to approve for the chair to work with the Accreditation Administrator to approve new dates, if necessary, based on the timeline that the consent order is able to be docketed. Board Member Kevin Austin made the motion, seconded by Board Member Bertadean Baker. The motion passed unanimously.

Staffing, Board Members, and Minutes

Board Chair Ellen then returned to the proposed agenda and passed the discussion to Administrator Belflower Thomas for staffing updates and board member status. Administrator Belflower Thomas explained that Ms. Margaret Benson Nemitz, who has been working in a temporary status, is transitioning to a permanent position in September and will continue working with the program. Administrator Belflower Thomas explained that Ms. Lori Rhew will be focusing specifically on training within accreditation, so Ms. Benson Nemitz will be assuming many of Ms. Rhew's former board responsibilities. Administrator Belflower Thomas also acknowledged Ms. Ali Zuercher who has remained with the team temporarily following her graduation in May to support strategic projects.

Administrator Belflower Thomas then shared an update that, while she is not happy that former Board Member Rebecca McLeod came off of the board due to retirement, she is happy to report that the Health Directors Association submitted some nominees and Karen Powell from the Foothills District has accepted her nomination which will then go to the Secretary's Office. She explained that Board Member Parks has been a great representative for a district health department, and Health Director Powell will provide some more perspective. She also mentioned that when Pamlico first became conditionally accredited, Foothills was as well as R.P.M. district. They were able to get their evidence together, and the board accredited them the very next cycle. With Director Powell's involvement with that process, she will bring great perspective for the program.

Administrator Belflower Thomas mentioned that the other vacancy is from Dr. Schiffel, who came off of the Board of Health in Hanover, so he can no longer sit on the Board of Health Representative seats on the NCLHDA board. Administrator Belflower Thomas explained that ANCBH is having some leadership changes right now, and they will get us a nomination for that seat when they're ready.

Ms. Benson Nemitz then pulled up the April 2021 Board Meeting minutes for approval with Board Member Virginia Niehaus's edits. Ms. Benson Nemitz reviewed the edits, including typos and language clarification. Board Chair Ellen asked if there were any other corrections to the minutes.

Board Member Kevin Austin had a few minor corrections. At the top of page four, Board Member Austin clarified his comments to read “human services director and county manager.”

Ms. Benson Nemitz made the clarification in the document and Board Chair Ellen asked for any further edits. Board Member Parks complemented and thanked Board Member Niehaus for her level of detail.

Board Chair Ellen then entertained a motion to approve the April 2021 minutes with the proposed corrections. Board Member Dr. Calvert Jeffers made a motion to approve, seconded by Board Member Benjamin Tillet. The motion passed unanimously.

Strategic Workplan

Board Chair Ellen invited Ms. Benson Nemitz to walk the board through the Strategic Workplan for review and approval. Ms. Benson Nemitz explained that she will walk through the presentation with Ms. Ali Zuercher, who contributed a lot to the strategic process. She then explained the purpose of the strategic workplan document and how it goes into more detail than the strategic roadmap. She detailed that this new document is intended to transparently define and measure the goals, objectives, and activities for each priority, based on the strategic roadmap. She emphasized that this is a living document, so it is different than many documents that the board is used to reviewing. She clarified that today, we want to hear from the board if it seems like this document is moving in the right direction and if there are big picture objectives that the board wants to adjust.

Ms. Zuercher then explained to the board how the Program Staff team developed the workplan by using a virtual Mural whiteboard to add and organize ideas of what we are planning to do over the four year time period, specifically focusing on year one activities. She then explained how the team translated the virtual sticky notes into a word document, which is the document we shared for this board meeting. Ms. Benson Nemitz explained that while the document can feel like a lot, the team tried to balance moving the work forward while making the plan feasible.

Ms. Benson Nemitz and Ms. Zuercher then explained the specific goals and objectives within each priority, accompanied by a slide deck. Ms. Zuercher also shared how Program Staff is in the process of translating the strategic workplan into the VMSG management platform to help track our progress and demonstrate to health departments how they can use this platform beyond accreditation evidence submission.

Ms. Benson Nemitz then specifically highlighted the activities where the board is most actively involved: providing feedback on phase 3 draft materials, providing feedback on sustainable remote site visit plans, being involved with various equity components, participating in a survey on professional relationships with legislators, and contributing to accreditation-related priorities to share with the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors and the North Carolina Public Health Association.

Ms. Benson Nemitz then ended her presentation and passed facilitation back to Board Chair Ellen for any board discussion or revisions.

Board Member Fleming El-Amin thanked the team for the hard work put into the document. He then asked about how we’re going to be able to measure strategy four and whether measures will be quantitative or just qualitative.

Ms. Benson Nemitz acknowledged that this is a hard thing to do and that our current measures are focused on consulting with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) experts, measuring the number of times we consult folks and recognizing that none of our staff are DEI experts. If we say we're doing this work, we need to bring in voices that are the experts working in this space. Ms. Benson Nemitz also explained that we will have annual survey data on how well respondents think we are addressing this priority, we will track the number of opportunities we make available, and we will determine how well program board and staff represent North Carolina demographics. She recognized that a lot of these measures focus on perspectives and welcomed any other ideas of how to measure this process. She also reminded the board that Priority 4 action items in year one are more process related of how we are going to get started on this work. She asked if this helps clarify Board Member El-Amin's question. Board Member El-Amin shared that he asks the question because he is involved with other boards having the same issue with written statements about diversity, inclusion, equity and they're asking themselves how to measure success and it's not easy. They have focused on qualitative assessment of the county, and he shared that it isn't an easy thing to do.

Ms. Benson Nemitz shared that diversity, equity, and inclusion is a new thing for the program to formally acknowledge, and as such, the year one workplan starts in a more elementary place to figure out where the program needs to focus with the help of equity experts, and she hopes that through these initial steps of figuring out our initial landscape, we can come up with more meaningful measures to incorporate in year two, three, four work plans.

Board Chair Ellen asked for any additional questions or comments and congratulated Ms. Benson Nemitz and Ms. Zuercher for the programmatic work. Administrator Belflower Thomas shared that this is important for our program and Board generally speaking, but also in helping the program navigate and strategically respond to the many requests we receive.

Board Chair Ellen asked if Administrator Belflower Thomas needed board approval for this. Administrator Belflower Thomas clarified that we do not need official approval, and Ms. Benson Nemitz added that it is less about approval as it is a chance to give feedback and make sure the board agrees with the direction, as the document will change over time with updates – the Board doesn't need to approve all the edits, but the program will share the updates along the way and seek the Board's input as a standing meeting agenda item.

Annual Survey Data

Ms. Benson Nemitz then gave a preview of the 2021 Annual Survey results, some of which are included in the Strategic Work Plan, but which the full results will not be publicly released for another month or so. She clarified that what she is sharing today is still a work in progress, but she threw together a draft to share with the board while everyone was together today. She shared that in 2021, we had a bit of a lower response – 111 respondents compared to 124 in 2020 and 196 in 2019, which makes sense to us given COVID demands. As always, most respondents were Agency Accreditation Coordinators. She shared preliminary strategic planning survey results that 70.2% of respondents agreed that the program is achieving the new mission language and that 68.1% agreed that the program is achieving the new vision language, with over 55% agreeing that the program is already doing the work of the strategic priorities. These specific numbers are in the Strategic Work Plan document. She shared that no one found no value in the program this year, which is exciting, with overall value being similar to past years. She shared that program satisfaction is similar to past years, with some responses slightly lower, which again we are not surprised by given that we did not conduct site visits this year. She emphasized that overall, the data show what we expect and is

similar to what we've seen in past years. She spoke to how we have particularly strong feedback about program communication and program staff, which is especially encouraging. Ms. Benson Nemitz shared that she is happy to answer questions about any specific data point, and that this will be publicly available as an interactive tool in October.

Next Steps

Administrator Belflower Thomas then shared next steps with the Board. She proposed that the board keep the November 19 meeting hold discuss revisions to policies and procedures and reflect on the Pamlico accreditation process. She then suggested Friday, March 11 as a new Board meeting date at the same time, 9:30 to 1:30, which is in line with the Pamlico petition dates that the Board approved earlier this meeting. There was no opposition to these two dates, so Administrator Belflower Thomas shared that Program Staff would go ahead and send calendar holds for the upcoming meetings.

Ms. Benson Nemitz then shared quick updates about the Quality Improvement (QI) Design Team and the Communications Campaign. She shared that the QI Design Team is helping the program make a lot of progress towards the QI priority in the strategic workplan. Since the last board meeting, the program put out a call for health departments to apply to participate in this process with a team of three staff members, and participation comes with a stipend for the health departments. She explained that the program was initially intending to select four health departments, but the facilitators ended up loving all of the applications so much that we invited six health departments to participate. In July, the health department teams participated in a three-hour design workshop thinking about how to do quality improvement at local health departments alongside Population Health Improvement Partners. She shared that the health departments seem to be loving the opportunity to think creatively and outside of the box. The team is meeting again this week to develop some prototypes to then test throughout the rest of the year. She explained that in some ways this is a pilot program for the health departments to test and provide feedback, but at the same time they are helping design the components.

Ms. Benson Nemitz also provided a quick update about the Communications Campaign materials that the program released in June and are now available on the NCLHDA website. She explained how these materials use a rocket ship launch pad as a metaphor of how the accreditation program helps make sure health departments have the things they need to launch and reach their various goals.

Administrator Belflower Thomas went on to share the diversity of health departments that are participating in the QI Design Team, including Burke, Caswell, Montgomery, Martin-Tyrell-Washington District, Dare, and Onslow. She shared how much happens to health departments without involving them in the process, and this is an exciting opportunity to change that process. She also shared that this work is supported by some funds from NACCHO. They share our excitement in this process, and Ms. Benson Nemitz has a follow up call with them in September.

Regarding program changes, Administrator Belflower Thomas shared that the program is trying to get into a new cadence with our annual survey taking place right before the end of the fiscal year, adjusting strategic activities every year, and seeing where we are with our milestones. Part of this is our annual survey that comes out this time of the year, which will be released in October this year as another video.

Administrator Belflower Thomas shared that the program will continue holding monthly webinars for health departments for free this fall, though registration is required. These will focus on the new HDSAI coming out in January and getting people ready to do accreditation again, but also sharing about our growing collaboration with Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). She also shared that, while last year we focused on Local Health Department contacts for the communications campaign, this year we will be working with Heather Gates and the Health Director's Association to do some advocacy for public health and accreditation to county managers and county commissioners.

Administrator Belflower Thomas reminded the board that the program will need to update operational guidelines this fall and look specifically at the unaccredited process. We will be working on those changes and how to best revise unaccredited processes. She shared that the program will put some thought into how to best structure those revisions and then will let the board know what's the best plan there.

Administrator Belflower Thomas then reminded the board about committee responsibilities, sharing that the Appeals Committee does not have current projects going on, Standards and Evidence Committee is in good shape for the fall, but the Policy and Procedure Committee will have some work this Fall.

Board Chair Ellen asked if there were any other comments or questions for the board.

Board Member Austin shared that after asking for increased communicable disease funding from the state for a long time, there is currently \$36 million in the current budget, so he hopes it stays there and encouraged people to thank General Assembly members to make sure the budget line stays there.

Board Chair Ellen asked Administrator Belflower Thomas about when the program would host the new AAC Orientation training again. Administrator Belflower Thomas shared that it is scheduled for October 5th of this year, and the program is already planning to do the training remotely. She added that the program offers this training alongside the Annual Dashboard Training, which is required for new AACs but open to everyone, and is also on October 5th. Registration will open next Tuesday. She mentioned that these trainings will take place again in April, and those dates will be in the liaison report from the Health Director's Association this month.

Ms. Rhew shared that in addition to these trainings, we also have a new e-learn that is posted to our website that staff can access at any time, so if people have a new staff on board, you can get to that from our website. She explained that this is an on demand training that staff can access at any time and it walks them through the new features of the HDSAI Interpretation document so they can get a better understanding of what it is and how to use it. The e-learn contains checks and activities throughout to make sure they are grasping the concepts, and it's designed around key questions that we get for the accreditation program. It takes about 10 minutes.

Board Member Jerry Parks asked a follow-up question to Board Member Austin's comment about if the \$36 million dollars is for the two-year budget or for each year. Board Member Austin said he wish he knew the answer, but he believed it was in both years of the biennium. Board Member Parks asked if there is anyone else we can thank other than our local legislators, asking who championed that. Board Member Austin explained that Katie Griffin and the Health Directors Association supported it to a great extent and so did they at the North Carolina Association of

County Commissioners, so multiple groups have been moving it forward. Board Member Parks mentioned it would be great to get more money after getting the same amount for 40 years.

Board Chair Ellen shared that, if nothing else came out of the pandemic, at least people now understand the importance of public health. She thanked everyone for all of the hard work, time, and attention that people have put in to the Pamlico County discussion. With no further comments, she entertained a motion to adjourn. Board Member Benjamin Tillet made a motion, seconded by Board Member Fleming El-Amin.

Next Meeting: November 19, 2021 from 9:30-1:30

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Belflower Thomas, MHA, MSPH, CPH
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