



Hi-Desert Memorial Health Care District dba
Morongo Basin Healthcare District
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
May 19, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Convened via GoToMeeting, an electronic, remote-site platform temporarily permitted as per the Executive Order issued by California's Governor in response to the COVID-19-19 pandemic. No physical site was available for the assembly.

- **Mission Statement:** *To improve the health and wellness of the communities we serve.*
- **Vision:** *A healthy Morongo Basin.*
- **Core Values:** *Commitment, Collaboration, Accountability, Dignity, Integrity.*

Board of Directors:

- Director Armstrong, Treasurer
- Director Doyle, President
- Director Evans, Secretary
- Director Markle-Greenhouse, Vice President
- Director Sullivan

Administrative Staff:

- Jackie Combs, CEO
- Karen Graley, Board Clerk
- Cindy Schmall, Director Operations
- Joe Ruddon, Director Business Dev

Guests:

- Paul Hoffman, CHC board member
- Cassie Souter, CHC board member
- Beverly Scott, CHC board member
- Valla Stultz, Waste Not Morongo Basin
- Hilary Sloan, Z107fm, media
- Tanesha Atwell, Health & Policy Specialist, Reach Out

CALL TO ORDER

Director Greenhouse called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. The meeting was convened using the electronic platform of Go-To-Meeting; there was no physical assembly.

ROLL CALL

Karen Graley, Board Clerk, conducted roll call and declared a quorum. Director Doyle joined the meeting late due to technical difficulties.

OBSERVANCES

Director Evans read the mission, vision and core value statements.

Director Greenhouse led the assembly in the pledge to the American flag.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None was presented.

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

Motion 20-26: Director Evans motioned to approve the meeting agenda as presented; motion was seconded by Director Armstrong; the motion passed by unanimous vote.

ACTION ITEMS

DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD TO MORONGO BASIN RESIDENTS IN NEED – *Joe Ruddon, Director Business Development*

Mr. Ruddon gave a PowerPoint presentation offering options for the board's consideration.



- Grocery Store Partnership with Vons, Yucca Valley:
 - Purchase 1,500 food bags with non-perishable food items, (we purchase \$25 worth of groceries, they charge \$20). District cost: \$30,000 (savings \$7,500).
 - Purchase gift cards (\$25 value) for purchasing fresh foods, dairy products, meats and household goods (i.e. toothpaste). Vons give a five percent discount; cards available with “Not for purchase of alcohol or tobacco products.” 1,000 \$25 gift cards: \$25,000 value; District cost \$23,750, savings \$1,250.
 - One-month partnership cost \$55,900.

Mr. Ruddon said he consulted food distribution experts within the Basin regarding the proposed partnership with Vons; they assured him the proposal was a good value.
- Waste Not Morongo Basin (WNMB) food distribution hub
 - WNMB distributed supplies to other agencies in Basin: pantry, church and food giveaway sites; hub is located in Joshua Tree and acquires food through wholesale vendors; and produce from USDA. Also does a soup distribution (frozen soup bags) made with produce from USDA.
 - Donate funds to WNMB who will purchase food and distribute to established food banks / programs throughout the Basin. Monthly cost is \$30,000.
 - Purchase fill-pump equipment for the production of soup bags: approximately \$5,000.
- Distribution Plan:
 - Distribute food bags at Yucca Valley and 29 Palms Community Health Center, up to 500 bags and Vons gift cards at each clinic site. Bags would be assembled at District campus. A flyer informing recipients of District services.
 - Distribute food bags to community centers in Wonder Valley, Landers and Johnson Valley, up to 500 bags without gift card, with WNMB soup bags.

Director Sullivan asked Mr. Ruddon if other food vendors, such as Stater Bros had been contacted. He stated he had not spoken with them. Director Sullivan asked him to contact Stater Bros.

Director Armstrong: “Our Community Health Needs Assessment showed that some Basin residents have difficulty getting reasonably priced groceries and fresh produce. I would like to see the project beefed up and make a bigger impact in the community. This project is well within our charter. Love the idea of the imprinted bags with our logo. If we could deliver more food, we’ll make a difference in the community.”

Director Sullivan: “I’m completely in sync with what Director Armstrong said. I believe we are going to need some kind of system in this program for the delivery of food to people who can’t get it otherwise. I’d like to consider the program spanning two months; I like the idea of a larger scale program.”

Director Evans: “I’m fully supportive of the project. We definitely should do a second month. I would like to hear feedback from Waste Not Morongo Basin and the Morongo Unified School District to help us better understand the need in our community. I agree partnering with people and organizations who can get food into homes is a good plan.



Director Greenhouse: “Perhaps LIFT could help deliver to homes. Waste Not Morongo Basin has resources for fresh produce and I’d like to hear from Valla Stultz.”

Joe Ruddon: “There is another option to purchase food by the pound from Vons and they would deliver to Waste Not Morongo Basin for distribution.”

Valla Stultz, Waste Not Morongo Basin: “There’s around 3,000 people regularly using food banks in the Basin. We order a pallet of fresh food and distribute till it is gone. We work with a broad group of people in the Basin who distribute at food banks. However, some people don’t know how to cook so we work with Bruce’s kitchen to make soup and flash freeze it for distribution. We distribute recipes with the produce and heating instructions for the soup bags. The Vons dry-food package distribution is good; it’s safe and not time sensitive like produce. Soup is packaged in a quart bag and feeds a family of four. However, we need a piece of equipment, a pump fill station to transfer the soup into the bags more efficiently. The 40-pound kettle fills 120 bags of soup. If we do more than one batch of soup a week, we would need to expand our refrigeration space. A walk-in fridge and freezer, installed, is \$102,000. All schools in the state have been charged with providing breakfast lunch and dinner each day to children since middle of March.”

Director Greenhouse said MUSD provides breakfast and lunch only.

Director Doyle asked Valla Stultz for an estimate for the requested equipment; \$5,000 for the fill pump.

Director Armstrong: “I am not a fan to buy equipment. My proposal is about putting food on the table of hungry families. If the Waste Not Morongo Basin is providing food to 3,000 families, the proposed amount of \$250,000 would feed these 3,000 families for months. We need to get feet on the ground and get this project rolling. We need to do a little more research and make this grander.”

Director Greenhouse: “The research presented tonight is great. Packing our own food bags is labor intensive.” She thanked Joe Ruddon for his work on the project.

Director Evans: Thanked Valla Stultz for the information and the big picture. She proposed to get something out there as quick as possible and then consider other options later. She would like to do the partnership with Vons and make a donation to Waste Not Morongo Basin. She asked Jackie Combs if we could reach out to the clinic patients to see if a food gift card would be helpful to them.

Director Sullivan: “I think we need a blend of these ideas on a grander scale and should use our staff. Some people can’t pick up food and need it delivered; some need help purchasing items, i.e. gift card. MUSD is doing what they do; somehow our program has to incorporate the housebound. I don’t like the idea of fresh produce because of the waste component. I would prefer having food pick up at the clinics.”

Director Greenhouse: “The first eight weeks of MUSD food distribution was about 8,000 meals. Food service workers are there every day providing breakfast and lunch to families with children.”

Director Doyle: “Whatever we do would be a supplement to what already exists in the community. But we could work with Waste Not Morongo Basin and other food banks throughout the Basin. I know we’re wanting to have additional information and discussion about this. I would like to authorize a portion of the project and follow up with a second phase.”



Motion 20-27: Director Evans motioned to approve the distribution of food to Morongo Basin residents in need through the Vons partnership for \$55,900, and a donation to Waste Not Morongo Basin for food \$30,000, and the fill-pump equipment \$5,000; second by Director Sullivan; discussion followed.

- Director Sullivan: “I’m not happy with the breadth of the presentation. I want Stater Bros brought into the mix. We have to be prepared to take coordination upon ourselves, and be prepared to use our own resources to deliver to those who can’t come and get it. I like the Waste Not Morongo Basin program. We need to take care of the greatest number of people as soon as possible.”
- Director Armstrong: “I don’t feel like we’re getting there tonight. No disrespect to Joe Rudden, but I expected grizzly bear but got a teddy bear. I don’t feel like buying a piece of equipment is what we should do. I want the focus on food and people. Can we order truckloads of food? Is there a matrix that says these are the key products that people want? We have a huge space on the District campus to pack up boxes and give them to Waste Not Morongo Basin. I’m not getting a sense of magnitude to make a difference in the community. The presentation fell short of what I was hoping for.”
- Joe Rudden: “One of the options is for Vons to fill trucks and deliver where we wanted it.”
- Director Doyle: “How much of our funds are we wanting to dedicate over what period of time?”
- Director Armstrong: “\$500,000 over two months.”
- Director Sullivan: “I’m thinking along the same lines as Director Armstrong. Perhaps we could commit to \$100,000 per month with a commitment to three months.”
- Director Evans: “I support \$500,000 over the next three months.”
- Cassie Souter asked where the money was coming from. Director Doyle stated it would come out of investment reserves. She asked, if we got big trucks of food, who would be packing the food? Director Doyle said that staff would be responsible for the operational component.
- Director Greenhouse: “I would like to approach this project as not \$500,000 out the door, but maybe \$150,000 and then move forward if we need more over three months, June, July and August.”
- Director Doyle: “We agree on three months.”
- Director Sullivan: “We have some consensus on the three months’ timeline; \$500,000 with a blend.”
- Cassie Souter asked how do we know what the demand is? Director Doyle said we know we have a high rate of poverty in the Basin based on our Community Health Needs Assessment and a higher rate of unemployment.
- Director Doyle summarized the discussion: \$300,000 to \$500,000 over the next three months. She asked if the motion could be modified.



- Director Evans amended the motion to authorize from \$300,000 to \$500,000 for food distribution over three months and that Staff will bring back to the Board a solution for distribution.
- Misty proposed we get \$111,800 to Vons for two months; plus 35,000 to Waste Not Morongo Basin for food and fill pump purchase, for a total \$146,800 for immediate distribution; with a maximum budget of \$500,000 over the next 3 months.

Director Armstrong expressed concern of boxing-in staff with these details. He would like to give Joe Rudson opportunity to explore more options. He is categorically against financing equipment capital expenditures.

General consensus to continue the meeting to Thursday.

Director Doyle asked to set the budget so Staff can move forward and get food out to the community.

Director Sullivan: “We have consensus for the budget of \$500,000. I would like have the rest of the project and action tabled to Thursday.”

Joe Rudson: “I will be calling organizations for options but don’t know if I will have the necessary information by Thursday.”

Jackie Combs: “I totally appreciate trying to get food to the people. We’ll figure out how to do it. I’m concerned about using existing staff to deliver the project because we’re currently bringing clinics back up to speed for increased patient volumes. I appreciate not wanting to pay overhead to a third party. I don’t know if we can have it ready by Thursday’s meeting. We will bring an update to you at Thursday’s meeting.

Director Doyle: “Let’s approve the budget of \$500,000 and continue this meeting.”

Amended Motion: Director Evans amended the motion to approve \$500,000 for food distribution over the next three months; with Staff to bring recommendation for distribution of monies. Second amended by Director Sullivan; motion passed unanimously.

Director Doyle: “We have a budget; we have a direction. Staff can move forward. Appreciate everyone’s input. Our community is going to be fed by MBHD.”

MEETING ADJOURNED

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m. and continued to Thursday, May 21, 2020.

Board meeting minutes recorded by K. Graley, Board Clerk.



Marge Doyle, President



Misty Evans, Secretary