



Hi-Desert Memorial Health Care District dba  
**Morongo Basin Healthcare District**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**October 5, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.**

*Convened on the La Contenta campus; the public was invited to attend the meeting on campus or via Microsoft Teams, an electronic, remote-site platform.*

- **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 Cooper
- Director Evans
- Director Markle-Greenhouse
- Director Savitt
- Director Stiemsma

Administrative Staff:

- Cindy Schmall, CEO
- Karen Graley, Board Clerk (*remote*)
- Joe Ruddon, Chief Community Programs Officer
- Deborah Anderson, CFO
- Tom Mannix, HR Director
- Kathy Alkire, Patient Educator (*remote*)
- Janeen Duff, Program Development Liaison

Guests:

Linda Evans, Chief Strategy Officer, Desert Market, Tenet  
Sarah Bridge, Senior Legislative Advocate, ACHD (*remote*)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Director Greenhouse called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was convened on the La Contenta campus and by electronic platform using Microsoft Teams.

**ROLL CALL**

Karen Graley, Board Clerk, conducted roll call and declared a quorum.

**OBSERVANCES**

Director Cooper read the mission, vision, and core value statements.  
Director Stiemsma led the assembly in the pledge to the American flag.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments were presented.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA**

Sarah Bridges, guest presenter, requested to be moved later in the meeting because of schedule conflict.

**Motion 23-51:** Director Stiemsma motioned to approve the meeting agenda as amended; the motion was seconded by Director Savitt and passed by unanimous vote.



## **APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA**

**Motion 23-52:** Savitt motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; motion was seconded by Director Stiemsma and passed by unanimous vote.

- Minutes: Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors, September 7, 2023.

## **PRESENTATION**

DESERT CARE NETWORK QUARTERLY UPDATE – *Linda Evans, Chief Strategy Officer of Community Advocacy, Desert Care Network*

Ms. Evans thanked the board for the opportunity to report the following on behalf of Karen Faulis, CEO of Hi-Desert Medical Center.

### **Capital Project Update: Acute Hospital**

- New nurse call light system replacement in the acute hospital scheduled for Q3-4 2023
- New centralized telemetry monitoring system project approved and with the vendor for scheduling installation.
- Acute hospital emergency generator project in process. Anticipated completion Q4 2024
- In-building cellular upgrade project started
- 6 new lab analyzers scheduled for replacement Q4/Q1
- EV Charging Stations awaiting SCE approval.

**COVID-19 Update:** No significant increases or surges noted.

### **Recruitment Efforts:**

- New CCC/SNF Administrator position filled with candidate beginning early October.
- OB/GYN recruitment underway to join existing group.
- New Pediatrician to begin participating in Emergency Department on call panel in November (LLUH trained).

### **Local Event Participation:**

- HDMC continues to hold blood drives with LifeStream as do the other Desert Care Network hospitals. The need for blood remains critical. Next HDMC Blood Drive at Helen Gray Education Center is Wednesday, October 11 from 10am – 2pm. Appointments can be made at [www.lstream.org](http://www.lstream.org) – walk-ins are also welcome.
- HDMC/DCN is pleased to participate in the upcoming MBHD Health and Resource Fair in Twentynine Palms.
- HDMC/DCN was a proud sponsor of the Basin Wide Foundation annual fundraiser held on the hospital campus at the end of August.

### **Trauma Update:**

- Designation on November 16, 2022 - 15 patients through year-end. Majority were traffic collisions and geriatric falls – via EMS
- YTD Sept 2023 – 189 patients. Majority continue to be traffic collisions and geriatric falls, followed by adult (15-64) and pediatric falls – via EMS (80%+)

### **People:**

SEIU-UHW has issued a strike notice at eleven of twelve Tenet California hospitals for October 23 – 27. This includes our Desert Care Network facilities and is the non-nursing staff. We have planned for staffing accordingly and continue to negotiate in good faith to reach an agreement.



Director Cooper asked about the Continuing Care Center. A new administrator was hired to cover regulatory requirements.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY – *Sarah Bridge, Senior Legislative Advocate, ACHD*  
Cindy introduced Sarah Bridge and thanked her for

The governor has until October 14 to sign bills. California doesn't require the governor to act for a bill to become law. He has already signed 100 bills and has hundreds remaining. He signed the minimum wage bill. You can access bill status on gov page. He vetoed SB799 which was amended last minute to allow striking workers to receive unemployment insurance paid by the employer.

SB525 health worker minimum wage: ACHD is neutral on the measure because it was carefully negotiated at the end of the legislative session. It essentially creates four tiers or phases of implementation. Wage increases start at \$18 an hour in June 2024 and rise to \$21 an hour in 2025. It is unclear if the governor will sign the bill as it may cost the state \$2 billion annually which is a huge concern with the current deficit. He had stated he would not sign bills that require state funding. This bill covers every employee from housekeeping to painters and raises wages from \$16/hour to \$21/hour. Just to adjust the wages at CHC is approximately \$218,000 annually plus equity raises (for employees who's hourly wage currently exceeds minimum wage). The long-term impact is a 3.5% pay raise every year. In 2025 it raises from \$21/hour to \$25/hour. It covers all types of health employers.

AB557: the bill would allow teleconferencing for public meetings, it's on the governor's desk waiting for signatures; we expect him to sign it.

SB282: two-year bill to allow FQHC/RHC to bill for same day visits. Currently Medi-Cal pays only one visit per day. It comes up for signature in January 2024.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

POLICIES – *Cindy Schmall, CEO*

Cindy Schmall presented three policies for board consideration.

- HR-200 Employee Discounts on Services: She stated we have added language to define the relationship between the district employee as a patient and the behavioral health providers. Because of confidentiality requirements for mental health, employees will be referred to an outside service.
- HR-222 Job Postings: Ms. Schmall stated we have had significant issues with employee recruitment. Postings are uploaded to the internal Intranet and the external Internet, as well as career-builder websites. The onboarding has been a seven-day window and we've lost candidates for such a long window. This policy changes the onboarding window to three days.
- HR-233 Confidentiality of Personnel Records: The policy was changed to define the timeframe for issuing copies of the personnel file.
  - **Motion 23-53**: Director Cooper motioned to approve policies HR-200, HR-222, and HR-233 as presented, second by Director Stiemsma; motion passed by unanimous vote.

## **REPORTS**

ACHD CONFERENCE UPDATE – *Directors Stiemsma and Greenhouse*

Director Stiemsma noted there were good presentations offered at the conference. The one she found most interesting was about AI technology and its use in healthcare. It can be used to



generate documentation in patient healthcare records, i.e., recording conversations between healthcare provider and patient and then transcribing it into the record. This is encouraging as the provider can focus on the patient rather than on documentation. She also attended a fentanyl discussion and reviewed a case study. Narcan is designed to be preventative and help people avoid overdosing. Camaria Healthcare district presented a program where seniors in care facilities use oculus machines that allows them to engage a tour to combat depression and isolation. Ventura County.

Cindy Schmall attended a presentation on community health workers. Healthy Petaluma developed a collaboration between the healthcare district, the city, and the county. Their community health workers focused on hypertension and visit patients in their home. It was inspirational how the community health workers were serving the community. We have the possibility of developing a similar program for our hypertension and diabetes programs. She said she wants to explore how to implement the program in our community.

She spoke to a second presentation where Camaria Healthcare District received funding to develop a new program. They purchased five Oculus VR machines. Seniors can sign up and come to the facility where they go on a group tour of a particular place, such as Greece, and then have cookies and coffee afterwards to talk about their tour. The program addresses depression, isolation, and loneliness. They also visit homes and provide intervention for individuals as well.

Most helpful was a panel of the Santa Cruz County supervisor, and the person in charge of rural health county collaboration. They did a question-and-answer time and explained the best way to get county support. Basically, we should be talking to our county supervisor and partnering with the county on specific projects for the Morongo Basin.

Director Greenhouse shared that ACHD President, Cathy Martin, made a presentation to recognize the three ACHD board members who had resigned this year. She spoke highly of Director Evans and her contribution to their board.

#### COMMUNITY PROGRAMS REPORT – *Joe Ruddon, Chief Community Programs Officer*

Chief Community Program Office, Joe Ruddon referred the Directors to his written report in the agenda packet. He highlighted the upcoming health fair in 29 Palms, and the TAG grant award.

#### FINANCIAL REPORT – *Deborah Anderson, CFO*

Ms. Anderson reported in her written report that the consolidated financials for the month of August show income of \$187,978 and year to date income of \$247,645. The non-clinic financials for the month of August show income of \$208,263 and year to date income of \$326,966. The clinic financials for the month of August show a loss of \$(20,284) and year to date loss of \$(79,321).

The finance department has been working on integrated payments with eClinicalWorks (eCW). This has involved working with a new credit card vendor, getting new card swipers, and working with eCW on setup. This should give patients more options to pay, including the ability to log into the Healow portal and pay online. It also means that payments taken at the front desk will go directly into eCW instead of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party portal. It should make our payments process more efficient and less prone to errors.

Patient services revenue (net) is down due to one dental provider budgeted, but who has not yet started. Also, one provider is out on extended leave. This also is the reason why salaries are under budget. Grant revenue variance is due to the loss of personnel to carry on grant duties. A replacement is being sought. Capitation fees variance is due to more patients on the capitation





roster than budgeted. Quality variance is due to ongoing efforts to bolster quality. Purchased services variance is due to less legal fees than budgeted and outside contractor for cost reporting not expended yet. Since providers have been out, medical supplies are also under budget. Also supplies include vaccinations which typically are incurred in the fall.

**Motion 23-54:** Director Savitt motioned to accept the financial reports as presented, second by Director Stiemsma; motion passed by unanimous vote.

### **CEO STAFF REPORT**

Ms. Schmall referred the Directors to her report under tab 5. Additionally, she highlighted:

- Kaiser Permanente visited unannounced. They toured the Yucca Valley clinic and are seeking to contract District services for their subscribers.
- She updated the Directors on the leased property on the Yucca Valley campus and that the tenant will be exiting the property by November 1.
- There were no compliance concerns reported for the month of September.
- She introduced Tom Mannix, HR Director. He will be working with Tela Thornett, who has moved to that department. Tom will be managing the employee engagement survey.
- Niko Lunetta has stepped into the IT Manager’s position, and Safety Officer for the District.
- She reviewed the patient visit data attached to her report. For Yucca Valley dental visits, the new provider was late coming on board contributing to the lower volume. 29 Palms adult volumes are low as we currently don’t have the space to provide care to a large volume of patients.
- She reviewed the Tenet lease. One of the things raised at the ACHD conference was seismic upgrade. She was pleased to report that the hospital is fully compliant with the new requirements.
- There is no new information on the Split Rock project. She is hoping to have a structure on the property by March 2024.

### **CALENDAR REVIEW AND COORDINATION**

- October 12: CHC Governing Board regular business meeting
- October 12: Employee forum
- October 14: Community Health and Resource Fair at Freedom Plaza, 29 Palms
- November 4: Strategic Planning special meeting, 10a-2p
- DISCUSSION to reschedule December meeting: Meeting will remain on December 7.

### **DIRECTOR COMMENTS**

**DIRECTOR COOPER:** “The information presented by Sarah Bridge was so informative. Appreciate the update. The financial impact to the District is disturbing.

**DIRECTOR SAVITT:** “I enjoyed Sarah’s report.”

**DIRECTOR STIEMSMA:** “Good to see Linda Evans.” She welcomed Tom Mannix and stated it is nice to free-up Cindy so she can focus on strategic issues.

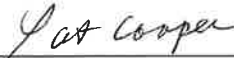


DIRECTOR EVANS: "Ditto!"

DIRECTOR GREENHOUSE: She thanked staff for their work and continuing efforts.

**ADJOURN MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Cooper".

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Pat Cooper, Secretary of the Board

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