

Hi-Desert Memorial Health Care District dba
Morongo Basin Healthcare District
BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
December 4, 2025 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 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, Equity.*

Board of Directors:

- Director Cooper
- Director Evans
- Director Markle-Greenhouse
- Director Stiemsma (*not present*)

Administrative Staff:

- CEO Cindy Schmall (*remote*)
- Debbie Anderson, CFO
- Tricia Gehrlein, CPE&CO (*remote*)
- Karen Graley, Board Clerk (*remote*)
- Beverly Krushat, Administrative Services Manager
- Janeen Duff, Director of Strategic Initiatives (*remote*)

Guests

- Sarah Bridge, VP Advocacy & Strategy, ACHD
- Linda Evans, Chief Strategy Officer, Desert Care Network
- Marc Greenhouse, CHC board member
- Eric Menendez, CHC board member

CALL TO ORDER

Director Greenhouse called the meeting to order at 6:06 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 a roll call and declared a quorum. Director Stiemsma was not present.

OBSERVANCES

Director Evans read the mission and vision statements. Director Greenhouse led the assembly in the pledge of allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eric Menendez spoke in support of the proposed use of Airway property as presented at the November meeting.

APPROVAL OF THE MEETING AGENDA

- **Motion 25-69:** Director Evans motioned to approve the meeting agenda; second by Director Cooper, motion passed by unanimous vote.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- **Motion 25-70:** Director Evans motioned to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing and regular meetings of the Board of Directors dated November 6, 2025, second by Director Cooper. Director Evans requested that the record reflect her comments at the November meeting regarding the approval of additional funding for the Split Rock project in 29 Palms; that the District, in spite of the delays and increased expenses, is still saving money over



leasing other property as we had done in the past, and that this project is an investment in the 29 Palms community. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

PRESENTATIONS

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – Sarah Bridge, VP Advocacy & Strategy, ACHD

Ms. Bridge gave a high-level overview of State legislation and what to expect in the new year.

- SB707 (passed) extends the sunset on two-way telephonic communication for elected officials under the Brown Act.
- AB1113 (pending) to exempt FQHC and tribal providers from inclusion on the 90%-spend on patient care. This is a two-year bill which has failed to move out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. ACHD advocacy committee approved a no-position on that ballot initiative so that ACHD can engage with the campaign very early on. This enables ACHD to advocate no placement on the ballot, and to educate the public should the measure be presented on the ballot.
- SB29 (pending) removes sunset on SB447 previous legislation from 2019 that allowed heirs to continue legal actions after the patient dies. ACHD advocates against SB29 as it provides a form of double-recovery and is contrary to the legislative intent of SB447.
- AB1018 (pending) defines automated decision-making tools for regulative control. ACHD advocates against this bill because the definition of automated software is too broad and not specific to generative AI. The definition includes any software that makes decisions as a computational function, (i.e. Outlook, EHRs, billing software), making basic systems heavily regulated over software that cannot be changed by the user to meet regulatory requirements.
- AB339 (passed) changes notification timeframe for collective bargaining to 45 days rather than 120 days.
- AB8533 (passed) allows healthcare districts to use a design-build authority for construction projects.

Director Evans encouraged Sarah Bridge to advocate for the continuance of telehealth. Discussion followed about patient accessibility to healthcare via telehealth. As she concluded her presentation, Sarah noted that voters will make a lot of decisions on this next ballot. At this time, there are over 30 ballot initiatives covering a broad spectrum of issues, from increased taxation to meet seismic upgrades to housing and uber related initiatives.

DESERT CARE NETWORK – Linda Evans, Chief Strategy Officer, Desert Care Network

Ms. Evans began her update by announcing that Hi-Desert Medical Center (HDMC) has a new clinic lab director and a new food and nutrition manager. They are still searching for a permanent labor and delivery director, and chief administrative officer.

Local Event Participation:

- “Desert Survival” series community event held on September 19 with 134 attendees
- LifeStream Blood Drive at HDMC on Oct 9; next scheduled for Dec 17 & Dec 30
- Morongo Basin Community Health Fair – w/District in Twentynine Palms
- CCC received “Best of the Best of Morongo Basin” for Long-Term Care

Tenet ACA Open Enrollment Initiative:

Tenet has launched an initiative in response to new insurance challenges, specifically targeting those currently enrolled in health insurance exchange programs such as Covered California. We are doing what we can to educate the community about open enrollment and the new, required re-application for benefits; that there is no automatic renewal like it has been in the past. With financial assistance no longer available in the new year, premiums are expected to skyrocket for some. Individuals not covered by Medi-Cal, Medicare or insured by an employer, may be at risk for lapse in health insurance coverage.

In response to this potential disruption, we are teaming up with local nonprofits and elected officials to have certified application counselors available at public gatherings to help people walk through and navigate the Covered California website for reenrollment.

The District has a strong program to assist individuals with enrollment. The more we can do together to try to keep people insured, the better we're going to be in terms of the emergency rooms and the continued good health of our communities.

Trauma Update: We are still treating a range of 27 to 50 cases per month in the hi-desert area with the majority being falls and traffic collisions.

Measure AA – Validation Action Update:

You may recall Measure AA passed with 72.34% of the voters in November 2024. Desert Healthcare District chose to file a validation action on the lease purchase agreement with Desert Regional / Tenet but Eisenhower Medical Center filed legal action against the District's validation action, arguing and opposing the non-compete clause and other items. The Judge initially continued the hearing to September 30 which has been reschedule to December 17.

Capital Project Update:

- Acute Hospital
 - Patient cardiac monitoring system replacement for remaining areas of ER, ICU and Periop / Recovery. The project remains on track for completion in December 2025.
 - CT Scan replacement project in process with completion estimated in Q2 2026. Mobile CT delivered December 1.
 - Generator project expected completion date is Q1 2026.
 - CCC: Resident bathroom flooring, shower tiling replacement and room refresh project with expected completion at the end of December 2025.

As of Tuesday evening, San Gorgonio District agreed to contract with Desert Care Network for management oversight, making corporate resources available to San Gorgonio's hospital.

Cindy Schmall asked about the recruitment of a mammography tech which has become a health issue in the community. She requested to meet with both Karen Faulis and Linda Evans to explore solutions.

ACTION ITEM

APPROVE ANNUAL CEO PERFORMANCE EVALUATION TOOL -Cindy Schmall, CEO

Ms. Schmall presented the tool for discussion. The form takes language directly from the District's Bylaws and presents it based on Key Performance Indicators. The CEO goals can be changed for the specific year being evaluated.



Director Evans asked about the rating measure used on the form. Ms. Schmall stated it is the standard measurement used for all employee evaluations: below expectations, meets expectations and exceeds expectations.

- **Motion 25-71** Motion by Director Evans, second by Director Cooper, to approve the annual CEO Performance Evaluation tool as presented. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

STAFF REPORTS

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Janeen Duff, Director Strategic Initiatives presented the updated information for the 2025 six-month period. She reviewed goals, strategies and tactics to meet the defined goals.

GOAL #1: Recognize healthcare as a human right and advocate for opportunities for all community residents to attain their full health potential.

- Strategy 2 has included providing continued assistance to community members for enrollment into health insurance programs.
- Strategy 4 is collaboration with San Bernardino County departments for the benefit of improved healthcare to Basin residents; including participation on county preschedule services, the Smile program, and the Department of Health committees. January 14 is the San Bernardino County Vital Signs public forum in Yucca Valley to collect community feedback about health needs in the Basin.

GOAL #2: Collaborate with other organizations to support community initiatives that enhance the general education and health literacy of the District's residents.

- Strategy 1 has included District health fairs with participation from other agencies and organizations. District community health workers (CHW) participate in community events to link members to healthcare services. The outreach team hosts health presentations and participates in community events.
- Strategy 2 provided training and certification for improved CHW effectiveness.

GOAL #3: Collaborate on initiatives to proactively improve or enhance the economic stability of our District residents.

- Strategy 1 specifically includes increasing community participation in the CalFesh food assistance program by 10%. We achieved that goal.

GOAL #4: Advocate for interventions and policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels that promote enhancing the built environment in the District's service area.

- Strategy 2 calls for collaboration with San Bernardino County to identify and reduce lead levels in Basin children. While our pediatricians make referral for testing, compliance is low. A lead testing machine was purchased for the Split Rock location and another machine for Yucca Valley is scheduled for purchase.

GOAL #5: Proactively improve the financial viability of the District to sustain the organization for residents' health needs.

- Strategy 2 calls for identifying ways to capture additional revenue through appropriate coding. The District contracted with a new billing company in June of this year and is waiting for a coding audit to determine improvement.



- Strategy 3 seeks to reduce employee turnover rate and costs by 15%. Currently the turnover rate stands at 12%.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Anderson reported that the consolidated financials for the month of October 2025 show income of \$146,545 and year to date income of \$994,287. Non-clinic financials for October show income of \$184,196 and a year-to-date income of \$855,388. The health center financials for the month of October show income of \$(37,652) and year to date income of \$138,899.

Considering the number of providers that have turned over/out on leave, the October financials did well. The clinics did show a net loss, but we have been expecting that and the loss for the clinics was minor at \$(37,652). Operating expenses for the month were \$898,346 and budget was \$921,762, so now that some of the larger expense variances that we talked about in previous months have completed, the expenses seem to be coming back in line with budget. Quality payments were confirmed to change in January 2026.

There are further changes coming to the 340B program. HRSA is doing a pilot rebate program, which means the monies we currently receive for certain (not all) drugs will be paid as a rebate (instead of when the pharmacy purchases the drug). This means that the payments will experience a longer lag time.

- **Motion 25-72:** Director Evans motioned to accept the financial report as presented, second by Director Cooper; motion passed by unanimous vote.

CALENDAR REVIEW AND COORDINATION

Calendars for December and January were reviewed.

- January meeting rescheduled to January 5 because of the holiday, noting that the meeting time was changed to 6:15 p.m..
- Director Greenhouse drew attention to the Point in Time Count and that our outreach team will be participating in the effort.

DIRECTOR COMMENTS

- **DIRECTOR COOPER:** commented that tonight's meeting was highly educational.
- **DIRECTOR EVANS:** spoke of her appreciation for staff and all they do for the community.
- **DIRECTOR GREENHOUSE:** thanked staff for their reports and useful information.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.



Patricia Cooper, Secretary of the Board

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