

**KITSAP PUBLIC HEALTH BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
Regular Meeting  
July 11, 2023**

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Mayor Becky Erickson at 10:16 a.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Charlotte Garrido moved and Mayor Greg Wheeler seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the June 6, 2023, regular meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

The July consent agenda included the following contracts:

- 2203 Amendment 13, *WA State Department of Health, Consolidated Contract*
- 2265 Amendment 1, *WA State University of Washington Extension, Clallam County, Youth Cannabis & Commercial Tobacco Prevention Program (YCCTPP)*
- 2355, *WA State Department of Ecology, Pollution Prevention Assistance Partnership*

Mayor Wheeler moved and Commissioner Garrido seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dr. Katherine Hebard, a healthcare provider for Kitsap OBGYN, said she wanted to speak today to thank the Board and to applaud them for passing Resolution 2023-04, declaring healthcare access and high costs public health crises. Dr. Hebard noted she has commented at a previous Board meeting to share concerns about the dwindling lack of care providers in the primary care and OBGYN sectors. She has not noticed any improvements in that matter and said it is projected to become worse. The Navy has proposed the addition of an aircraft carrier to Bremerton as a home port. This would lead to an estimated 30,000 new residents of reproductive age as well as their dependents and families. With the current number of primary care and OBGYN providers in Kitsap, the community providers would be unable to accommodate them. Additionally, St. Michael Medical Center received approval to build a new tower at the hospital. Dr. Hebard said the hospital has decided that the family birth center will not move to the new tower or receive a remodel of the facility due to a cost assessment analysis that states the center does not produce enough money to make the decision worthwhile. The family birth center has been in place for over 25 years, and they have been experiencing ongoing issues with upkeep and makes operations more challenging. Several times, the number of babies being cared for has gone beyond the capacity of the nursery and are moved to an auxiliary nursery, consisting of patient care rooms. The gestational age of infants treated in the neonatal care nursery has been lowered to 32 weeks, leading to more babies to care for. The aged facility and an ongoing wage gap for primary care providers, pediatricians, and OBGYNs have made it difficult to recruit

providers. Dr. Hebard said the expansion of Kitsap's community population, struggles to recruit a workforce to replace the aging provider population, and the difficulty in paying providers and staff a competitive wage will make the healthcare access issues worse. She said she feels strongly that Resolution 2023-04 is legitimate and believes it might help the community by declaring this sector of healthcare a critical access location and zip code, which may lead to better funding and reimbursement for providers. At the very least, it will help move the community in the right direction.

There was no further public comment.

## **HEALTH OFFICER/ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

### Health Officer Update:

Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer at the Health District, began his report by offering his condolences to all members of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe on the death of Chairman Jeromy Sullivan. He said Chairman Sullivan was an astonishing person, a genuine leader, and a good-hearted advocate for the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe.

Dr. Morrow noted that Dr. Herbie Duber is in attendance at today's Board meeting. Dr. Duber is a full professor and works in the emergency medicine department at the University of Washington School of Medicine. He also has faculty appointments at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, and the University of Washington Center for Health Innovation and Policy Science. Dr. Morrow told Board members that he is available as a resource if there are questions regarding the draft resolution that will be presented towards the end of today's meeting.

Next, Dr. Morrow provided the Board with a retrospective look at the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus, SARS-CoV-2, has proven to be a formidable opponent.. One type of coronavirus that causes the common cold may have been the virus that caused the Russian flu, in which over one million people were killed between 1889 and 1894. Two coronaviruses called SARS and MERS cause severe lung infections that kill 15% and 35% respectively of people that are infected. Dr. Morrow went on to note that one reason coronaviruses are so prevalent is that they infect a wide variety of animals. The first two cases that occurred in Kitsap were Marnie Malpass and her husband Dr. Tom Malpass. Dr. Morrow thanked Dr. Malpass for actively advocating for Ms. Malpass' testing and treatment and for sharing their story with Kitsap Sun's Nathan Pilling.

Dr. Morrow then went on to explain that COVID-19 testing was not widely available in Kitsap early in the pandemic. He noted that in the fall of 2020, the average amount of time from onset of symptoms until completion of the case investigation was around one week, with significant delays in getting results from "send away" labs. Health District staff were reassigned from their normal duties to complete case and contact investigations.

Next, Dr. Morrow discussed the COVID-19 outbreak that occurred at St. Michael Medical Center in August of 2020. The first case was discovered on August 4, 2020. Within the next two weeks, test results from widescale testing showed this to be the largest reported acute hospital outbreak in the country at that time. Dr. Morrow noted that at the time of the outbreak, there were no written guidelines for this scenario. He said that the Health District wrote the guidelines and Dr. Morrow thanked the Health District staff that helped with this work. The guidelines required that all new patients admitted to the hospital be tested for COVID-19 and tested weekly, that the hospital would notify all employees and patients who were exposed to the disease, and that staff adhere to the proper use of N95 or other type of respiratory protection. Dr. Morrow went on to explain that the Health District established community-based testing sites for COVID-19. He said that although health insurance and the federal government paid for the tests and the lab processing fees, there was no system in place to pay healthcare workers who were putting themselves at risk by administering tests. To overcome this challenge, the Health District reassigned public health nurses to administer tests and requested the help of Medical Reserve Corps volunteers.

Dr. Morrow continued his report by discussing COVID-19 vaccines. They became available in December of 2020, though the supply of vaccine was still limited. Due to the limited supply, certain groups of people were prioritized based on the risks to their health while others had to wait until more vaccine was supplied. Several members of the public shouted at and threatened Health District staff because they were unable to receive the vaccine right away. Dr. Morrow thanked the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office and the Poulsbo Police Department for responding to these threats and ensuring the safety of Health District staff. To provide vaccinations to the public in a timely manner the Health District established mass vaccination clinics. With the help of Health District staff, epidemiologists, and volunteers, the Health District was able to administer vaccines, monitor side effect rates, and confirm that the vaccine was safe and highly effective. Dr. Morrow noted that the data from this effort was used to inform policy decisions such as requiring Health District employees to get vaccinated and he thanked all the employees who received the vaccine. As with the COVID-19 testing system, providers who opted to administer the vaccine were often uncompensated for their work. Dr. Morrow said the Health District will forever be grateful to the doctors, nurses, and volunteers who administered vaccines after business hours and on weekends, despite the lack of compensation.

Next, Dr. Morrow explained how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated health inequities in Kitsap County. He thanked the Board for unanimously passing Resolution 2021-01 declaring racism a public health crisis. The passing of this resolution allowed the Health District to build the Equity Program to begin to address the inequities that became apparent during the pandemic. Dr. Morrow said that by the summer of 2021, all members of the public who wanted to be vaccinated received the vaccine. The Health District worked to make the vaccine desirable and easy to get for those who were unsure. When vaccine administration rates slowed down significantly, new COVID-19 variants began to emerge, causing hospitalizations and deaths. The pandemic persisted for another year, during which time the community saw bottlenecks occur in hospitals, a degradation of emergency medical services with ambulances used as ancillary emergency department holding rooms, a significant rise in healthcare worker resignations, a

dramatic increase of mental health and substance use disorders, delayed education for children, and economic damage.

Dr. Morrow finished his report by providing the Board with a list of conclusions he has arrived at. He encouraged Board members to read through the list and to consider them.

When given the opportunity to ask questions, Member Drayton Jackson asked Dr. Morrow what lessons were learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and response. Dr. Morrow said that the lessons learned are endless and that the Health District continues to learn from that experience. He noted that partnerships and community relationships are highly important in emergency responses and that the Health District is working to sustain the partnerships that were built during the response. Dr. Morrow also said that it has become clear that healthcare systems could be used to minimize health inequities in society, but that it was not configured to do that. The pandemic took healthcare systems to the edge of breaking down and they are still struggling to recover. He went on to say that there are many components of the healthcare economic system that were counterproductive to a successful emergency response, particularly the lack of a mechanism to compensate healthcare workers administering tests and vaccines. Dr. Morrow said the COVID-19 after-action report that will be presented will provide additional information on lessons learned.

There was no further comment.

## **COVID-19 AFTER-ACTION REPORT**

Gabrielle Hadly, the Program Manager for Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (PHEPR), began the presentation by thanking Dr. Pattijean Hooper and Sarah van der Capellen of Tetra Tech and Michelle McMillan of the Health District for their work in developing this report. Ms. Hadly also thanked everyone in Kitsap who gave their time and thoughts to the project.

Ms. Hadly explained that the after-action report involved collecting information and analyzing evidence from a variety of sources. They spoke with community partners, volunteers, first responders, private sector partners, community leaders, community-based organizations, numerous Health District staff, and a variety of other entities in the county. The foundation of the report used Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), and Center for Disease Control (CDC) capabilities. This was used to guide the analysis of surveys, interviews, and document reviews, culminating in the final after-action report. The final report will be disseminated in late July. Ms. Hadly said the report unveiled three main themes: collaboration, incident response roles, and deferred maintenance.

Ms. Hadly provided a summary of the collaboration theme. She said the analysis found that the Health District adapted quickly to build the crucial partnerships needed during the beginning of the COVID-19 response. However, it was determined that the pre-existing partnerships were limited, so the Health District will work to have those partnerships in place before an emergency

occurs. Next, Ms. Hadly explained the incident response roles component, noting that in the beginning of the pandemic, there was a lack of clarity among partners and their roles in the response. To address this, PHEPR has convened an Emergency Support Function 8 (ESF-8) taskforce, consisting of healthcare, medical, mortuary, veterinary, and public health partners. The last theme was regarding deferred maintenance. Ms. Haldy noted that chronic underfunding impacted multiple systems in Kitsap County, including emergency management and public health. Evidence of underfunding was found in data systems, staffing, training, and exercises.

Next, Dr. Hooper explained that Tetra Tech, a consulting firm, conducted the after-action report interviews and surveys and reviewed documentation from the response operations. She listed numerous strengths in the response, including staff dedication and professionalism, the dedication of Kitsap volunteers, the establishment of the Vaccine Equity Collaborative, and the implementation of resources to address the mental health needs of responders. Dr. Hooper then went on to explain the areas of the response that need to be improved, which included effective methods for information sharing among community partners, clearly defined roles and responsibilities of ESF-8, and sufficient training and exercises for Health District staff.

Dr. Hooper concluded the presentation by providing the Board with a summary of the Health District's improvement plan. The analysis noted that the Health District's COVID-19 response had 32 strengths and 15 areas of improvement. There are already improvements being made, such as the convening of the ESF-8 taskforce and creating volunteer specialists to ensure there is continued volunteer support.

When given the opportunity to ask questions, Dr. Tara Kirk Sell said many of the primary areas for improvement are outside of the Health District's control and would like to know how those weaknesses are addressed in the firm's recommendations. Ms. Hadly said the recommendations outside of the Health District's scope were given to the appropriate agencies and those agencies will prioritize them on the local level. She also said the Health District can affect programs at the state and federal level by advocating for changes through the grants funding PHEPR. Dr. Hooper added that the Health District can establish priorities, such as establishing regional relationships, through the strategic planning process. From there, the agency's budget, infrastructure, and training exercises can be realigned to those priorities. Ms. Hadly also said there are things that can be done locally, such as partnerships between public and private entities during emergencies.

Member Jackson said Kitsap is very heavily surrounded by military entities and asked if those relationships and resources were analyzed in the after-action report. Dr. Hooper responded by explaining the team working on the after-action report spoke with the Navy in Bremerton. She stressed the importance of understanding that although the military lives and works locally, they are still a federal entity, meaning their primary relationship is with other federal entities. While they were not required to communicate and coordinate with the Health District, they did so due to pre-existing relationships through emergency management and healthcare systems. Ms. Hadly acknowledged the strong relationships between the Health District and the Navy, noting that the relationships were built and fostered primarily by Dr. Morrow, Yolanda Fong, Liz Davis, and the epidemiology program.

There was no further comment.

## **KITSAP COUNTY HEALTHCARE ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

Dr. Morrow introduced the consultants from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Health Security. Dr. Tener Veenema is the senior scholar leading the project, and Dr. Morrow noted that she is unable to attend today's meeting. Her two faculty partners, Sanjana Ravi and Diane Meyer, will be presenting the update to the Board.

Ms. Meyer began the update by introducing herself as a nurse and one of the researchers working on the Kitsap County healthcare system assessment. She briefly explained who each team member was, noting that they have various backgrounds in areas such as health system strengthening, workforce development, and public health emergency preparedness and response. Ms. Meyer noted that the Center for Health Security's main mission is to explore how new policy approaches, scientific advances, and technological innovations can strengthen health security and save lives. The center is made up of a network of scholars in science, medicine, nursing, public health, law, social sciences, economics, and national security.

Next, Ms. Meyer provided an overview of the project, noting that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses within local healthcare system infrastructure. Issues such as lack of workforce capacity, closures of health facilities, lack of health insurance, among others, have negatively impacted access to healthcare. These impacts disproportionately impacted communities of color and the socioeconomically disadvantaged. The challenges Kitsap is experiencing are not unique to any one specific county, but systematic and tailored assessments are crucial in understanding and addressing system gaps and failures. In response to the Health District's request for proposals, Johns Hopkins proposed a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of Kitsap's healthcare system and workforce be conducted. The assessment will be built on previous work conducted by the Health District and would be completed in December of 2023.

Ms. Ravi then explained the study methods that will be used during the assessment. The study methods include a historical analysis of the county's health system, policy analysis, key informant interviews, and focus groups. Ms. Ravi noted that they are currently conducting the key informant interviews and thanked everyone who participated in the interviews. The Johns Hopkins team will be traveling to Kitsap in late July to conduct the in-person focus groups. When those components of data collection have been completed, the team will complete a Delphi Study. The Delphi study is a method that can be used to reach expert consensus on a given topic and, ideally, it would result in actionable recommendations. Survey participants will consist of approximately 25 experts in the community, including policymakers, decision makers, and healthcare leaders. A final report of the data collected during the study will be given to the Health District and the Board. The report will contain a summary of key themes identified in the historical and policy analyses, a detailed report of themes highlighted by interviewees and focus group members, poignant quotes from interviews and focus groups, a detailed report of the findings from the Delphi study, and a detailed list of recommendations for how to increase access to, and quality of, healthcare services in Kitsap County.

At the conclusion of the update, Chair Erickson asked if the Johns Hopkins team has found anything unusual in their research so far. Ms. Ravi said it has been great learning more about Kitsap and one thing they found was that multiple sectors and stakeholders have a deep level of commitment to improving the community and making Kitsap a vibrant, livable place, and they have found there is a lot of interest in wanting to improve healthcare access and the quality of care. She also said it has been interesting learning about the role of community partners, such as Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, in shaping the accessibility and affordability of care in Kitsap. Ms. Ravi noted they are still collecting data and are not yet ready to share preliminary findings. Ms. Meyer added that they are also interested in learning more about the role of the Navy base and the impact that it has on the community. Ms. Ravi said they were struck by the level at which state and federal policy making has impacted the ability of local communities to provide the care that their residents need. She noted that part of the challenge is balancing feasible solutions at the local level with the reality of state and federal policies.

Chair Erickson asked when the Johns Hopkins team plans to travel to Kitsap and Ms. Meyer said they will be traveling in the week after next.

Commissioner Garrido asked how many individuals will participate in the focus groups and how many groups will be held. Ms. Ravi said the team is planning to have four focus groups, each with a different thematic area. One group will focus on health equity, the second group will focus on sexual and reproductive health, the third group will focus on child and adolescent health, and the fourth group will focus on healthcare workforce issues. They are hoping to recruit 8-10 people per group, though with the large response from the recruitment bulletin, they may increase that number to get as many different perspectives as possible.

There was no further comment.

## **RESOLUTION DECLARING HIGH COSTS AND INSUFFICIENT ACCESS OF HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN KITSAP COUNTY ARE PUBLIC HEALTH CRISES**

Mayor Wheeler explained that he and Dr. Michael Watson are co-presenting the draft of Resolution 2023-04, developed by the Board's Policy Committee. The resolution resulted from conversations with the public and on data that has been collected and analyzed. Mayor Wheeler said they hope the resolution will provide clarity for their goals in order to maximize the use of time, energy, and funding. The Johns Hopkins assessment will provide several recommendations that require action, therefore the resolution will provide focus and clarity to prepare the Board and the Health District to take those actions. Mayor Wheeler thanked the effort and time spent by Dr. Morrow and the Policy Committee in developing the resolution for proposal to the Board.

Next, Dr. Watson explained that he is a family physician and a primary care provider that takes care of people both in and out of the hospital. He noted that he delivers babies, usually resulting from uncomplicated pregnancies. The healthcare crisis is causing Dr. Watson and his partners to treat increasing numbers of complicated patients that previously would have been treated by specialists. He went on to say that the intent of the resolution is not to single out a particular

organization because each sector has a part to play in resolving the crisis. The goal of the resolution is to call attention to the current circumstances of healthcare in the region, commit to finding a plan forward to ensure the healthcare crisis in the community does not degrade further. Dr. Watson said the resolution offers a rationale for coordination of resources, which would allow all organizations involved to work towards common solutions.

Chair Erickson explained that the resolution was brought to the Board for adoption after a lengthy and robust discussion by the Policy Committee. She noted that her initial response to the draft resolution was that it was premature and should not be adopted until Johns Hopkins has completed their assessment. After the committee discussions, she believes the adoption of this resolution would assist in addressing the healthcare crisis and allow resources to be used to improve the healthcare system in Kitsap.

Mayor Rob Putaansuu said he shared Chair Erickson's initial feelings in that it is premature, however a light should be shone on this crisis. He added that he is anxiously awaiting the healthcare assessment that is underway.

Member Jackson agreed with Chair Erickson and Mayor Putaansuu and said the Health District and the county need to prepare themselves to address the crisis. He noted that this is a step in the right direction, and it demonstrates the Board's initiative to address the healthcare crisis.

Commissioner Christine Rolfes said she believes the resolution should have been adopted prior to the Johns Hopkins assessment, though she is comfortable with the resolution. Commissioner Rolfes said in the past 10 years, she has consistently heard that North Kitsap is experiencing a lack of services, long waiting periods for appointments, and affordability and access issues. She added that she understands the resolution might seem radical, but that those involved must think more radically to make improvements to the healthcare system.

Dr. Kirk Sell said that in adopting the resolution, the Board and Health District have declared the situation a public health crisis and it can be used as a catalyst for more action. She added that she hopes there is also room for new and creative solutions, outside of what is outlined in the resolution. Dr. Kirk Sell said the resolution should be a starting point and should not limit the actions that need to be taken after the healthcare assessment is published. Chair Erickson agreed and noted there is no language in the document that would preclude the Board from taking different actions.

Chair Erickson said this draft resolution was on the meeting agenda as a discussion item, however she entertained a movement of approval for Resolution 2023-04. Member Jackson motioned and Commissioner Garrido seconded the motion to approve Resolution 2023-04. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair Erickson thanked Dr. Watson and Mayor Wheeler for spearheading this resolution.

There was no further comment.



**EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO RCW 42.30.110 (1)(G) TO EVALUATE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APPLICANT FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT OR TO REVIEW THE PERFORMANCE OF AN EMPLOYEE**

Chair Erickson announced that the Board would recess to the closed executive session to discuss the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of an employee.

Prior to adjourning, Dr. Watson thanked Dr. Hebard for her public comment, adding that it is incumbent upon all of those in the healthcare community to bring light to the issue.

Chair Erickson asked if there were any other matters that should be discussed before the Board moves on to the closed executive session. Dr. Morrow reminded Board members that there is no Board meeting scheduled for August. Commissioner Rolfes noted that the legislature has significantly increased reimbursement payments for maternity and OB/GYN services. Local doctors and doctors throughout the state should be seeing enhanced payments in the coming months. She will forward that information to Dr. Morrow.

Mayor Wheeler and Member Jackson welcomed Commissioner Rolfes to the Board.

The Board recessed to the closed executive session at 11:26 a.m.

Dr. Watson thanked Dr. Hebard for coming, noting that it's uncommon to find so many people speak up about these issues.

**ADJOURN**

There was no further business; the meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

  
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**Becky Erickson**  
**Kitsap Public Health Board**

  
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**Keith Grellner**  
**Administrator**

**Board Members Present:** *Mayor* Becky Erickson; *Commissioner* Charlotte Garrido; *Member* Drayton Jackson; *Member* Dr. Tara Kirk Sell; *Mayor* Robert Putaansuu; *Member* Jolene Sullivan; *Member* Dr. Michael Watson; *Mayor* Greg Wheeler.

**Board Members Absent:** *Councilperson* Kirsten Hytopoulos; *Member* Stephen Kutz.

**Community Members Present:** Rhonda Brown, *Virginia Mason Franciscan Health*; Katy Crabtree, *Office of Congressman Derek Kilmer*; Dr. Herbie Duber, *Washington State Department*

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*of Health; Dr. Katherine Hebard, Kitsap OBGYN; Anne Presson, Kitsap County Board of Commissioners; Commissioner Christine Rolfes, Kitsap County Board of Commissioners.*

**Additional Presenters:** *Pattijean Hooper, Tetra Tech Consulting.*

**Staff Present:** *Angie Berger, Management Analyst, Administrative Services; Jessi Cadorna, Secretary Clerk 2, Administrative Services; Margo Chang, Administrative Assistant, Administrative Services; Maria Fergus, Community Engagement Specialist, Equity; Gabrielle Hadly, Program Manager, Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response; Adrienne Hampton, Policy Planning, and Innovation Analyst, Administration; Karen Holt, Program Manager, Human Resources; Kari Hunter, Program Manager, Assessment and Epidemiology; Kimberly Jones, Program Manager, Drinking Water and Onsite Sewage Systems; Siri Kushner, Division Director, Public Health Infrastructure Division; Albert Lawver, Environmental Health Specialist 1, Food and Living Environment; Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer, Administration; Woodi Nickerson, Social Worker 1, HIV Case Management; Ally Power, Epidemiologist 1, Assessment and Epidemiology; Tad Sooter, Communications Coordinator and Public Information Officer, Communications; Jacob Wimpenny, Environmental Health Specialist 2-RS, Food and Living Environment.*

**Zoom Attendees:** *See attached.*

**Kitsap Public Health Board Meeting (Virtual Attendance)**

<b>Webinar ID</b>	<b>Actual Start Time</b>	<b>Attendee Count</b>
861 8605 2497	7/11/2023 10:12	28

<b>NAME</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>JOINED BY PHONE</b>
Kandice Atisme-Bevins	Diane Meyer	None
Jessica Chen	Mel O'Brien	
Lisa Erickson	Carin Onarheim	
April Fisk	Kayla Petersen	
Fredric Hoffer	Rebecca Pirtle	
Wendy Inouye	Suzanne Plemmons	
Thomas Jury	Rosemary Shaw	
Dayna Katula	Kelsey Stedman	
Ann Marie Kimball, MD	Amanda Tjemsland	
Brandon Kindschy	Erica Whares	
Sarah Kinnear	KIRO Radio	
Thomas Kruse	Sanjana Ravi	
Gary Lidstrom	Nathan	
Michelle McMillan	Anne	