HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
March 2, 2020
Minutes

Members Present: Trubac, Stivers (arrived at 6:31 p.m.), Tennis, Morgan, Slaughter, and Naeyaert.

Members Absent: Koenig.

Others Present: Jennifer Hanna, Dr. Durany Mohammed, Daphine Whitfield, Carol Salisbury, Dr. Peter Gulick, Peter Hochstedler, Dr. Alane Laws-Barker, Dr. Priti Pathak, Jeffrey Brown, Linda Vail, Sue Graham, Anne Scott, Jared Cypher, Scott Hendrickson, and others.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Trubac at 6:30 p.m. in Personnel Conference Room “D & E” of the Human Services Building, 5303 S. Cedar Street, Lansing, Michigan.

Approval of the February 24, 2020 Minutes


Additions to the Agenda

None.

Commissioner Stivers arrived at 6:31 p.m.

Limited Public Comment

Jennifer Hanna stated that she was the Vice Chair for the Ingham Community Health Center Board of Directors. She further stated that, during her time on the board, provider recruitment had been and continued to be a frequently discussed issue.

Ms. Hanna stated that Anne Scott, CHC Executive Director, had been working very hard on this matter to improve the compensation for our providers. She further stated that it came to their attention last week as they had nine providers show up sharing their experiences.

Ms. Hanna stated that the Community Health Centers had been without a Medical Director for a year and they just lost the Dental Director. She further stated that these vacancies had negative impacts not only on their patients but on their providers and on their bottom line too.
Ms. Hanna stated that they were at the point where they were facing a crisis, and they were at risk of losing even more providers. She further stated that, as a registered nurse, she preferred to provide for patients multiple nights in a row and this was the same for outpatient settings, as well.

Ms. Hanna stated that their providers had done an amazing job absorbing more patients, and that this was very demanding, but it had come at a price. She further stated that many were working extra hours, which were uncompensated.

Ms. Hanna stated that this increased stress levels and increased risks for burnout. She further stated that she had told the providers that they needed to first care for themselves.

Ms. Hanna stated that the County needed to be mindful of the risks that this posed to the patients and the providers and their licenses. She further stated that when they were short on providers, the patients also suffered.

Ms. Hanna stated that it took time to build a trusting relationship with a medical provider. She further stated that having to repeat the process over and over could lead to care that was perceived as substandard compared to the care that they could have received elsewhere.

Ms. Hanna stated that it makes getting an appointment difficult. She further stated that new patients and current patients alike have difficulty getting appointments in a timely manner, putting their health at risk.

Ms. Hanna stated that compensation was the main reason providers were seeking employment elsewhere. She further stated that she was urging the Committee to please consider increasing compensation for their critical providers.

Ms. Hanna stated that it was imperative to mitigate risks. She further stated that it would also ensure that the County was a competitive employer and that they attracted quality employers.

Ms. Hanna stated that failing to make the upfront investment could make additional long term costs and meaningfully affect the patients they were trying to serve. She further stated that multiple long-term vacancies sent a poor message to employees and it was important to correct this situation quickly.

Dr. Durany Mohammed stated that he was a family physician for the Ingham County Health Center. He further stated that these providers build their own practices for a year or two.

Dr. Mohammed stated that when they left, those patients were transferred back to the other providers in the clinic. He further stated that this affects his patients because they may have to wait two months because now he had to take on a number of new patients.

Dr. Mohammed stated that the fact that some of those internal medicine doctors left their practices, meant that now their mid-level practitioners have to take on more complex cases. He further stated that they were concerned about their own practices and licenses.
Dr. Mohammed stated that they were there to voice the concern that translated mostly for the patients’ care. He further stated that he wondered how the Committee could help to fix the situation.

Dr. Mohammed stated that the turnover was amazing, and retention was almost impossible. He further stated that he knew that the Chief Health Officer had been trying to recruit people.

Dr. Mohammed stated that the moment they made an offer, it was “thank you but no thank you.” He further stated that there had been market research done and the providers at the County were about 20% underpaid.

Dr. Mohammed stated that he was assuming that they would prefer to go to a place where they could be paid better and where they could provide a higher quality of care.

Commissioner Tennis stated that this issue had come up at the Community Health Center (CHC) Board meeting last week, and that a lot of the same individuals that were there, were before the Committee tonight. He further stated that he had suggested that the individuals come here and talk to the Human Services Committee.

Commissioner Tennis stated that, for someone who had been on the CHC Board for a while, this was not a new issue. He further stated that this was not something that was just occurring now, but had been going on for some time.

Commissioner Tennis stated that the lack of providers and number of vacancies was to the point where it was not only a personal crisis for the providers, but was also affecting patient care. He further stated that he suggested that the individuals come here tonight and galvanize the Committee to take steps to address this issue.

Daphine Whitfield, CHC Board member, stated she was on the CHC Board and wanted to share what she felt when these providers came in last week. She further stated that the whole reason why she joined the CHC Board was at the suggestion of the pharmacists and practitioners that she worked with, and the ladies that were at the front line at the receptionist’s desk.

Ms. Whitfield stated that they said, they know she wanted to equip people to go beyond what life has dealt them in terms of the hand and the poor choices they might have made. She further stated that, from the moment she stepped on the board, she knew this is a great fit.

Ms. Whitfield stated that the idea of working in a capacity where she is able to serve the community she love just resonates with her. She further stated that last Thursday when they had their monthly meeting and these providers came in and began to share the severity of what they were experiencing it hit her.

Ms. Whitfield stated that she had to be honest and tell the Committee how it hit her. She further stated that she got to her car and tears began to run out of her eyes.
Ms. Whitfield stated that she knew that being a part of the CHC Board, she served a marginalized, disenfranchised community that was often dismissed, and they were on the agenda for a whole lot and they did what they could to serve them. She further stated that she felt that that was what they were doing right now.

Ms. Whitfield stated that she turned around and looked at them and said that she apologized as a leader on this board. She further stated that she wanted to be a part of something where everyone was taken care of and they had the people that were on the front lines servicing the people that were in the community, now saying that their life in the office was influencing their life when they got home.

Ms. Whitfield stated that that trauma was 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. She further stated that she hated what was going on systemically, but she loved the people and so she asked them to allow this to be a starting point.

Ms. Whitfield stated that she was before the Committee as a part of this team. She further stated that whatever it was they could do that was beyond talking, and that they have benchmarks to get the providers in and get the staffing that they needed, needs to be done.

Ms. Whitfield stated that she knew that when she went there, there was no difference to her in the quality of services that she received at Foster Community Health Center than when she had gone out to Okemos or to East Lansing. She further stated that this was top of the line.

Ms. Whitfield stated that she never saw what the providers were experiencing, and so she asked them to accept the apology that she gave as a member of this team, as a starting point. She further stated that she was asking the Committee tonight that they could get some things done.

Ms. Whitfield stated that she was not trying to be abrasive or saying that they had not done what they were supposed to, but rather asking what could the Committee do to show that they were here and they were with them.

Carol Salisbury, Forest CHC Nurse Practitioner, stated that she had been at the Health Department for 12 years now. She further stated that she provided care to the infectious disease population but also worked in primary care.

Ms. Salisbury stated that she really wanted to stress to the Committee the amount of burnout that she had seen with other people that she worked with, Nurse Practitioners, Physician’s Assistants and Physicians. She further stated that she had seen such a movement of brand-new graduates come in and unfortunately they may stay a few years and then they moved on, and she wondered why because some of them were looking for other kinds of practices and it was a very big burden to work with this type of population.

Ms. Salisbury stated that they had 20 minute visits scheduled to see very complicated patients that may not speak English. She further stated that she wanted to stress to the Committee that she was in it for the go, but she did want to tell the Committee that she had seen a lot of people leave and a lot of it had to do with the workload.
Ms. Salisbury stated that they came in early and left late and worked over their lunch period. She further stated that she asks that the Committee consider trying to keep people here.

Ms. Salisbury stated that a person of her 16 years’ experience would make about $20,000 more if she went some other place. She further stated that she was not here for the money, she was here for the patients and that she did think that the County was not going to attract and retain people unless the Committee did something about it.

Peter Gulick, Forest CHC Infectious Disease Physician, stated that he was in charge of the HIV clinic and had been for the last 12 years. He further stated that part of his program had been to keep the Ryan White funds progressive.

Dr. Gulick stated that one area that was extremely important was that they had primary care providers to provide primary care to the patients. He further stated that they were losing providers and his patients were now having to scamper to other providers and even outside of the care of the Health Department.

Dr. Gulick stated that part of the success of the grant was that they provided care on a continuum to this community. He further stated that they had done a very good job in the past.

Dr. Gulick stated that he did not want to see that jeopardized by having this kind of a situation occur here. He further stated that it was very important that they keep the primary care providers as a strong unit for his program because his program was big and had been successful, and the Ryan White Foundation looked at this closely, not only whether the HIV patient was receiving care for HIV, but also primary care.

Peter Hochstedler, Community Mental Health social worker, stated that he was a clinical social worker and health worker in the clinics and he wanted to express support for the providers; that their issues were his issues and, as a team, they worked together. He further stated that he wanted all of them to stay, but that he would not blame them if they did not.

Mr. Hochstedler stated that, in other places, he had experienced an impetus from higher-ups to appeal to the mission and values to avoid change. He further stated that he urged the Committee to resist that urge if they could.

Vanessa Kramer, CHC employee, stated that she was a new nurse practitioner at Women’s Health and she wanted the Committee to know that had has three small children and when she brought her work home, and she could not spend time with her babies, it made her life hard. She further stated that to be able to reduce visits would make it more worth staying, and she knew that would be important to her.

Dr. Alane Laws-Barker, Lead OBGYN, stated that she worked with Sparrow in collaboration with the Health Department, and she was the lead OBGYN. She further stated that she had been there two and a half years now.
Dr. Laws-Barker stated that her experience had been very similar. She further stated that it was very difficult to serve a population that was the sickest in the County, that had translation issues, multiple co-morbidities, and, in their department, it was a mother and child.

Dr. Laws-Barker stated that they were serving two patients in a period of 20 minutes. She further stated that many of the nurse practitioners come right out of school so they had the most inexperienced people taking care of the sickest people. She further stated that the electronic health records system was very difficult to use compared to EPIC and others.

Dr. Laws-Barker stated that the difficulty of entering the information, left stacks of charts that piled up. She further stated that they had transformed their schedule into four ten-hour days, but that they spent that fifth day charting.

Dr. Laws-Barker stated that they were spending their days and nights charting; she had pictures of herself going into surgery with an IV in her arm charting, going to her vacation on the plane, she was charting. She further stated that that was the reality of what these providers were living with.

Dr. Laws-Barker stated that it had been said that wanted to give quality care and compassionate care to these individuals, and she thought they had to let the providers tell what was like and this experience. She further stated that they needed to be a part of this experience.

Dr. Laws-Barker stated that she did not work for the Health Department, but she was afraid that her nurse practitioners were going to leave when their two years were up and they found somewhere else to work that paid them better, treated them better and listened to what they have to say. She further stated her nurse practitioners were new, and they were doing primary care, and there was nowhere to send a patient with thyroid issues or diabetes some of the things that they should not be taking care of.

Dr. Laws-Barker stated that they were trying to take care of the patient so their health did not worsen. She further stated that she came here to support them in their journey and get them a better work environment.

Priti Pathak, CHC Physician, stated that she was a family physician that had been working for the County for 17 years. She further stated that she loved this place because the Ingham Community Health Centers provided excellent care.

Dr. Pathak stated that she had worked at different places and she loved her job and her patients. She further stated that she thought they had a perfect team and the quality care that they provided to the patient was comparable to any clinic like Cleveland or UCLA.

Dr. Pathak stated that she was very interested in bringing up the quality of care to that level. She further stated that she had seen people come and go.

Dr. Pathak stated that, when she started, she worked in four different places, all different. She further stated that to start with they had three female physicians, now she was the only female.
Dr. Pathak stated that they developed a rapport with the patient and with the staff and everyone worked like a team and that provided the best care for the patient. She further stated that recently she had seen something happening that was concerning, where patients came to her and said, “You are my third doctor in the last year, everybody who takes me as a new patient leaves, when are you going to leave?”

Dr. Pathak stated that she had told them, “I will never ever leave you” and that they lost trust in the system. She further stated that they thought that people were just leaving and they could not function well if they did not have a team, and she also was interested in developing a new system and she wanted to do additional projects, but how could she do that if her colleagues were leaving all the time.

Dr. Pathak stated that she highly recommended and agreed with what her colleagues have said tonight.

Jeffrey Brown, CHC Board member, stated that he was one of the CHC Board members, and he was also a patient and he wanted to come because the Health Center had changed his life as he was able to access care, but also because of the circumstance that he found himself in because of the challenges being discussed before the Committee. He further stated that his father was a 75-year-old Vietnam veteran who needed dental work.

Mr. Brown stated that he brought him to the Health Center to get dental work and dentures and they brought him in and extracted all of his teeth on the top and they said “I’m sorry but we only have 20 minutes,” and they sent his dad home and told him they could not get him back in for three months because they did not have enough time. He further stated that his father as a respectable man, and for him to go three months without top teeth just to get back in so they could pull more teeth, and then another three months not even get the dentures.

Mr. Brown stated that the providers did not have enough time; they did not have enough providers because they were not even close to being competitive. He further stated that, when there was such a gap in disparity, they had to be able to sustain their family.

Mr. Brown stated that they talked about hiring newly graduated students, but they had student loans too. He further stated that he found his father in the community, and now his weight is going down and he is down to 130 pounds.

Mr. Brown stated that his primary nurse practitioner retired and he had to establish a new care and that was going to be another 60-90 days until he could see his primary care provider. He further stated that he found himself coming in here and he did not know how, but he ended up with a blood sugar level of 600.

Mr. Brown stated that he almost went into a coma. He further stated that he tried to come in and get care and when he got care, the provider said, “I’m sorry you’re diabetic and there are other things going on with you, complications with that, but I don’t have time to tell you the rest, I have other patients, and we’re short staffed and I only get 20 minutes.”
Mr. Brown stated that he found himself as a CHC Board member supporting a health center that he was having the most challenging times of his life at. He further stated that he had talked to people in his community and they asked him why he continued to serve.

Mr. Brown stated that he thought they had a great leader and providers, and that they were doing everything that they could. He further stated that he had private insurance, and they were getting paid off of his health care as well.

Mr. Brown stated that it was not just where the County should increase the pay of providers and be further in debt, but also to make an investment to make a further impact to have a sustainable operation. He further stated that they have people who care, it was not just the providers trying to get paid.

Discussion.

MOVED BY COMM. NAeyaERT, SUPPORTED BY COMM. SLAUGHTER, TO APPROVE A CONSENT AGENDA CONSISTING OF THE FOLLOWING ACTION ITEMS:

1. **Parks Department** – Resolution to Authorize a Contract with Brock & Associates Inc. for a New Dock at Lake Lansing South Park

2. **Health Department**
   a. Resolution to Authorize Amendment #2 to the 2019-2020 Comprehensive Agreement with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
   b. Resolution to Authorize an Agreement with Verity Stream, Inc. to Provide Verification of Professional Credentials of Physicians and Allied Health Professionals

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Commissioner Koenig.

THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Commissioner Koenig.

Commissioner Tennis stated that, to wrap up the public comment, he would ask that the Controller and Community Health Centers Executive Director sit down and discuss this issue and the history of this issue and come back and report to this Committee at a later date.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER TENNIS, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER STIVERS, TO DIRECT INTERIM CONTROLLER CYPHER TO SIT DOWN WITH THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER DIRECTOR AND DISCUSS THE RECENT PROVIDER ISSUES AND REPORT BACK TO THE COMMITTEE AT A LATER DATE.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Commissioner Koenig.

Commissioner Stivers stated that she would like to have a discussion about this.

Discussion.
Chairperson Trubac stated that he wished to discuss this matter when the Controller came back to report after that meeting.

Linda Vail, Health Officer, stated that she would be willing to discuss this matter further.

Ms. Vail stated that Anne Scott, CHC Executive Director, had been working hard on this issue, and that they had just met a week ago with a proposal for a salary restructure. She further stated that she was hoping to have that in front of the Committee soon.

Ms. Vail stated that salary was a big part of it, a huge part of it. She further stated that there were also IT and electronic health record issues.

Ms. Vail stated that the Community Health Centers had a lot of great things going on, that the County could offer a loan repayment program that others could not, but they had to keep the positive factors ahead of the detracting factors. She further stated that she was going to meet with the interim Controller and Sue Graham, Human Resources Director, soon, and thanked Ms. Scott.

Ms. Vail stated that they were relying on Michigan Primary Care Association (MPCA) for a lot of information and that they were working with that information as well. She further stated that she believes it will help resolve this situation.

Ms. Vail stated that Vanessa Kramer was a nurse here not long ago and worked here while she went to school. She further stated that she got her Nurse Practitioner degree while still here, but was clearly struggling.

Ms. Vail stated that Dr. Laws-Barker was one of the best known OBGYNs in the County. She further stated that when she said that she heard people were leaving, she listened.

Ms. Vail stated that Dr. Gulick was a legendary renowned physician and one of the reasons that his program was successful was that continuity of care. She further stated that when they could not do that too, they were speaking a non-truth to the Ryan White program.

Ms. Vail stated that this was very critical and priority issue for her Department. She further stated that she would be back with a proposal in the next few meetings with more information.

Chairperson Trubac stated that he wished to wait to have further discussion on this matter until there was an agenda item for debate.

2. Health Department
   c. Jail Medical Update (Discussion)

Ms. Vail stated that, likewise with the CHC provider issue, they were on the verge of bringing a proposal to the Committee regarding Jail Medical. She further stated that mainly, the first issue she had was that they continue to not be able to hire nurses.
Ms. Vail stated that they just hired two nurses, so they only had one vacancy currently. She further stated that they have to address the salary for those nurses as well, for fear of rapid turnover.

Ms. Vail stated that she worked with Human Resources and found that that job description was 19 years old, and did not accurately reflect the job anymore. She further stated that they got that rewritten and revised and worked with Ms. Graham and Human Resources to get that together.

Ms. Vail stated that their Jail Medical provider would fit in with the other nurse practitioner and physicians assistants. She further stated that as soon as the other nurse practitioner and physician’s assistant salaries were raised, the Jail Medical salaries would increase alongside it.

Ms. Vail stated that she had information right now, and in the next meeting or two she should be in front of the Committee with a recommendation for the Jail Nurse position and the Medication Associate II position, which was a per diem position.

Chairperson Trubac asked if it was two positions that the Committee would be asked to make changes to.

Ms. Vail stated that there were two separate and aside from the other issue. She further stated that the provider in the jail would be either a nurse practitioner or a physician’s assistant, and when they addressed the structure across the board, they could not make changes in the provider salaries at the health centers, but leave the jail alone.

Chairperson Trubac asked how many people there were in those two positions.

Ms. Vail stated that there were currently five FTE Registered Nurse positions, four filled and one vacant. She further stated that there were several in the other position.

Discussion.

Commissioner Stivers stated that earlier, the Committee heard that they were 20% lower pay than competing positions. She further asked if that number was in the right ballpark.

Ms. Vail stated that that would not stand up to the MCPA averages that they would provide to Committee. She further stated that they know they were never going to compete with them.

Ms. Vail stated that they offered a different benefit and a quality of work that was just different. She further stated that if you looked at Sparrow salaries, it was very difficult to pay at that level.

Commissioner Slaughter asked what, outside of compensation, were some of the other concerns offered by providers.
Ms. Vail stated that one concern was the electronic health record system, connectivity and usability, as Dr. Laws-Barker mentioned, was challenging, and was a huge driver of burnout. She further stated that the vacancy in the Medical Director position was a big problem too.

Ms. Vail stated that they had to move on and hire a full-time Medical Director. She further stated that they would not be able to do that until they addressed the salary.

Commissioner Slaughter asked if Ms. Vail had heard about problems with culture.

Ms. Vail stated that when they got issues related to salary, IT, and electronic health records, the result was losing providers and then they must take those providers' patients and spread them among other providers. She further stated that it was not good for morale and culture and that they could not keep doing that to the other providers without expecting them to feel like they were taking the brunt of this situation.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated that while this was not directly related, but was mentioned; the issue about the job descriptions being a few decades old is of concern. She further stated that the County has had to update a few positions, but that she thought there should be a discussion about a rotation of looking at these job descriptions.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated that these were part of the problem and that it was unacceptable.

Discussion.

Ms. Vail stated that department heads had responsibility as well. She further stated that every time her department had a vacancy, the job description was reviewed.

Ms. Vail stated that the problem was that whenever the position was not vacant, they could not rewrite the job description without the employee rewriting the job description and requesting a reclassification themselves.

Discussion.

Commissioner Stivers stated that a year ago, the Committee had a discussion about privatizing Jail Medical. She further stated that she thought that at that time the Committee talked about revisiting the job descriptions and she thought looking at the job descriptions would be implicit in that.

Commissioner Stivers stated that she felt like a year later, this was not just a problem with Jail Medical, but also for the providers who provided services to some of the poorest and least advantaged people in our community and she was frustrated that the County did not have a system that required the County to routinely review job descriptions. She further asked why that job description was not looked at in the last year, as it seemed like the County could have come with a reorganization or a reclassification before it got to where they were now, where they had a crisis.
Discussion.

Commissioner Stivers asked why Ms. Vail did not look at that job description sooner.

Ms. Vail stated that the County did approve a reorganization.

Discussion.

Ms. Vail stated that what they did not know at the time was why they were not able to recruit and retain nurses. She further stated that the manager had 5% of her time allocated to Jail Medical.

Ms. Vail stated that they needed to get a full time manager in place and task that person with recruitment and retention and see where they got with that over time. She further stated that now, she and Ms. Scott were getting ready at the 1 year mark to go back and reevaluate, as they were not recruiting and retaining nurses well.

Ms. Vail stated that when they looked at the jail nurse position, they realized that that position required more autonomy as it was in an environment that was chaotic and critical. She further stated that the County’s health center nurses seemed stay longer.

Ms. Vail stated that the salaries were similar, but when they were working they were surrounded by the team present tonight. She further stated that the nurses at the jail did not have that team and support around them.

Ms. Vail stated that they had to take a hard look at them and put a job description together and discover that indeed it was a much more complex job. She further stated that she hoped that it would be a good resolution.

Ms. Vail stated that she was working with the Ingham County Employees Association (ICEA) Professionals Union. She further stated that she did not think it would be a problem with the union since it was a favorable change.

Ms. Vail asked how long you let something go before you decided to address it again.

Commissioner Stivers stated that she appreciated Ms. Vail’s methodology, but that the County knew a year ago that being a jail nurse was harder than a health center nurse.

Ms. Scott stated that the positions had people in them. She further stated that the process to change them with people in them was a reclassification and, at the time, their goal was to get a reorganization.

Ms. Scott stated that they did not take the time at that time to do a reclassification. She further stated that she made the decision to put a reorganization in front of the Committee.
Ms. Scott stated that she thought there were some good recommendations that they were putting forward now and that they would have to continually refine the setup, structure, adjusting the provider salary and they were working hard to make the operation successful.

Chairperson Trubac stated that he looked forward to seeing more.

Public Comment

None.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

BARB BYRUM, CLERK OF THE BOARD