



## RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

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NEBRASKA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH  
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### **MINUTES of the Rural Health Advisory Commission**

**Friday, January 29, 2021**

**Virtual Via Zoom**

Members Present: Marty Fattig; Sheri Dawson, R.N.; April Dexter, N.P.; Jessye Goertz; Michael Greene, M.D.; Lynette Kramer, M.D.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.; Mike Sitorius, M.D.; Roger Wells, PA-C

Members Not Present: Gary Anthone, M.D.; Cherlyn Hunt; Ben Iske, D.D.S.; Sandra Torres, M.D.

Staff Present: Margaret Brockman, Tom Rauner, Deb Stoltenberg, Nancy Jo Hansen, and Rachael Wolfe

#### **1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes.**

The meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. with the following members present: Marty Fattig; Sheri Dawson, R.N.; April Dexter, N.P.; Jessye Goertz; Michael Greene, M.D.; Lynette Kramer, M.D.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.; Mike Sitorius, M.D.

Chairman Marty Fattig announced that the meeting notice had been posted to the DHHS website (<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Rural-Health-Advisory-Commission.aspx>) and sent out via email or USPS on January 15, 2021 to: NE Rural Hospital CEOs, NE Certified Rural Health Clinic Directors, NE Local Public Health Departments, NE Community Action Partners, NE Community Health Centers/FQHCs, NE Professional Associations/Organizations, NE State Senators, the Offices of the Governor and Lt. Governor, and other rural interested groups and parties.

The Open Meetings Act and Agenda were available to send to anyone attending the meeting by Zoom. Introductions were made via chat.

Rebecca Schroeder moved to adopt the January 29, 2021, meeting agenda. Dr. Mike Sitorius seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Dexter, Goertz, Greene, Kramer, Schroeder, Sitorius. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Anthone, Hunt, Iske, Torres, Wells.

Sheri Dawson then moved to approve the October 23, 2020 meeting minutes. April Dexter seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Dexter, Goertz, Greene, Kramer, Schroeder, Sitorius. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Anthon, Hunt, Iske, Torres, Wells.

## **2. Administrative Items**

Deb Stoltenberg announced that Accountability and Disclosure Forms are likely to go out in February. Commission members should watch for notification of these. They are sent directly to the contact specified on the paperwork. She also shared that Student Loan Form 1098s, for individuals making student loan default payments, will be sent out by NE State Accounting for tax purposes.

### *Current Members Update*

Six positions will be up for appointment/reappointment in September:

Michael Greene, Cherlyn Hunt, Rebecca Schroeder, Mike Sitorius, Sandra Torres and Roger Wells. These members will need to submit an application via the website should they wish to continue to serve on the Commission.

### *Other Announcements*

Marty Fattig remarked that virtual meetings are allowable through the end of April. The group felt it made sense to plan on having at least one more virtual meeting, so it was agreed to move the next meeting from May 21<sup>st</sup> to Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, and have that meeting via Zoom again. The list of meeting dates on the webpage will need to be updated accordingly and revised invites sent to Commission members.

## **3. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program Updates**

### *Review Shortage Designation Request*

Rachael Wolfe went over a designation request that had been received by the Office of Rural Health. A review of Colfax County was requested, under the specialty of Physical Therapy. After a review of current providers, it was determined that the county does qualify as a shortage area.

Dr. Mike Sitorius moved to approve the designation of Colfax County as a shortage area for Physical Therapy, Sheri Dawson seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Dexter, Goertz, Greene, Kramer, Schroeder, Sitorius. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Anthon, Hunt, Iske, Torres, Wells.

### *Budget*

Rachael Wolfe then presented an updated budget to the Commission, including projected award amounts for new applicants.

### *Other – Definition of Full Time*

Ms. Wolfe remarked that with the addition of ER/ED work as allowable under the State Loan Repayment program, the definition of full time work will require a slight edit. Some of these recipients are working alternating schedules (two weeks on two weeks off, etc.).

The Commission's current definition of full time work is: "at least 32 hours scheduled patient time per week, and other duties required to run a practice," the implication being ~40 hours per week. Legal was consulted and has determined that 40 hours per week is not specified in statute for the State Loan Repayment program, and that full time work can likely be defined by average hours per month if necessary (~160 hours per month being the basis for full time employment). Ms. Wolfe proposes adding wording that "alternate schedules may be allowable upon review by the Commission".

Dr. Mike Sitorius and Rebecca Schroeder agreed that this sounded like a good solution. A consensus was reached to proceed with allowing practitioners discussed at this meeting to be approved and officially voting to add the additional wording at the next meeting.

#### **4. Closed Session**

Roger Wells entered the meeting at 1:45 p.m.

Dr. Lynette Kramer moved to go to closed session at 1:46 p.m. Dr. Michael Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Dexter, Goertz, Greene, Kramer, Schroeder, Sitorius, Wells. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Anthone, Hunt, Iske, Torres.

Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 1:46 p.m. to review loan repayment applications and updates on current recipients.

#### **5. Open Session**

Sheri Dawson moved to go into Open Session at 2:00 p.m. Dr. Michael Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Dexter, Goertz, Greene, Kramer, Schroeder, Sitorius, Wells. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Anthone, Hunt, Iske, Torres.

Roger Wells moved to approve the loan repayment applications with estimated loan repayment start dates and loan repayment amounts as indicated or as determined by Office of Rural Health staff, based on issuance of license and/or loan documentation, practice time in the shortage area, and the availability of funds for the state match. Dr. Mike Sitorius seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Dexter, Goertz, Greene, Kramer, Schroeder, Sitorius, Wells. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Anthone, Hunt, Iske, Torres.

| WL | Status   | Date Complete App Received | License     | Name                       | Actual Practice Date | Expect/Eligible Start Date | Specialty       | County (Community) of Practice        | Total Loan Repayment (State and Local) |
|----|--|----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| WL | recommend federal funds - qualifies for either | 10/23/2020                 | 113145      | Rose, Danielle             | 6/23/2020            | 9/1/2022                   | APRN (FP)       | Scotts Bluff (Gering)                 | \$50,000.00                            |
| WL | Application - State                            | 10/28/2020                 | 32509       | Sholes, Samantha           | 9/1/2020             | 7/1/2022                   | MD (FP)         | Holt (Atkinson)                       | \$163,122.66                           |
| WL | Application - State                            | 11/6/2020                  | pending     | Yantzie, Halleluja         | 1/1/2018             | 7/1/2022                   | NP (FP)         | Valley and Garfield (Ord and Burwell) | \$18,000.00                            |
| WL | Application - State                            | 11/9/2020                  | provisional | Connor, Shawnda (0.57 FTE) | 2/1/2021             | 7/1/2022                   | LMHP            | Box Butte (Alliance)                  | \$51,300.00                            |
| WL | recommend federal funds - qualifies for either | 12/2/2020                  | 33050       | Wilson, Madeline           | 8/1/2022             | 9/1/2022                   | MD (FP)         | Cherry (Valentine)                    | \$100,000.00                           |
| WL | Extension into State from SLRP                 | 12/4/2020                  | 28125       | Westengaard, Justin        | 8/1/2016             | 7/1/2022                   | MD (FP)         | Richardson (Falls City)               | \$180,000.00                           |
| WL | recommend federal funds - qualifies for either | 12/9/2020                  | pending     | Tejral, Ashley             | 8/1/2021             | 9/1/2022                   | NP (Psychiatry) | Adams (Hastings)                      | \$50,000.00                            |
| WL | recommend federal funds - qualifies for either | 12/10/2020                 | pending     | Kohake, Heidi              | 9/1/2021             | 9/1/2022                   | PharmD          | Pawnee (Pawnee City)                  | \$86,533.44                            |
| WL | Application - State                            | 12/16/2020                 | pending     | Hoff, Susan                | 3/1/2021             | 7/1/2022                   | NP (Psychiatry) | Scottsbluff (Scottsbluff)             | \$60,000.00                            |
| WL | Application - State                            | 12/17/2020                 | 3972        | Chohon, Jordan             | 6/24/2019            | 7/1/2022                   | PT              | Nance (Genoa and Fullerton)           | \$80,593.80                            |
| WL | Application - State                            | 12/17/2020                 | provisional | Drudik, Ashleigh           | 8/13/2020            | 7/1/2022                   | LMHP            | Fillmore (Geneva)                     | \$24,278.46                            |
| WL | Application - State                            | 1/7/2021                   | 13253       | Dendinger, Ashley          | 12/2/2019            | 7/1/2022                   | PharmD          | Pierce (Plainview)                    | \$64,347.00                            |
| WL | Application - State                            | 1/21/2021                  | 3966        | Wisnieski, Casey           | 5/17/2021            | 7/1/2022                   | PT              | Colfax (Howells)                      | \$90,000.00                            |
| WL | recommend federal funds - qualifies for either | 1/22/2021                  | pending     | Taylor, Bryce              | 8/31/2021            | 7/1/2022                   | PA (FP)         | Jefferson (Fairbury)                  | \$90,000.00                            |

Sheri Dawson exited the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

## 6. Review Current Federal & State Legislative Activities Impacting Rural Health

Marty Fattig and Roger Wells presented on items relevant to Rural Health.

### *State Level*

Marty Fattig remarked that Senator Hilgers had hoped to limit bills, but 684 bills were introduced, many relevant to healthcare.

LB421 was introduced by Senator Stinner and would fund the State Loan Repayment program. It includes some funding specified to be used for Community Health Centers. Funds provided would be able to carry forward to future fiscal years.

Bills addressing the following items were also introduced:

- Telehealth and payment parity, one for physical and one for mental health
- Crisis standards of care across the state
- Outlaw the motorcycle helmet law
- The issue of multi-state licensure

### *Federal Level*

Marty Fattig remarked that almost all of the federal level activities have to do with COVID (payment protection programs, advance payments from Medicaid, etc.).

Roger Wells agreed, remarking that he would be attending the virtual National Rural Health Policy Institute on February 9-11, 2021.

### **Other Business**

#### *Strategic Planning*

Rachael Wolfe stated that suggestions for strategic planning had been submitted by Dr. Maya Chilese after the October meeting, and asked if the Commission would like to discuss the matter at a future meeting after having reviewed these. Marty Fattig remarked that holding a strategic planning session will be necessary, as the Rural Health Advisory Commission Recommendations document is in need of updates. He believes such sessions are better to hold in person, but requested this matter be added to the April meeting agenda, as an item for discussion.

#### *Other Meetings*

Deb Stoltenberg remarked that the Annual Rural Health Conference is planned for April 7<sup>th</sup> and will likely be virtual. It was also mentioned that the Nebraska Conference of Health Equity is taking place on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> (virtual as well).

#### *Difficulties for Providers*

Dr. Lynette Kramer remarked that there has been a lack of consistency between Public Health Departments and the State, which has been a major issue for their providers. April Dexter agreed with Dr. Kramer. Marty Fattig mentioned LB585, a bill adding funding to Local Public Health Departments. He suggested Dr. Kramer get in touch with the Hospital Association, as they are involved with working on the bill, and share her thoughts with them. Dr. Kramer remarked that she knows these are extreme circumstances and hopes this can be an opportunity for learning and growth.

#### *Pulmonary Rehab*

April Dexter asked if there were any bills funding pulmonary rehab for those who've contracted COVID. Marty Fattig remarked that he hadn't seen anything but agrees it's a need; they're seeing more patients than they can treat or handle.

### **7. Adjourn**

Dr. Mike Sitorius moved to adjourn at 2:24 p.m., and with no second necessary, the meeting was adjourned. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dexter, Goertz, Greene, Kramer, Schroeder, Sitorius, Wells. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Anthone, Dawson, Hunt, Iske, Torres.