



## 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, October 23, 2020

Holthus Center, York  
Lexington Regional Health Center, Lexington  
And Virtual Via Zoom

Members Present: *In York:* Marty Fattig; Jessye Goertz; Michael Greene, M.D.

*In Lexington:* Roger Wells, PA-C

*Via Zoom:* Mike Sitorius, M.D.; Ben Iske, D.D.S.; April Dexter, N.P.; Sheri Dawson, R.N.

Members Not Present: Lynette Kramer, M.D.; Cherlyn Hunt; Gary Anthone, M.D.; Sandra Torres, M.D.; Rebecca Schroeder, Ph.D.

Staff Present: *In York:* Tom Rauner

*Via Zoom:* Margaret Brockman, 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 1:31 p.m. with the following members present: Marty Fattig; Jessye Goertz; Michael Greene, M.D.; Roger Wells, PA-C; Mike Sitorius, M.D.; Ben Iske, D.D.S.; April Dexter, N.P.; Sheri Dawson, R.N.

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 October 8, 2020 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 posted on site in York and Lexington and were available to send to anyone attending the meeting by Zoom. Introductions were made.

Jessye Goertz moved to adopt the October 23, 2020, meeting agenda. Dr. Michael Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Wells, Sitorius,

Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

Jessie Goertz then moved to approve the June 26, 2020 meeting minutes. Dr. Michael Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Wells, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

## **2. Administrative Items**

### *Nominate and vote for Chair and Vice-Chair:*

Jessie Goertz moved to nominate Marty Fattig as Chair, Dr. Mike Sitorius seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Wells, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

Jessie Goertz moved to nominate Rebecca Schroeder as Vice-Chair, Dr. Mike Sitorius seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Wells, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

### *Set 2021 Meeting Dates:*

The Commission decided on the following dates and times for their 2021 RHAC meetings:

Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup> – 1:30 pm-4:00 pm  
in Lincoln or by Videoconference

Friday, May 21<sup>st</sup> – 1:30 pm-4:00 pm  
in Lincoln or by Videoconference

Friday, August 13<sup>th</sup> – 1:30 pm-4:00 pm  
in a Rural Location

Friday, November 19<sup>th</sup> – 1:30 pm-4:00 pm  
in Lincoln or by Videoconference

Due to Open Meeting Law, no more than 50% of meetings per year can be held by videoconference. In order to have a videoconference, at least two sites must be open to the public with a Commission member at each site. Other members can then attend virtually and count towards the quorum.

### *Other Announcements:*

Marty Fattig congratulated Dr. Gary Anthone on winning the 2020 Nebraska Hospital Association's Health Care Advocate of the year award.

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

Rachael Wolfe went over designation requests that had been received by the Office of Rural Health.

*Review Shortage Designation Requests:*

Box Butte and Cherry Counties requested re-assessment as shortage areas for General Dentistry. Upon review by the Office of Rural Health, they do not qualify and were notified of such.

The City of Tilden straddles two counties: Antelope (dental shortage area) and Madison (not a dental shortage area). There is a dental practice 100-some feet outside of Antelope County and it was requested by Tilden that the Commission consider designating the city and/or this specific site. A map of dentists within a 60 mile radius of Tilden was provided to Commission members, as requested at the last meeting.

Upon review and after some discussion, the Commission determined that they would not make an exception to current policies at this time. Shortage areas are determined at the county-level and that will remain for the time being. The federal government may be re-defining Rural, at which time the Commission would take a look at these guidelines again and consider revising them.

Rachael Wolfe then presented an updated budget to the Commission, including a new Cash Fund Projection from Ryan Daly.

*Cash Fund Projection Update from Ryan Daly:*

The existing balance appears sufficient to continue current operations through the new biennium beginning July 1, 2021. Updated projections indicate fund depletion within the 2024/2025 state biennium. This extension to the viability of the Rural Health Provider Incentive Fund was made possible by depositing interest earned on local match dollars via the federal SLRP into this fund. This estimate assumes annual loan repayment awards of approximately \$2.05M, or the average award level authorized by the RHAC in SFY20 and SFY21 (this amount includes both state and local match).

*General Fund Update:*

After some recent cuts (Fiscal Years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19), General Funds have remained at \$680,723 per year. Additional cuts to General Funds are not planned at this time. If General Funds remain the same, and no cash funds are added, the Commission will eventually need to decrease the amount of new awards given each year.

*State Loan Repayment and Waitlist:*

The new state fiscal year began on July 1, 2020, and twelve individuals started contracts for state loan repayment. A total of thirty nine individuals remain on the combined waiting list. Nine of these individuals qualify for the federal (NHSC SLRP) program and are waiting for federal funds to become available in September 2021 or 2022. Current wait time remains around 700 days on average. Of all those still on the waiting list, thirty-five could have started state loan repayment contracts in the current fiscal year if more funds had been available. An additional \$525,000 in General Funds would have allowed us to fund all those who qualified.

*Strategic Planning Session(s) for an Update of the RHAC Recommendations:*

The Commission had discussed updating their Recommendation document, but was unable to complete this process due to the pandemic. Dr. Maya Chilese joined the meeting to advise about facilitation options and see what the needs of the Commission might be. Members did not feel ready to make a motion, and Dr. Chilese agreed to email the Office of Rural Health with some suggestions and names of facilitators to be shared at the next Commission meeting.

*RHAC 2020 Annual Report, Recommendations and Distribution:*

Roger Wells moved to approve the Rural Health Advisory Commission's 2020 Annual Report and Recommendations and agreed that the Chair would distribute the Annual Report and Recommendations with a cover letter from the Commission via email to the following individuals/groups: Governor, Lt. Governor, all State Senators, Nebraska's Congressional representatives, and DHHS' Directors. April Dexter seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Goertz, Greene, Wells, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: Dawson. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

Annual Report and Recommendations will be added to the webpage that ORH maintains for the Commission, replacing prior versions. If any physical copies are desired, ORH can assist with printing these documents.

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

Dr. Mike Sitorius moved to go to closed session at 2:28 p.m. April Dexter seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Wells, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 2:29 p.m. to review loan repayment applications and updates on current recipients.

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

Sheri Dawson moved to go into Open Session at 2:35 p.m. Dr. Mike Sitorius seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Wells, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

Dr. Mike Sitorius 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. April Dexter seconded the motion. Motion carried. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter. NO: None. ABSTAIN: Wells. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.

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	Application - State	2/25/2020	112294	Ana Taylor	2/25/2020	7/1/2021	NP (FP)	Saline (Friend)	\$90,000.00
WL	Application - State	2/26/2020	32367	Ian Engebretsen	9/1/2020	7/1/2021	MD/DO (FP)	Wayne (Wayne)	\$180,000.00
WL	recommend federal funds - qualifies for either	3/10/2020	5442	Mary Rieken	10/8/2018	9/1/2022	LMHP	Lincoln (North Platte)	\$25,000.00
WL	Application - State	3/24/2020	113064	Amanda Wolff (.75 FTE)	1/15/2020	7/1/2022	NP (FP)	Antelope (Neligh)	\$44,834.00
WL	Application - State	5/29/2020	30320	Ashley Tiaht	7/15/2019	7/1/2022	MD (FP)	Thurston (Pender)	\$180,000.00
WL	Application - State	6/24/2020	pending	Paige Pauley	9/28/2020	7/1/2022	PA (FP)	Nance (Genoa)	\$90,000.00
WL	Federal Only	9/2/2020	15847	Ali Baldwin	1/22/2018	9/1/2022	PharmD	Knox (Creighton)	\$100,000.00
WL	Application - State	9/11/2020	2477	Jason Dillard	6/1/2017	7/1/2022	LMHP and Alcohol and Drug Counselor	Dawson (Lexington)	\$30,000.00
WL	recommend federal funds - qualifies for either	9/16/2020	112943	Heather Noerrlinger	8/10/2020	7/1/2022	APRN (Gen. Int.)	Otoe (Syracuse)	\$50,000.00
WL	Application - State	9/24/2020	pending	Scott Zach (0.5 FTE)	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	DDS/DMD (General)	Hooker (Mullen)	\$90,000.00
WL	Application - State	9/28/2020	pending	Rebecca Strokland	1/1/2021	7/1/2022	MD/DO (FP)	Jefferson (Fairbury)	\$103,667.00
WL	recommend federal funds - qualifies for either	10/1/2020	31410	Kent Niss	9/14/2020	9/1/2022	MD (FP)	Pawnee (Pawnee City)	\$100,000.00
WL	Application - State	10/14/2020	16581	Mallory Sansom	4/6/2020	7/1/2022	PharmD	Brown (Ainsworth)	\$90,000.00

## 6. Office of Rural Health Activities

National Rural Health Day is November 19<sup>th</sup> 2020. Tom Rauner spoke about NHSC site approvals the Office of Rural Health has been working to get finalized.

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

Marty Fattig and Roger Wells presented on items relevant to Rural Health. Roger Wells remarked that it's unclear when the public health emergency will end, and many issues depend on that. Reimbursement for rural health clinics has been quite an issue; it's complicated to do video visits with lack of broadband and reimbursement varies between video and telephone visits. Many things are changing quickly and 'Rural Health' is being left out. There is also confusion about the loans related to the public health emergency – it can be unclear whether or not these loans are forgivable which can make sites hesitant to participate in these assistance programs. Mr. Wells forecasts that within 2-3 years, many people will be without hospitals. Medicaid 304 B and transparency rule were mentioned as other complicating factors. It's been exposed that some sites nationally showing better outcomes were getting those outcomes by focusing on what they did well and ignoring what they didn't do well. He mentioned that 'Rural Areas' will never show great

reimbursement rates as their purpose is to serve shortage areas, not operate with large profit margins.

Marty Fattig mentioned provider relief funds (part of COVID relief); CMS released new, stricter requirements after hospitals accepted these funds. Two of the three Nebraska State Senators have expressed concern about this. He echoed concerns about the transparency rule. He then gave the State update, remarking that Medicaid expansion has officially begun as of October. Sheri Dawson stated the roll out has gone positively and about 13,000 people have enrolled. They are trying to document those moving over from Office of Behavioral Health to receiving services through Medicaid, and to make sure the transition is seamless.

## **8. Other Business**

No other items were discussed.

## **9. Adjourn**

Sheri Dawson moved to adjourn at 2:54 p.m., and with no second necessary, the meeting was adjourned. YES: Fattig, Dawson, Goertz, Greene, Sitorius, Iske, Dexter, Wells. NO: None. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Kramer, Hunt, Anthone, Torres, Schroeder.