
Health Needs and Human Services Commission Minutes

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 12:00 p.m.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

Commission Members:

Michelle Kavouras Crystal Duncan, Annette Evans,
Amanda Roberts, Lawrence "Woody" Widmark, Sterling "Chip" Camden
JJ Carlson (Assembly Liaison)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kavouras called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Crystal Duncan, Annette Evans, Michelle Kavouras,
Amanda Roberts, Chip Camden, and Wood Widmark (via zoom)

Commissioners Absent:

Assembly Liaison: JJ Carlson

Staff Present: Jess Earnshaw, Deputy Municipal Clerk

III. CORRESPONDENCE /AGENDA CHANGES

None.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(Public participation on any item off the agenda. All public testimony is not to exceed 3 minutes for any individual, not to exceed 3 minutes)*

Callie Simmons, a representative from a local food coalition, expressed interest in the Health and Human Services Commission's potential support for removing the sales tax on food to alleviate the cost of living for low-income community members.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 19, 2025

Duncan moved to approve the minutes of March 19, 2024. Motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

VI. REPORTS

Chair – Kavouras mentioned that HNHS still has one vacant seat.

Commissioners – Duncan wondered if the board training was going to be recorded.

City Staff – Earnshaw thanked Holley Bayne for help during her absence.

Assembly Liaison – Carlson reported that the 2025 Goals passed at the April 8th Assembly Regular meeting.

Other(s) – None.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Review of workgroup assignments for 2025

1. Suicide Prevention and Postvention
2. Enhancing Communication and Empowering Assembly Initiatives

The Commission reviewed the approved goals and established subcommittees to work on them. Duncan spoke about the timeline, structure, and format of the report, and expressed a desire for HNHS to mirror the way the Sustainability Commission presented their goals to the Assembly. She noted that the fifteen-minute presentation time limit was not adequate and suggested a standalone work session for the 2026 goals.

C. Discussion/decision on Sitka Food Coalition advocating removal of sales tax on food
Callie Simmons is a member of the Sitka Food Coalition. Sitka Food Coalition is an organization that actively advocated for the removal of sales tax on food in Sitka as a step toward greater food justice and economic equity. The Coalition believed that eliminating this tax would ease the financial burden on families, improve access to nutritious food, and support a more resilient and affordable local food system. For the Coalition, removing sales tax on food wasn't just about saving money at the checkout—it was about making healthy, essential items more accessible to everyone in the community. She mentioned why it mattered: groceries were a necessity, not a luxury, sales tax disproportionately affected low-income households, and many communities across Alaska and the U.S. had already taken steps to remove sales tax on food. She noted in the future they would be asking the HNHS Commission for a letter of support.

- I. PERSONS TO BE HEARD** *(For items on or off the agenda, not to exceed 3 minutes)*
None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Kavouras moved to adjourn the meeting. Seeing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Attest:
Jess Earnshaw
Deputy Municipal Clerk