
Health Needs and Human Services Commission Minutes

Wednesday, June 19, 2024 12:00 p.m.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

Commission Members:

**Rachel Worthey, Crystal Duncan, Annette Evans, Elise Davidson Kitka,
Woody Widmark, Amanda Roberts, Paul Bahna**

JJ Carlson (Assembly Liaison)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Duncan called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Crystal Duncan, Annette Evans, Woody Widmark, Paul Bahna

Commissioners Absent: Amanda Roberts (excused)

Assembly Liaison: JJ Carlson

Staff Present: Jess Earnshaw, Deputy Clerk

III. CORRESPONDENCE /AGENDA CHANGES

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(not to exceed 3 minutes)*

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 15, 2024 minutes

Widmark move to approve the minutes of May 15 , 2024. Motion passed 4-0 by a voice vote.

VI. REPORTS

Chair -None.

Commissioners - Bahna proposed implementing a small monetary incentive system for commissioners to encourage their participation.

City Staff - None.

Assembly Liaison - None.

Other(s) - None.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Nominations for Vice Chair

Evans moved to nominate Duncan for the Chair position. Motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

C. Working groups for Childcare, Elder Care, and Public Transportation

Evans highlighted strategies to enhance infant and toddler care capacity in Sitka, with leadership from the Early Childhood Coalition. She noted that the Chamber of Commerce plans to host a fall Speaker Series featuring experts like Bert Stedman and Blue Schibler to address childcare challenges and potential solutions.

The Commission addressed efforts in elderly care, particularly targeting the 30% of single, elderly residents in Sitka living alone. Their discussions included initiatives to raise awareness about mental health, physical health, and transportation issues, alongside concerns regarding the disbanded Department of Home Health.

Bahna and Widmark reported meeting with Municipal Administrator John Leach to discuss problems with taxi and shuttle services, proposing a series of meetings to tackle these issues. They emphasized the urgent need for improved public transportation, noting challenges with taxi companies focusing on tourism during peak seasons.

Regarding transportation services, John Leach, Municipal Administrator cited reasons why Uber or Lyft are not operating in the city, including concerns over short trip profitability, vehicle age requirements, and the demand for round-the-clock service.

The Commission clarified their role in addressing elderly care, childcare, and transportation issues, highlighting that the restoration of home health services falls under the purview of two Assembly members. Their strategy will focus on identifying issues, exploring partnerships, studying successful programs from other cities, and presenting specific recommendations to the Assembly in a series of detailed reports. These efforts aim to inform budget decisions and improve service delivery across Sitka.

D. Adopt the 2024 Health Needs and Human Services Commission Goals

The Commission had set new goals for 2024, prioritizing childcare, elderly care, and public transportation issues. They have committed to producing comprehensive reports and proposing solutions by year's end, emphasizing the importance of maintaining manageable discussions to prevent burnout.

Widmark moved to approve the 2024 HNHS Goals. Motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Duncan moved to adjourn the meeting. Seeing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Attest:
Jess Earnshaw, Deputy Clerk