

Meeting – Public Health Advisory Committee – April 7, 2008

Members present:

Dr. Horton, Chair
Dr. Jonathan Fielding
Dr. Antronette Yancey
Robin Cox
Dr. Anthony Iton
Carolina Simunovic
Stephen Shortell
Ellen Wu
Dolores Apodaca
Dr. Rodney Borger
Cynthia Gomez
Susan Harrington
Dr. Franklin Pratt
Jeanette Dong
Ruth Mulnard
Harold Sterker

Also present at table:

Dr. Bonnie Sorensen
Peter Baldrige, Senior Staff Counsel

Morning Session

Dr. Horton opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed the members of the Committee.

Secretary Kim Belshé addressed the committee, and asked each member to introduce themselves. She then described the history behind the creation of the Department of Public Health and the committee. She also commented on the ongoing fiscal crisis, including the potential that the May revise could result in further departmental budget cuts.

Dr. Horton reviewed the agenda and described the planned events of the day, including the noontime Public Health Week Press Event at the State Capitol – North Steps.

Mr. Baldrige provided a brief overview of the State Open Meeting Act and discussed the need for the committee to avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest, even though the Political Reform Act, including disclosure requirements, do not apply to this committee.

Dr. Horton described the general organization of the Department of Public Health.

Dr. Bonnie Sorenson discussed the departmental organization in detail. Member Gomez inquired whether other officers would have cross-cutting responsibility. Dr. Horton emphasized that the directors of the various centers within the Department are part of the management team.

Dr. Sorenson discussed the impact of the 10% budget reductions, programs exempted, and the fact that the reductions are structural. Overall reductions of \$38 million were reported. Forty-seven positions are being eliminated; 20 positions are occupied and will be reassigned. Dr. Fielding inquired, if the May revise of the budget promises further cuts, whether there are contingency plans to avoid cutting on an across the board basis. Dr. Horton advised that sharing cuts across the board may reduce the overall CDPH impact. He advised that the May revise will likely be worse than the initial budget.

Dr. Horton opened the floor for discussion about CDPH's organization. A member inquired whether the budget cuts have caused a hiring freeze, and Dr. Horton advised that there is no freeze on hiring. Questions were raised about the relationship of CDPH with DHCS, and a desire for copies of more detailed organizational charts, both up and down, was expressed.

Dr. Horton called a lunch recess at 11:45 a.m. to attend the Public Health Week ceremonies. Mr. Baldrige cautioned the committee members to avoid discussing committee business during the lunch recess to ensure compliance with the State Open Meeting Act.

Afternoon Session

Dr. Horton reconvened the committee at 1:00 pm. Dr. Horton and CDPH Chief Dep. Director Mary Winkley discussed the CDPH strategic plan. Dr. Fielding stressed the need for flexibility in the language of the plan.

On Goal 2, Item 7, Dr. Shortell inquired about the baseline number of counties. Carolina Simunovic inquired about exercises and whether the So. Cal. fires of 2007 qualified as an exercise, and was advised that it did qualify. Questions were raised about datasets. Ellen Wu suggested that language preference data be utilized, not just race/ethnicity data. Gwen Doebbert, CDPH Strategic Planning Project Manager, explained that there are 5 core datasets (name, place of birth, date of birth, name of mother, and gender)

Dr. Horton commenced a discussion of the draft charter for the committee. He advised that the draft is more in the nature of by-laws, and suggested that the document should be recast as such. Dr. Horton indicated that it had been his original intent to go through the draft line by line, but in the interest of saving time suggested it may be more efficient to accept comments from the committee. Mr. Baldrige indicated that there were some

technical problems with the proposed by-laws, and that further drafting would be necessary.

Dr. Fielding indicated that he needed to depart early and offered several comments. First, he requested that Mr. Baldrige consult with the Attorney General's Office as to whether there is greater latitude available to the committee as a purely advisory body under the State Open Meeting Act. Second, he expressed his opinion that two meetings annually is not enough, and that two additional telephonic meetings are needed. Third, he suggested that the Director, as Chair, should be a non-voting member of the committee. Fourth, he offered to host a meeting in Los Angeles. Fifth, he suggested that the tables be rearranged at future meetings to afford members better sightlines with each other.

Dr. Yancey asked that committee meetings reflect a culture of wellness, featuring walking breaks and healthful foods.

In the area of communications, Dr. Yancey objected to restrictions on members speaking to the media, observing that she is often interviewed by the local public radio station. She observed that members may also be asked to testify before the Legislature. Mr. Baldrige observed that members may have no way to control how they are represented by the media, and at best can only make clear to the reporter that they can't speak on behalf of the committee, that only the Director as Chair of the committee is in a position to do so. Janet Huston, CDPH Associate Director of External Affairs, expressed her concern that members of the committee may be perceived as representatives of the Department, and asked that committee members inform the CDPH Office of Public Affairs of press contacts.

Cynthia Gomez asked that Dr. Horton designate another member as the chair, and that Dr. Horton serve as an ex-officio member, in a manner similar to a corporate CEO in relation to the corporate Board of Directors.

Dr. Borger inquired as to how issues would be placed on the agenda. He also expressed a desire that the committee meet quarterly.

Dr. Shortell expressed the view that the Director should set the agenda, and suggested that the Healthy People 2020 goals should be on future agendas.

Dr. Iton expressed his concern that holding meetings in private hotels may be more restrictive on interested persons expressing their views than meetings held in public buildings.

Carolina Simunovic expressed a desire for more information about how the boxes on the organization chart relate to programs described in the strategic plan.

Dr. Horton adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.