

**Monthly Meeting  
Minutes  
May 11, 2010  
8:00 AM  
Library**

**Call to order at 8:10 AM**

Present:

Board of Health – Matt Brovender, Esq., Greg Burnett, Kenneth Lalime, RPH, Theresa Quell, PhD, RN, and Ed Tracey, MD

Staff – Tim Callahan, Director of Health, David Reed, MD, Medical Advisor, Tom Closter, Director of Environmental Health

Guests – Richard Moccia, Mayor and Larry Cross, Executive Director Norwalk Community Health Center

Minutes of April 13, 2010 Meeting - **Motion to approve by Ms. Quell, seconded by Dr. Tracey, passed unanimously**

HRSA Decision - Norwalk Community Health Center

Mr. Callahan recalled in February 2008 the Board discussed the matter of Community Health Centers Inc. (CHC) proposal to expand services beyond dental and behavioral health to include primary care. At that time the Board met with the leadership of the Norwalk Community Health Center (NCHC) and CHC. The recommendation of the Board, which was sent to Jack Egan, Operations Director, Eastern Division, and Bureau of Primary Health Care, was as follows. “In summary, the Board of Health finds NCHC and CHC to be organizations sharing a mission predicated on service to the less fortunate. The Board recognizes that numbers link economics and quality. Too many patients may drive quality down if adequate funding is not available, while too few patients may escalate costs on a per visit basis and therefore affect the quality of care. The challenge is to find the equilibrium point. Currently NCHC is meeting the demand for services from the community they serve in a timely manner. When medically necessary, patients are seen on the same day they seek service. Replication of existing services by another publicly financed provider will decrease the number of patients seen at NCHC and may impact the quality of care. For these reasons the Board of Health does not support the Community Health Centers Inc. application to HRSA for a change of scope which would allow them to provide primary care in Norwalk.” Recently a decision to approve the CHC request was issued by Kirsten Argueta, Chief, Northeast Branch Eastern Division, HRSA.

Larry Cross, Executive Director Norwalk Community Health Center, addressed the group. Consultants retained by HRSA conducted a Service Area Overlap Analysis. The

intent of this exercise was to determine if unmet need for services exists and whether or not a plan to address the deficiency was in place, the effect of additional capacity on the financial viability of NCHC and the degree of collaboration between NCHC and CHC.

The consultants found the need for services is nearly met and NCHC has in place an aggressive plan to eliminate the shortfall. In fact after the move to a larger facility and the addition of practitioners the capacity at NCHC will be slightly greater than the demand for services. The consultants also found the entrance of CHC into the primary care market will destabilize the financial viability of NCHC. In regards to collaboration the consultants found NCHC and CHC might better coordinate their service offerings for patients.

Mr. Cross said the Norwalk based organizations interviewed by the consultants all felt the CHC plan would result in unnecessary duplication of services. In Mr. Cross's view the consultants report clearly advised against granting approval to CHC. Kirsten Argueta's ruling cannot be reconciled to the report. Since HRSA does not have an appeals process Mr. Cross with the full support of the NCHC Board of Directors has requested intervention by Representative Himes and Senators Lieberman and Dodd. Mr. Cross asked the Mayor and Board of Health to advocate with their political associates for a review of this action. The Mayor and Board of Health agreed to assist.

#### Personnel Update

Projects Coordinator – Utilizing grant funds this position was created to assist in preparation for accreditation, to implement a formal quality improvement process, assume the coordination of public health emergency preparedness activities and serve as the point person on a variety of projects. There were 15 applicants, 11 candidates interviewed and a short list of 3 candidates to be interviewed by senior staff. The target date for hire is by the end of May 2010.

Health Educator – This city- funded position became vacant in May 2009 and was frozen. The position is now approved for hiring and recruitment will get underway this week

#### Environmental Health Software Demonstration

Due to technical difficulties and the length of the meeting this item will be taken up at the June 2010 meeting

Motion to adjourn at 9:10 Am by Ms Quell seconded by Mr. Burnett passed unanimously