
Health Needs and Human Services Commission Agenda

Wednesday, August 21, 2024 12:00 p.m.
Harrigan Centennial Hall

Commission Members:
Crystal Duncan, Annette Evans, Amanda Roberts,
Woody Widmark, Paul Bahna, Michelle Kavouras
Assembly Liaison: JJ Carlson

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. CORRESPONDENCE /AGENDA CHANGES

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

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 11, 2024

VI. REPORTS

Chair

Commissioners

City Staff

Assembly Liaison

Other(s)

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Working Group Updates

1. Goals

○ Childcare Services

○ Community Transportation

○ Elder Services

2. Timeline

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at noon in Harrigan Centennial Hall.

Health Needs and Human Services Commission Minutes

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 12:00 p.m.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

Commission Members:

**Rachel Worthey, Crystal Duncan, Annette Evans, Woody Widmark,
Amanda Roberts, Paul Bahna, Michelle Kavouras**

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, Michelle Kavouras, Paul Bahna (arrived at 12:05 pm)

Commissioners Absent: Annette Evans (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. June 11, 2024 minutes

Widmark move to approve the minutes of June 11, 2024. Motion passed 4-0 by a voice vote.

VI. REPORTS

Chair -None.

Commissioners – Kavouras introduced herself to the Commission and provided a overview of her background.

City Staff – None.

Assembly Liaison – Carlson updated the group on efforts to remove references to Sitka Community Hospital from the Charter. She encouraged members to contribute to the Tourism Task Force's recommendations regarding smoking in non-smoking areas.

Other(s) – None.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

B. Working Group Updates

Dr. Bahna presented issues with city public transportation, emphasizing the need for more efficient services. Three main city lines were proposed with extended hours

from 7:30 to 9:30 daily, including Saturdays. The Green Line extension to the airport was suggested for better traveler access.

He discussed extending the red line to serve residential areas better and improve access to tourist sites like the Fortress of Bears. Recommendations on clearer bus maps and destination signs, more shelters, and increased frequency were mentioned. He noted possibilities of increasing funding to enhance services.

Taxi service challenges in Sitka were highlighted, with three companies often prioritizing tourists. A proposal was a volunteer-based transport service like “Good Samaritan Sitka Volunteers” for emergencies until taxi services could improve. The safety of volunteers and transportation improvements were key focuses.

The Commission appreciated Dr. Bahna and Widmark’s contributions, aiming to enhance elder services with potential home visits. A discussion on expanding transit days and stops, mindful of financial implications and communication to maintain service and government relationships was had.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Duncan moved to adjourn the meeting. Seeing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Attest:
Jess Earnshaw, Deputy Clerk

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members
From: Crystal Duncan, Health Needs and Human Services (HNHS) Chair
Subject: 2024 Goals
Date: July 18, 2024

During the June 19th regular HNHS commission meeting, Commissioner Widmark moved to approve the 2024 Goals. Motion PASSED by a unanimous voice vote. The topics for further exploration are:

1. **Childcare Services**
 - *Working group: Annette Evans (lead), Crystal Duncan, TBD*
2. **Community Transportation**
 - *Working group: Amanda Roberts, Lawrence Widmark (lead), Paul Bahna*
3. **Elder Services**
 - *Working group: Crystal Duncan, Michelle Kavouras, Paul Bahna (lead)*

You may recall that one of these topics was provided by direction of the Assembly. On April 26, 2022 a motion was made by Assemblyman Christianson to request the Health Needs and Human Services Commission provide recommendations on how to improve childcare availability and program services in Sitka. The motion PASSED by the following vote. Yes: 5 - Himschoot, Knox, Duncan, Miller, and Christianson. Absent: 2 - Mosher and Eisenbeisz

The additional two topics were identified and selected at an April 17th HNHS work session.

Upon approval, the commission will use the remainder of the year working in smaller working groups to research and draft information in a concise report that will be provided to, and then expanded upon via a short presentation to the Assembly. The commission discussed common things to explore and settled on:

- Background information
- Problem identification
- Summary of the service currently offered by the City and/or other organizations and partnering potential
- Relevant City action in other communities
- Recommendations for Assembly

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Crystal Duncan

Health Needs & Human Services Commission

Working Group Summary Updates (July 18 - August 14) City & Borough of Sitka

Topic: Child Care Services

Lead Member: Annette Evans

Work Group Members: Crystal Duncan

Summary and Updates:

No update provided.

Topic: Community Transportation

Lead Member: Lawrence Widmark

Work Group Members: Paul Bahna, Amanda Roberts

Summary and Updates:

The HNHS Commission has included addressing transportation issues as one of its goals this year. We are hoping to make public transportation, the Ride, more accessible and efficient so that more Sitkans can use it throughout the day. Also, we would like to address the availability of taxis and to find ways to invite Uber or Lyft to operate in Sitka.

Topic: Elder Services

Lead Member: Paul Bahna

Work Group Members: Crystal Duncan, Michelle Kavouras

Summary and Updates:

Our working group met once this month. The plan is to meet at the Sitka Public Library on the 3rd Friday of each month at noon, and as needed.

We have contacted the Center for Community, Brave Heart, Pioneer home, and Southeast Alaska Independent Learning (SAIL) to learn more about the services they offer. Michelle offered to get an updated *community resource guide* which we will review at the next meeting and will plan to include in the report as an appendix item.

During our meeting, we discussed the possibility of suggesting the Assembly (and/or City staff) plan for, and host an event for elders where relevant service-providing (including the City) agencies can share information during a luncheon gathering. We are still brainstorming new ways the City can support this group.

The report has not been started. Our group needs to come up with a timeline to ensure we are making progress and will be ready to present at the end of this calendar year.

August 14, 2024

Childcare Workgroup Update:

The childcare crisis has been adopted by many as a main topic to discuss in order to work towards solutions, including a visit to Sitka from Chris Brown, staffer from Senator Dan Sullivan's office, August 19th, 1-2:30pm UAS Sitka Campus, with the goal to provide Sullivan with information on how the federal government might help. The Chamber of Commerce will also be focusing their fall Speaker Series on Childcare to include presenters with follow-up discussion workshops this October through December. The local childcare workgroup Early Childhood Coalition (ECC) continues to meet weekly to share updates from members which include representatives from local licensed childcare programs, school district superintendent, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Sitka Counseling, Parents, City of Sitka employees, and more, and as a success from their fall 2023 Childcare Career Summit, the ECC continues to support the initiation of Early Childhood Development classes to be offered in our local high schools through UAA beginning this fall.