



Minnesota Rural Health Association  
118 State Capitol  
Day at the Capitol  
Wednesday February 20, 2008

MRHA Board Meeting  
Minutes

MRHA Board members attending: President Barbara Muesing, Jack Geller, Liz Quam, Mark Schoenbaum  
Ex Officio: Marnie Moore Lindman, Judith Neppel

Legislators: Senator Gary Kubly, Representatives Larry Hosch, Thomas Huntley, Bernie Lieder, Mary Ellen Otremba, Marty Seifert

Other guests: Dr. Barbara Brandt, Associate Vice President, Angela Bowles, and Melissa Hansen, MN AHEC, Joan Porraz, NW AHEC, Brittany Morgan NE AHEC, Larissa Stigen and Richard Smestad, Central AHEC, Kathleen Huntley and Wendy Foley, S AHEC, Kari Lappe and Kristine Lekander, Comprehensive Advance Life Support, Kari Thurlow, MN Health and Housing Alliance, Ashley Schellhas, Intern with Liz Quam, Sara Eeg and Kristen Shorts, Emerging Leaders. Joel Hetler, U of M Center for Excellence in Children's Mental Health,

President Barbara Muesing convened the MRHA Board of Directors meeting at 10 AM and welcomed all attending. She asked each to introduce themselves and their organization.

President Muesing introduced Dr. Barbara Brandt, Director of MN Area Health Education Center at the University of Minnesota and asked her to give us an overview of the work of the AHEC's. She discussed the history of the federally funded program, its establishment in MN, the regional offices NW, NE, Central, and S and spoke to the addition of an urban AHEC in North Minneapolis and another Southeast if grant funding allows.

She highlighted the outcomes of the work of the AHEC's as follows:

- U of M Academic Health Center's health professions workforce strategy
- AHEC's outcomes in promoting health care careers and recruiting students to educational programs preparing rural providers
- Workforce analysis in 6 healthcare professions
- Accountability - graduate placement reports in each of the 6 professions
- Rural Physician Associate Program (RPAP) reports and graduate placement successes in rural MN
- Dental clinic education/services to underserved in Hibbing and currently established Willmar
- The U of MN Academic Health Center strives to be agile and flexible and uses technology to meet rural workforce shortages. For example there

currently is a graduate nurse practitioners cohort program being delivered on-line requiring minimal travel to the Twin Cities

Representative Marty Seifert, Republican Minority Leader of Marshall discussed the tragic accident van/school bus crash at Cottonwood yesterday and the reminder that traffic safety is a rural health issue of great importance. President Muesing concurred and spoke to the MRHA Policy Initiatives regarding seat belt laws and rural statistics. Liz Quam spoke of the MRHA Rural Opportunity Assessment (ROA) initiative and explained that where there is opportunity for rural jobs/economic development there should be legislative support. Representative Seifert recognizes that the healthcare system is fragile that the margins are precarious particularly in long term care. He thanked MRHA for the work they are doing to keep rural health issues on the forefront of Legislators thinking and encouraged legislative visits today.

Mark Schoenbaum discussed the importance of the legislative visits and encouraged all to meet with as many Legislators as they could. He spoke of the budget issues and the state employment freeze. The top legislative issues this session include the bonding and transportation bill, and property tax relief. He spoke of the Legislative and Governor's Task Force Reports. Hearing on these reports is occurring now and he looks for health reform bills to come shortly. The reports bring attention to three critical rural health issues: workforce, technology, and system quality reporting expectations.

Kari Thurlow, MN Health and Housing Alliance (MHHA), VP for Advocacy, spoke to their Legislative agenda which includes supporting a transformation and reform in older adult services across the continuum from nursing facilities to home and community based services, to reform to the "24 Hour Customized Living" services to allow assisted living residents to receive the services needed, and to fund a cost of living adjustment for 2009. They are also asking for "rebasement" language change that was a part of the FY 2008-2009 state budget which doesn't achieve the goals of the original rebasing proposal. She encouraged a review of the MHHA website for talking points.

President Muesing introduced Dr. Thomas Baldwin, UMC Sr. Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs and his wife Ardith Pelton.

Joel Hetler, Director of the U of M Center for Excellence in Children's Mental Health, discussed a mission of promoting mental health in MN's children, their families and communities, through statewide collaborative actions that influences and integrates training, research, practice and policy. He explained the shortage of mental health professionals statewide but particularly in rural areas. CECHI is offering 3 interactive TV conferences this year attended by 600+ individuals in 37 sites in greater MN.

Representative Thomas Huntley, Chair of Health and Human Services Finance Division, spoke of the Legislative Healthcare Access Commission's work group activities and their goal of universal healthcare coverage, the Governor's Healthcare Transition Task Force comprised of 4 Legislators and 13 Governor's appointees. Their report goal is to reduce the total health care cost to the state by 20% by 2011. The current payment structure doesn't reward preventative health cost savings measures but rather sick measures only. Currently, 75% of the healthcare dollars are being spent on 5 chronic diseases. Both reports are being considered and a bill to change the payment system to incent prevention will likely result. Rewards to primary care and away from specialty care much like the international medical model is being considered. Only 35% of the American physicians are primary care while in most countries it is greater than half.

Representative Bernie Lieder, Chair of Transportation Finance Division spoke briefly about the need for a bonding bill to support building additions to higher education institutions in his district to offset the numbers of students turned away in nursing where rural workforce shortages are significant.

Senator Gary Kubly, Chair of Energy Subdivision, spoke of his concern for rural health care access in the south east portion of the state particularly as it relates to cost and access. He serves on his local hospital Board of Directors and recognizes the thin margins and the significant losses incurred in the last years.

Representative Larry Hosch, Vice Chair of the Health and Human Services Finance Division, represents central MN and is concerned about rural health care given the demographic shifts. He spoke to his constituents concerns for healthcare access and costs. He sees the need to educate the public about the issues related to MN rural older populations and the services needed currently and into the future.

Representative Mary Ellen Otremba, Chair of Agriculture, Rural Economics, and Veterans Affairs, a strong rural health proponent and a member of MRHA spoke of several rural health case examples in her rural community where constituents could not access health care because they lacked the resources needed to pay for the care required. When asked how we could help, she said there had been work completed in the agriculture bill that would meet the need but that it now requires a congressional waiver to insure access. She asked that we write letters to our Congressman asking them to pass the waiver needed to assist rural health care consumers.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30AM.  
President Muesing thanked all the guests.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Judith Neppel