

Minutes of the Meeting of the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Directors of the Cook County Health and Hospitals System (CCHHS) held Friday, November 20, 2020 at the hour of 9:00 A.M. This meeting was held by remote means only, as permitted by the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

I. Attendance/Call to Order

Chair Driscoll called the meeting to order.

Present: Chair Mary Driscoll, RN, MPH and Directors Robert Currie, Raul Garza and Heather M. Prendergast, MD, MS, MPH (4)

Board Chair M. Hill Hammock (ex-officio), Board Vice Chair David Ernesto Munar and Directors Ada Mary Gugenheim, Joseph M. Harrington, Mike Koetting, Robert G. Reiter, Jr. and Otis L. Story, Sr.

Absent: None (0)

Additional attendees and/or presenters were:

Debra D. Carey – Interim Chief Executive Officer
Jeff McCutchan – General Counsel
Beena Peters, DNP, RN, FACHE

Carrie Pramuk-Volk –Interim Chief Human
Resources Officer
Deborah Santana – Secretary to the Board

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Friday, February 19, 2021 at 8:30 A.M.

II. Electronically Submitted Public Speaker Testimony (Attachment #1)

The Secretary read the public speaker testimonies submitted from the following individuals into the record:

1. Identical testimony statement was separately submitted by the following individuals:

Stroger Hospital

Kevin Murray, RN
Falguni Dave – RN
Laura Phillips - RN
Tasha Mosley-Brown – RN
Nancy Alverio – RN
Sophia Meneses - RN
Kathyline Buday - RN
Onyinye Ireaja - RN
Patricia Ezirike - RN
Kecia Johnson - RN
Rhodelyn Bedford - RN
Marie Kuzniarek – RN
Netron Bernal – RN
John Stewart

Provident Hospital

Phyllis Seaton , RN
Joyce Ball, RN
Patricia Washington, RN

Cook County Health

Tina Montanez, RN

Trauma Department, Stroger Hospital

Catherine Szdelko , RN

Adult Emergency Department, Stroger Hospital

Dorothy Boswell-Lee, RN

MICU/Covid-19 Unit, Stroger Hospital

Norma Hernandez, RN
Joyce Richardson, RN
Leiza Hernandez, RN
Sneha Koladyil, RN
Aida Radhima, RN
Lorina Rojas-Cesario, RN

PACU, Stroger Hospital

Jona Pathiyil, RN
Mini Abraham, RN
Cicily Peter, RN
Nimfa Abas-Millan

Emergency Department, Stroger Hospital

Jacqueline Martinez, RN
Ijeoma Ibe, RN
Ariteneo Constantino, RN
Cristina Ong, RN
Leilani Dulce, RN
Jacqueline Macias, RN
Noemi Estante, RN
Smart Owusu-Aduomi, RN
Cassandra Kay, RN
Siddhi Patel, RN
Kamilah Brown, RN
Mellody Bellamy, RN
Ogechi Uche, RN
Consuelo Vargas, RN
Ernesto Agron, RN
Zyra Maldonado, RN
Sarah Walker, RN

II. Electronically Submitted Public Speaker Testimony (continued)

2. Celedonia Estrada - RN, MICU/Covid-19 Unit, Stroger Hospital
3. Ashley Hixson - RN, Provident Hospital
4. Nastasia Medina – RN, Emergency Dept., Stroger Hospital
5. Dayana Vilangatt - RN, MICU/Covid-19 Unit, Stroger Hospital
6. Lissy Mathew – RN, Neuro ICU, Stroger Hospital
7. Maribel Quinones – RN, Integrated Care Dept., Stroger Hospital
8. Tashon Vantrease – Charge Nurse, 7West MedSurg, Stroger Hospital
9. Rolanda Watson – RN, CCH
10. Peter Sesi – RN, CCH

Following the presentation of public testimony, Debra D. Carey, Interim Chief Executive Officer, provided the following comments regarding staffing challenges relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

I want the Board and the public viewing this meeting to understand that staffing is a challenge for hospitals across the region and across the country. This is not unique to Cook County Health. And it is not unique to nurses. Dozens of hospital positions are required in the fight against COVID.

The second COVID-19 surge is on us. Since June, we have discussed how we can respond to a second surge. We must function within the limits of our financial resources which impacts our ability to onboard supplemental staff that may be needed.

There have been countless media stories – literally hundreds in recent weeks - with hospital leaders indicating that their capacity is not limited by their bed count rather by staffing. And most notably nurses but also respiratory therapists and lab techs to name a few others.

Adding to this is the fact that this is not a regional surge like we saw in the Spring. This is a national surge. The staffing challenges across the country have led CDC to issue guidelines allowing both exposed and infected healthcare workers to work if staffing shortages compromise safe care. We have seen this operationalized in North Dakota when hospitals reached 100% capacity and did not have enough frontline workers to keep up with the demand. We hope that we will not get to this point.

We have been able to mobilize approximately 50 agency nurses but please understand that agency nurses are leaving some assignments for assignments that pay more. The going hourly rate ten days ago was approximately \$130/hour. This week, that rate is closer to \$200/hour. But having a contract with agencies doesn't guarantee the agency can recruit nurses or that they will stay and this is seemingly what is happening across the industry and here at Cook County Health.

We have had a number of agency nurses who have left the jail in recent weeks for better paying assignments in other states. Some hospitals are even reporting that nurses are resigning to take agency positions knowing that they can get hired full time when the pandemic is over. We also have heard that more profitable hospitals are paying these high rates to nurses to stay home and be available when they are needed. Some hospitals are paying nurses \$4,000/week and some are providing \$10,000 signing bonuses. We are hearing from systems with more resources that even offering bonuses is not always effective because nursing and clinical staff are tired.

II. Electronically Submitted Public Speaker Testimony (continued)

Cook County Health cannot pay bonuses or afford to hire agency nurses in anticipation of a surge. And for that matter, most safety net hospitals have a very hard time competing in this environment. This should be viewed as another example of health inequity.

Lastly, I want to reiterate what we have said since the beginning of this pandemic. Our first and highest priority is the jail. You will recall that in the Spring, significant efforts to release detainees brought the population down to approximately 4,000. This better accommodated social distancing and was a key component in our ability to contain the virus.

Today, the population stands at 5,500. The positivity rate has increased to nearly 5% in the last week...the highest it has been since May. We still have our robust testing protocols in place. In fact, we are testing well over a thousand detainees a week. But having 1,500 more detainees limits the Sheriff's ability to provide ideal social distancing. We are working around the clock to bring in nurses and other support staff to staff the areas that were closed in recent months but are now reopened to house infected detainees. We have significantly reduced ambulatory services and are working to redeploy staff, primarily nurses but others as well. We are also aggressively seeking staffing through agency contracts but the virus is not waiting until staffing resources show up.

In the spring of 2020, we were fortunate to have supplemental staff for the jail from the state's agency contract. We do not have this resource at this time.

In the end, should the situation at the jail require more resources than we can mobilize through agency or shifting nurses from CCH outpatient clinics, we will have no choice but to pull staff from Stroger and Provident. This domino effect will result in the need to limit hospital-based services which we obviously don't want to do. Other hospitals will be forced to take patients that would have come to Stroger hospital. A large number of these patients will be undocumented and uninsured – the very patients are mission envisions us caring for.

We are grateful to our frontline staff for their commitment. We appreciate that this situation is not ideal but it is the current reality in our country. We need to work together and move forward to care for our patients the best we can. We will continue to keep the board apprised but want you to know that we are working every avenue to bring in enough staffing to provide safe patient care.

III. Action Items

A. Minutes of the Human Resources Committee Meeting of June 19, 2020

Director Prendergast, seconded by Director Garza, moved to accept the minutes of the Meeting of the Human Resources Committee of June 19, 2020. A roll call vote was taken, the votes of yeas and nays being as follows:

Yeas: Chair Driscoll and Directors Garza and Prendergast (3)

Nays: None (0)

Absent: Director Currie (1)

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Any items listed under Sections III and VI

IV. Report from Interim Chief Human Resources Officer (Attachment #2)

Carrie Pramuk-Volk, Interim Chief Human Resources Officer, reviewed the report, which included information on the following subjects:

- Overview of Human Resources
- Employee Engagement
- Covid-19 Response – Update
- Metrics:
 - HR Activity Report through 10/31/20 and Hiring Snapshot
 - Hiring Plan
 - Cook County Health HR Activity Report – Improve/Reduce Average Time to Hire
 - Appendix – Nursing and Revenue Hiring Snapshot through 10/31/20

During the review of the information, a question was raised regarding what is the standard ratio of Human Resources staff to the total workforce. Ms. Pramuk-Volk responded that she will follow-up with that information.

Chair Driscoll requested that Dr. Kiran Joshi and Dr. Rachel Rubin, Co-Leads of the Cook County Department of Public Health, provide an update on contract tracing hiring at the December 4th Board Meeting.

V. Report on Nursing Services (Attachment #3)

Dr. Beena Peters, Chief Nursing Officer, reviewed the report, which included information on the following subjects:

- Nursing Priorities
- Nursing HR Priority Focus Areas for FY20
- Department of Nursing – Organizational Chart
- Overview of Nursing Positions
- Workforce Data
- Accomplishments
- Vizient Nursing Agency Contract
- Nursing Workforce Optimization Committee
- Flexible Staffing Pool Proposal
- Covid-19 Resurgence Plan

During the review of the information, Director Currie requested information on the nursing turnover and vacancy rates prior to the start of Covid-19 pandemic. Dr. Peters responded that she will provide that data.

VI. Closed Meeting Items

- A. Report from Interim Chief Human Resources Officer**
- B. Discussion of personnel matters**
- C. Update on labor negotiations**
- D. Discussion of litigation matters**

Attest:

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Deborah Santana, Secretary

Requests/Follow-up:

- Follow-up: Information was requested regarding the standard ratio of Human Resources staff to the total workforce. Page 3
- Follow-up: Chair Driscoll requested that Dr. Kiran Joshi and Dr. Rachel Rubin, Co-Leads of the Cook County Department of Public Health, provide an update on contract tracing hiring at the December 4th Board Meeting. Page 3
- Request: A request was made for information on the nursing turnover and vacancy rates prior to the start of Covid-19 pandemic. Page 3