


TO: Skagway Traditional Council

FR: Judean Gordon 
SEARHC Board Representative

RE: SEARHC Board of Directors Quarterly Meetings

Date: November 3, 2023

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) Board of Directors held another successful quarterly meeting on October 25–27, in Juneau. For three consecutive days, Directors heard leadership updates, operational reports and year-end outcomes for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. The following provides some highlights throughout the meetings:

Accreditation Governing Body Committee – October 25, 2023

On Wednesday, the Accreditation Governing Body (AGB) Committee met to review and approve regular business, including revisions to the Medical Staff Bylaws, Rules and Regulations. Dr. Elliot Bruhl, the Senior Vice President/Chief Medical Officer, introduced the new Chief of Staff to the Committee, Dr. Guillermo Espinoza. Following Dr. Espinoza’s presentation of the October Medical Staff Credentials, Dr. Bruhl provided an overview of SEARHC’s Primary Care leadership teams and their ongoing efforts towards improving access, service, quality, and patient experience.

Below are some highlights from his presentation:

- During FY23, SEARHC experienced remarkable growth with 86,400 primary care visits recorded at the close of the fiscal year. August was a record month for specialty care visits with over 1,500 patients served, in addition to Dental serving 11,000 patients during the fourth quarter.
- Patient Experience survey results showed that the likelihood of recommending SEARHC to family and friends was between 94% and 97% from respondents.
- SEARHC Primary Care teams have been exceeding all quality target measures for blood pressure control, diabetic foot exams and Hepatitis C screenings. Also above targets, were breast cancer screenings, diabetes control, depression screening, opioid use, and tobacco cessation counseling.
- Behavioral Health continues to grow the outpatient intensive Substance Abuse Treatment program in Sitka, and is now able to support 20 patients. All residents of Southeast Alaska are eligible for the program, which currently has open beds available.
- SEARHC successfully opened another Opioid Treatment Clinic in Klawock on Prince of Wales Island mid-September, marking a significant milestone as the third Opioid Treatment Center that’s been opened since the inception of the Front Street Clinic in Juneau.
- During the fourth quarter, 40 behavioral health employees completed a highly regarded international training program for professionals, known as White Bison Mending Broken Hearts. A culturally-based training program designed specifically for professionals in mental health, behavioral health, substance abuse, and re-entry fields supporting indigenous communities.

The Committee also approved SEARHC’s annual Quality Assurance Performance Improvement Plan and Infection Prevention Control Plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, in addition to a Joint Replacement manuscript study that was presented.

Executive Committee – October 25, 2023

On Wednesday, the Executive Committee met and conducted its regular business of reviewing and approving the agenda along with the minutes from August 9, 2023. The Committee moved into executive session at 1:03 p.m. to discuss and review the President and CEO's annual evaluation. The Committee adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Finance Committee – October 26, 2023

On Thursday, the Finance Committee met and conducted its regular business along with reviewing two resolutions that were presented. SEARHC Senior Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, Dan Harris provided a report on year-end financials in addition to the fourth quarter performance. The following are some highlights from his report:

- SEARHC concluded another successful year of serving Southeast Alaskan communities, maintaining a strong financial position with a 9.2% operating margin.
- In the past fiscal year, the Consortium has experienced phenomenal growth, with a 20.5% increase in accumulative outpatient volumes from the previous fiscal year. As additional expansion projects are brought online, volumes will continue to grow throughout FY24.
- SEARHC's workforce has also grown significantly during FY23, through the acquisition of Juneau OB/GYN Services and Juneau Youth Services, as well as the expansion of Opioid Treatment Programs and Specialty Care Services.
- 2024-01 Resolution *Authorizing SEARHC application for funding from the Indian Health Service (IHS) for the Small Ambulatory Program (SAP) to construct a replacement clinic in Haines, Alaska* was endorsed and moved to the full Board for consideration.
- 2024-02 Resolution *Authorization for Approval of Healing Hand Foundation Affiliation* was endorsed and moved to the full Board for consideration.

Patient Experience Committee – October 26, 2023

On Thursday, the Patient Experience Committee met to conduct its regular business and heard an update from SEARHC Senior Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer, Leatha Mercurieff on Patient Satisfaction. A presentation was also provided from SEARHC's Vice President of Finance that shared an overview of services that are available through the Patient Health Benefits department.

The following are some highlights from the meeting:

- Despite SEARHC's significant increase in services, patient satisfaction data shows that patient complaints have declined over the past three years.
- The Patient Experience Survey has been expanded to include additional outpatient clinics across the Consortium: Primary Care, Specialty Care, Radiology, Patient Travel, Call Center Services, Dental and Behavioral Health.
- A total of over 1,500 employees have completed training in SEARHC's 7 Standards of Excellence over the past year, with 100 providers completing an assessment tool called DiSC. DiSC measures personality profiles, which are used to improve workplace culture and foster effective communication and relationship-building strategies.
- SEARHC's Patient Health Benefits team serves as an excellent resource for individuals needing assistance with health insurance enrollment or seeking information about Medicaid, Medicare, the Tribally-Sponsored Health Insurance Program (T-SHIP), the Health Insurance Marketplace, Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits, HRSA's sliding discounts, Part D purchase programs, and financial assistance programs.

Board of Directors – October 27, 2023

On Friday, the Board of Directors heard report updates from the Chair, President and CEO, and the Senior Vice President/Chief Financial Officer. In addition, the Board successfully held elections for officers, members-at-large, and representatives for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB) and will serve two-year terms. The following are highlights from the meeting:

- **Elections:** Kimberley Strong was re-elected as Chair, Judean Gordon was re-elected as Vice-Chair, Lavina Brock was re-elected as Secretary, and Harriet Silva was re-elected as Treasurer. June Durgan, James Jack, Sr., and Patricia Cottle were re-elected as Members-at-Large.
- **ANTHC/ANHB Representatives:** Kimberley Strong was re-elected as the ANTHC primary representative, and Lincoln Bean, Sr. was re-elected as alternate. Judean Gordon was elected as ANHB primary representative, and Patricia Cottle was elected as alternate.
- The ANTHC hosted a Travel Summit that focused on patient travel issues within Alaska's Tribal Health System. Tribal Health Organizations from across the state discussed issues within patient travel processes with travel, lodging, and the Purchased and Referred Care (PRC) program. SEARHC has been actively involved with Kimberley Strong, Judean Gordon, June Durgan and Patty Cottle are working in partnership to address top priorities that were identified during the summit. The next travel summit is expected to convene in December 2023 to discuss the progress of each committee.
- The ANTHC Board of Directors met on October 10-13, to conduct its quarterly board and committee meetings. Main outcomes included the approval of an 80-bed skilled nursing facility and the approval of the FY24 budget with a negative 2% operating margin.
- SEARHC has successfully expanded services at the Mountainside Rehabilitation Clinic in Sitka, that includes a dedicated space for pediatric rehabilitation services. The new Vintage Park Medical Center campus in Juneau will begin opening in December 2023, with Urgent Care, Imaging and Laboratory services. Primary Care, Pediatrics, Behavioral Health, Optometry and Pediatric Rehabilitation will open in January 2024.

I appreciate the opportunity to represent our community on the SEARHC Board of Directors and invite you to contact me with any questions or concerns. Again, thanks for your continued support of SEARHC's important mission of, *"Alaska Native People working in partnership to provide the best healthcare for our communities."*