

MEMORANDUM

TO: County Commissioner Warren Brown

FROM: The Health Investigation Committee formed in August 2021
Mozhdeh Bruss, Chairperson
Leslie Davis, Vice Chair
Marybeth Snyder, Secretary
Adam Talamante, Committee Member
LaVonda Bass, Committee Member
Mike Le Roux, Committee Member
Susie Kleckner, Committee Member

RE: Results of Investigation

DATE: December 6, 2021

This memorandum is for the purpose of introducing you to the information and research that our Committee members have gathered since our first meeting on August 12, 2021. Our goal was to complete the task given “*research the feasibility of creating an independent county public health agency vs joining another health district vs remaining with San Juan Basin Public Health*” by early December. We appreciate your guidance and support as the BOCC liaison to the Committee.

The following describes the Committee’s processes and activities during this past 4 months:

- Oriented to the Sunshine Law and received a summary of the Colorado Revised Statutes - Title 25. Public Health and Environment along with other related information to facilitate the work of the Committee.
- Reviewed the core public health requirements and drafted a spreadsheet questionnaire to gather information from San Juan Basin Public Health (SJBPH) as the district public health agency serving Archuleta County.
- Obtained information about the legal structure and governance of SJBPH including organizational functions, statutory obligations, core activities (foundational services and capabilities), proportional allocations of costs, expenses, budget, and other topic areas.
- Met via zoom with members of the SJBPH Board of Health (one was present in person) accompanied by a number of staff of SJBPH staff (executive director, division directors, and others) to obtain answers to a series of questions such as services, budget, and programming.
- Conducted interviews with representatives of the five county health agencies using a questionnaire that asked about structure, service, budget, staffing, assessment, and communication. Additional questions were included by individual committee members who conducted the interviews (see individual reports for [select 3B counties: Gilpin,

Alamosa, Grand, Delta], and Montezuma). According to Colorado.gov, there are a total of 43 counties that have their own County Public Health Agency serving different size populations.

- Conducted online research on profile of each county interviewed (see individual reports along with snapshot of all counties).
- Reviewed documents shared by SJBPH and completed the above-mentioned questionnaire (see report for SJBPH).
- Conducted rudimentary public outreach through conversations/interviews with community members, businesses, and programs that are partnering with SJBPH by 2 members of the Committee.
- A total of nine public noticed meetings (including tonight) were held at 398 Lewis Street, Pagosa Springs.

The following is a list of attached documents that were the products of the research by members of the Committee:

1. Snapshot chart presenting the profile for Archuleta, LaPlata, Delta, Grand, Alamosa, Gilpin, and Montezuma counties.
2. Individual responses/reports for the 5 Counties interviewed.
3. A report of SJBPH which includes 2021 “Fee Schedule for Services Rendered”, budget information from 2019 until current proposed budget.
4. List of services and programs at SJBPH in Archuleta County from 1990-2012.
5. Information gathered through the public outreach by two Committee members.
6. List of additional resources discovered through the process that maybe helpful moving forward.

The following information highlights some of the key learning from the County Public Health Agencies by the type of question:

Structure: Nearly all health agencies interviewed were governed only by County Commissioners serving as the Board of Health (BOH). The challenge raised among some of those interviewed was the need for health expertise among the BOH members considering the complexity of the issues and topics that need attention.

Services: Counties either contract with others for some or all of their core services or manage their services internally. It was noted that county public health agencies in general stay abreast of their community needs and resources and can customize services appropriately. Environmental services such as septic system are carried out by the health departments with the exception of two that is handled by the county building department. The budgets for the health departments ranged anywhere from \$350,000 to \$2,363,271 commensurate with the scope of

work, services offered by the agencies, and size of population as possible influencing factors. (see attached snapshot chart).

Staffing: Number of staff ranged from 4-27 (see attached snapshot chart). Lack of staffing, high turn-over, difficulty in recruitment due to County pay structure, and access to qualified staff were reported. One County has a Home Health Agency with 29 employees.

Assessment: All public health agencies in Colorado are required to complete the Health Improvement Assessment every 5 years, which can involve independent assessment with internal or external technical support or as part of a regional health partnership.

Communication: Limited access to broadband and transportation for clients needing health care services was reported. Additionally, limited access to public health agency offices was also noted in at least two of the counties. Communication was described as a way to engage with partners through focused efforts such as family nurse partnership or suicide prevention.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, the BOCC may consider the following in their initial deliberation with SJBPH Board of Health:

Assessment: BOCC may be aware that every 5 years, public health agencies in Colorado complete a Community Health Assessment (CHA) that provides an overview of current health status of their services area with the purpose of informing their Public Health Improvement Plan. BOCC may consider requesting that the next CHA for the jurisdiction be designed with the ability to gather, analyze, and report on Archuleta County population with the purpose of informing the Public Health Improvement Plan for the County.

Budget: BOCC may consider requesting a monthly financial report (as done in La Plata) by program area and related services for Archuleta County.

Communication: BOCC may consider the co-creation of a Communication Plan by the BOCC and SJBPH staff as a way to facilitate effective and timely communication which includes follow-up on requests for information and reporting. The Communication Plan may include frequency and locations of meetings, the role of liaison person(s) in gathering and sharing information between BOCC and SJBPH, and other ideas that emerge during the co-development of the Communication Plan.

Statutory Requirements: BOCC may consider requesting a work session with SJBPH Board of Health for the purpose of reviewing the Colorado Revised Statutes - Title 25, Section 1. which covers County and District Public Health Agencies. This information can be helpful in ensuring that all requirements are being addressed in Archuleta County.

In conclusion, we learned much about the different health structures and services among those that we contacted and those that provided information. There are many more questions to be asked and research to be done. We learned that each community has their own population makeup (ethnicity, age), income, poverty, geography, and other data profile with potential implication for services and programming. We also learned that each public health agency (district or county) has their own challenges and opportunities and has to work within their

budgets and resources. All of the public health agencies (district or county) are continuously assessing and reassessing to meet the needs of the people in their service area. BOCC may consider exploring additional questions with both SJBPH and the community to stay open to learning about the public health landscape and gaps that can be addressed in a responsive manner. Toward this end, BOCC may consider formal public outreach or polling as a next step to see what the public needs are and who the public health clients are and will be in the future.

The Committee thanks you, as our liaison Commissioner, and Alvin Schaaf who was wearing two hats as County Commissioner and serving on the Board of Health for SJBPH for allowing seven citizens to be a part of a very important process involving Archuleta County. The Committee worked very hard and did their best to gather the information to assist the BoCC in this process. We would like to give a special thanks to Jaimie Jones and Mary Helminski for assisting with meetings and all communications.