

Minutes of Meeting  
January 10, 2005  
SLO City/County Library, Community Room  
995 Palm Street  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Members Present: Deborah O'Brien (Chair), Penny Chamousis, Tom Hale, M.D.,  
Jan Hicks, Sara Horne, Donald Pinkel, M.D., Susan Warren,  
Richard Wood, M.D.

Members Absent: Lynn Enns (excused), Pam Heatherington (excused), David Odell (excused)

Staff Present: Pam Dudley, Jean White (recorder)

1. **Call to Order**

Health Commissioner Chair, Deborah O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Chair O'Brien asked for a moment of silence for all the people who were affected by the disaster in Southeast Asia.

2. **Minutes: Approval of November 8, 2004**

Motion was made by Commissioner Chamousis to approve the minutes as written. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Wood and unanimously approved.

3. **Public Comment**

**Dr. Steve Hanson, Central Coast representative to the American Medical Association:**

- 1) Starting March 1<sup>st</sup>, Medicare is going to cover tobacco cessation, counseling and medication for Medicare patients. This will require outreach to providers and patients.
- 2) Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, a new law AD 384, will make all 33 prisons and youth authorities under the California Department of Corrections in California, tobacco free.
- 3) San Luis Obispo County is one of two counties in the state that uses some of their tobacco money to help First 5 publicize the need for tobacco cessation and counseling. They are going to be pushing on a statewide basis to increase the number of counties and will be asking for a letter of support from the Health Commission.

**Gregg LaVeille, Canaries Foundation**, referred to a mosquito abatement item that is going before the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, January 25, 2005 that, if approved, would cost the County several million dollars. He believes the use of pesticides through this program would have a tremendous impact on hundreds of chemically sensitive people in the County. He encouraged the Commission to consider all the facts and referenced their website ([noacceptablerisk.com](http://noacceptablerisk.com)) for additional information.

4. **Presentation: Perinatal Substance Abuse – Children's Treatment Center**

**Pam Dudley, Director of Public Health Nursing, introduced Ira J. Chasnoff, M.D., President of the Children's Research Triangle and Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the University of Illinois. She also introduced his colleague, Richard McCourty, Ph.D., who works as a consultant psychiatrist.**

Dr. Chasnoff gave a Power Point presentation entitled "Is Prevention a Moral Obligation?" He stated that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) occurs when a woman drinks during pregnancy. FAS is the most common cause of diagnosable mental retardation, but the majority of children with FAS are not mentally retarded. The most common brain effect is in the behavior and neuro-cognitive functioning of the children. Many of their children have normal IQs, but have significant behavioral problems. Another component of FAS are changes in the facial structure. Dr. Chasnoff showed pictures of the classic facial features of a child with FAS. There are many children whose mothers drank during pregnancy that have normal facial features, but will have central nervous system effects (called alcohol related neuro developmental disorder (ARND)).

Any alcohol used during pregnancy produces harm to the developing brain. There are two patterns that are recognized, binge drinking and chronic drinking. Binge drinking is worse, because you reach high peak blood alcohol levels. One of the highest rates of binge drinking in SLO County is among college women. The combination of marijuana and alcohol increases the rate of FAS.

The effect of alcohol on the developing fetal brain is the key component of FAS. Dr. Chasnoff showed pictures of a normal brain and a brain of a child with FAS. Dr. Chasnoff showed schematics of the brain and the parts that are affected by alcohol. The part of the brain responsible for putting information together and linking information from the back of the brain to the front of the brain is the “limbic system,” which is the part most acutely affected by alcohol. If a child is born without a corpus colosum, they can tell that the mother binged on alcohol approximately 23 days after conception. The corpus colosum’s major job is to connect the right and left sides of the brain.

They have been funded by the Federal Government to do different studies of treatment and are currently studying 6-12 years old with FAS. They are finding new ways to help children learn to regulate their behaviors because without intervention, 90% end of up with mental health problems, 60% drop out of school, 50% end up in trouble with the law, and 50% end up in Jail.

They recently did a study looking at four very different diverse communities (Chicago inner city, Southern Illinois, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura). They found that out of 4800 women total, 20% were using tobacco in the month before they knew they were pregnant, 22% were using alcohol and 7-8% were using both. Once they found out they were pregnant, about half of those women stopped. Of the four communities they studied, San Luis Obispo had the highest substance abuse rates.

The best solution is prevention. In many communities, they have developed a SART system (Screening, Assessment, Referral, Treatment), where every pregnant woman receives the 4P’s Plus (the screening instrument). If the screen is positive, the next step is an assessment. If the assessment is positive, the woman is referred into a central number, and then a Public Health Nurse or a counselor will go out to the home, with a goal to move the person into treatment. This is a linked system between the prenatal care system and the substance abuse treatment system. There are about 40 communities in three states that are using the system. Currently, in San Luis Obispo, they have implemented the 4P’s plus to screen pregnant women in OB offices (18 out of 22 practices in San Luis Obispo County are doing the screening). The next step is to provide a full assessment on children and intervention plan for services.

Dr. Chasnoff referred to their website [www.childstudy.org](http://www.childstudy.org) for information on their research data.

5. **Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Five Year Needs Assessment Report**

**Jan Campbell, Supervising Public Health Nurse, MCH Director**, referred to the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Five Year Needs Assessment Report. All 58 counties in California did an assessment of their county’s health issues and chose three areas to address over the next five year. The San Luis Obispo County MCH Five Year Planning Committee prioritized and chose Perinatal Substance Abuse, Mental Health Issues for children 0-3, and Obesity in children 3-5. They have put together three focus groups that will be setting goals and objectives. San Luis Obispo County has great collaboration between agencies, non-profits, and private providers. Ms. Campbell’s hope is that one day Dr. Chasnoff and Dr. McGourty will be in San Luis Obispo County to cut the ribbon on a Children’s Center in San Luis Obispo County.

**Public Comment**

**Dr. Hanson** asked if Mental Health Prop 63 funds will help them. Ms. Campbell answered that there is a committee discussing that, but those funds won’t be coming for at least a year or two. They are assessing what they have in the County for children and then will build on what they don’t have.

**Commissioner Questions:**

**Commissioner Horne** asked about education for the parents (some parents will buy juice because it is cheaper than milk). Ms. Campbell answered that there are several nutritionists on the focus groups and that

they will be linking with a tri-counties group. Parents need to be educated on diet, budgeting, and how to make a healthy meal. A few Public Health staff are attending the Childhood Obesity Conference in San Diego, and will bring back some ideas for San Luis Obispo County. Many things contribute to the obesity of children, including a huge fast food marketing campaign targeted at children.

**Commissioner Warren** asked if they would be working with the schools on school lunches. Ms. Campbell answered that there are members from the school on the task force who will be addressing that.

Chair O'Brien thanked Jan Campbell and called for a 10-minute break.

#### **6. Public Health Department Director's Report**

**Pam Dudley, Director of Public Health Nursing**, referred to Dr. Thomas' written report. Dr. Thomas is out of town attending the Childhood Obesity Conference in San Diego.

- First cases of Influenza A and B have been detected in San Luis Obispo County. Cases usually increase to a peak within three weeks. Public Health Department flu vaccine hotline: 788-2903. Commissioner Hicks asked if flu vaccine restrictions have been lifted. Pam Dudley answered yes for private vaccine, but state criteria must be followed for distribution of state vaccine.
- Final interviews for the Health Agency Director were held last week. Final selection is expected soon.
- "Community 2050" workshops will be held to address long term land use planning in San Luis Obispo County. Health Commissioner participation is welcome. A flyer is attached to the written report.
- The First 5 Commission is holding a series of planning meetings inviting all providers of perinatal and postnatal home visitation services in order to better coordinate the services.
- The Washington State Institute of Public Policy recently did a study looking at the costs and benefits of early intervention services. Their report came out in Sept 2004 and concluded that the Olds nurse home visit program (an intensive public health nursing program) costs about \$9,000 per family for 3 years. The savings added up to over \$17,000 per family in welfare, criminal justices system and medical costs. You can hear the NPR report @ [www.npr.org/rundown/segment.php?wfld=4208447](http://www.npr.org/rundown/segment.php?wfld=4208447).

#### **7. Discussion of Next Steps Regarding Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) Issue - Action**

Chair O'Brien referred to a letter to the Health Commission from Bob Lilley, Ag Commissioner. The Ag Commissioner's office will be addressing the agricultural components of GMOs through small workgroups with both conventional and organic agriculturists to look at the issue of growing GE crops locally, the compatibility of conventional, organic and GE crops and the marketing of GE crops produced in San Luis Obispo County. Wine grapes will be the first crop examined, since it is the leading crop in SLO County and has potential GE application. The Ag Commissioner's office will not be addressing the health effects of consuming GE crops, or the labeling of GE foods at the retail level or any other issues not related to production agriculture.

Chair O'Brien opened up discussion to the Commission regarding initiating a task force to look at the health impacts of GE crops. Commissioners Heatherington, Pinkel and Chamousis volunteered at last month's meeting to participate on a task force, if convened.

Brenda Ouwerkerk, Assistant Ag Commissioner, answered questions from the commission about Health Commission and public participation on the Agricultural "workgroups." She explained this is not a task force or a committee, but an outreach effort that their office will be doing through formalized groups within the Ag industry, such as the Grape Grower's Association. It will be up to those "groups" whether the meetings will be open to the public.

Commissioner Chamousis emphasized the importance of needing a multifaceted group representing all areas of the community in order to make sense of it all, not just from an AG point, health point, or an economic point. Commissioner Warren referred to the federal regulations that are coming out in March and thought that they may be a starting point for everyone. Commissioner Hale encouraged the Ag Commissioner's office to address in a broader fashion. Ms. Ouwerkerk noted that their primary focus is to work with the Agricultural community, because that is where their jurisdiction, expertise and knowledge is.

The commission discussed how to bring the information from the agricultural study groups back, if the Health Commission forms a task force, so that there is a linkage between the groups. Chair O'Brien suggested the possibility of having a liaison from the Agricultural community group to the Health Commission task force.

**Public Comment:**

**Jackie Crabb, Farm Bureau**, was a member of the original GMO task force and explained why it was important for the Ag industry to come together and focus on issues relating to agricultural production. One of the things that was lost in the campaign was it assumed everything grows the same. By focusing on one or two crops, they can look at pollen problems, segregation problems, and environmental issues. They wanted to bring in the Ag Commissioner and the UC Cooperative Extension for their expertise.

**Nancy Reinstein, Ph.D., Registered Dietician**, stated that there was a lot of misinformation and misunderstandings on both sides of Measure Q. She recommended that the County develop a public website to provide neutral, objective information on GE crops/foods in the County. The website could also provide an open forum for public discussion, as well as list scheduled events and meetings.

**Lauren Brown, Ph.D.**, was involved in the Measure Q campaign. He believes there is a lot of confusing information about GE foods and the health risks. A task force that would add value to the community must be science based to avoid emotional "politicalization" of the issue.

**Connie Dunbar, Registered Dietician**, stated that there is still a lot of community concern about genetically engineered foods. There are concerns about being able to shop at the local Farmer's Market and know whether you are buying GE foods or not. Organic products are labeled, but there is no labeling for GE foods. She also believes that focusing strictly on the science will limit the discussion. She asked that the Commission open the task force to the public as much as possible.

*Commissioner Wood made a motion that the Health Commission form a task force addressing health and environmental issues, with a proviso that they arrange a liaison with the Ag Commissioner's study group, Dr. Thomas, and Supervisor Bianchi, and that the Chair appoint the members. Motion seconded by Commissioner Horne.*

*Discussion: Commissioner Hale stated that the scientific information is important, and the task force needs to be well organized and directed, and include members from the community. Commissioner Warren would like to see the task force come together with defined purpose/goals, and referred to public comment about the development of a website as a public forum for education. Chair O'Brien believes a smaller task force, with clear goals and a clear mission (and perhaps public community forums), would be better than a large group, where efforts can get diluted.*

*Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Wood -yes; Commissioner Warren – yes; Commissioner Horne – yes; Commissioner Hicks – yes; Commissioner Hale – yes; Commissioner Chamousis – yes; Commissioner Pinkel – yes; Commissioner O'Brien – yes. 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 absent. Motion passed.*

8. **Health Commission Updates**

**Chair Update:**

Commissioner O'Brien reported that she and Commissioner Heatherington, along with two members of the Mental Health Board, participated in the interview process for the Health Agency Director. There were three top candidates, and a decision will be made by the County Administrator and announced soon.

**Commissioner Updates:**

**Commissioner Wood:** No report.

**Commissioner Warren:** Drug & Alcohol Advisory Board meets later this week.

**Commissioner Horne:** Children's Network Services meets at the end of the month – was unable to attend December meeting.

**Commissioner Hicks:** SART meeting was cancelled. The location of meeting has changed, due to remodeling of the annex and library.

**Commissioner Hale:** No report.

**Commissioner Chamousis:** Domestic Violence Task Force meets later this month.

**Commissioner Pinkel:** Referred to the retail tobacco licensing ordinance that was brought forward to the Health Commission a year ago and asked that this item be included on the February agenda for possible action by the Commission.

**9. Committee Reports**

Legislative: Will have report at next month's meeting.

Nominating: Will be setting up a meeting to begin "campaign" for this year.

Community Education: Plan to meet in February.

Budget: Will be meeting at the end of January or early February.

**10. Prospective Future Items**

**February:**

- Interim Ordinance for Treated Sewage Sludge/Biosolids land application - update
- CHC - 6 month report
- San Luis Obispo Retail Tobacco Licensing Ordinance
- Update on Childhood Obesity Conference – as part of Director's report

**March / April:**

- Childhood Obesity
- Future Vision Task Force – how are we doing in relation to the goals and recommendations

**Other:**

Chair O'Brien would like to follow up on an issue brought forward to the Health Commission last July regarding an odor on Prado Road. She would like to set up a time for herself, one other commissioner and Dr. Thomas and/or other appropriate individual to visit the site.

Chair O'Brien would like to have one of the upcoming meetings in North County and one in South County. Dr. Wood volunteered to look at some possible sites in North County.

Commissioner Horne referred to an email forwarded to the Health Commission about the possibility of radium in sewage sludge. There will be a report given by Environmental Health next month.

**11. Adjournment**

Commissioner Horne made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Motion was seconded and unanimously carried.