

## District Board of Health Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 28, 2026  
1:00 p.m.

### Members

Devon Reese, Chair  
Clara Andriola, Vice Chair  
Paul Anderson  
Michael Brown  
Dr. Eloy Ituarte  
Steve Driscoll  
Dr. Reka Danko

Washoe County Administration Complex  
Commission Chambers, Building A  
1001 East Ninth Street  
Reno, NV

### 1. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

Chair Reese called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Members present: Devon Reese, Chair  
Clara Andriola, Vice Chair  
Paul Anderson  
Michael Brown  
Dr. Eloy Ituarte  
Dr. Reka Danko – arrived at 1:15 p.m.

**Ms. Lawson verified a quorum was present.**

### 2. Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Member Brown led the pledge to the flag.

### 3. Public Comment.

Dr. Michael Day spoke on behalf of Maison T Ortiz Youth Outdoor Skills Camp, a nonprofit organization where he serves as president. The organization was formed 16 years ago with support from Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Northern Nevada Safari Club International, and the Rotary Club of Sparks and provides a summer outdoor skills camp for approximately 32 boys and 32 girls, ages 11–14 and is funded through donations, participant fees, and scholarships to ensure no child is excluded due to inability to pay. He stated the organization provides food, lodging, tents, sleeping bags, and related accommodations for participants and volunteers.

The permitting process required for the camp, includes annual county permits, food permits, and fire protection requirements. Dr. Day stated that previous food permit costs were approximately \$180, this year the organization was informed it must also obtain an additional “food promoter permit event” permit costing approximately \$847, increasing total permit-related costs to over \$1,000. He

expressed concern regarding the applicability and justification of the additional permit, noting the organization does not sell food or conduct fundraising through food sales, but only provides meals for campers and volunteers.

#### 4. Approval of Agenda.

**Board Member Brown motioned to approve the agenda. Board Member Anderson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.**

#### 5. Recognitions.

##### New Hires

Elijah Golish – Public Health Informatics Specialist – PHD – 5/4/2026

Nancy Diao introduced Elijah Golish as the new Public Health Informatics Specialist for Population Health.

##### Years of Service

Vicki Ahrens – Account Clerk II – 5 years 5/10/2021

Brittany Lucier – Environmental Health Specialist – EHS – 5/10/2021

Megan Rennie – Air Quality Specialist – AQM – 5/24/2021

Erin Dixon shared congratulations for years of service reached for these staff members.

##### Health Heroes

Ariana Tomasello – PHD Public Health Investigator

Leia Lagman – PHD Public Health Investigator

Nicole Alberti – PHD Health Educator Coordinator

Virginia McDonald – AHS Office Specialist

Josh Restori – AQM Supervisor

Olivia Bustamonte – CCHS Medical Billing Specialist

Eva Sandoval shared the Health Heroes recognitions reached and thanked them for their great work.

#### 6. Proclamations.

Recognize the month of June 2026, as Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month in Washoe County.

Lisa Sheretz read the proclamation for Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month in Washoe County.

Niki Rubarth stated that Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia affect not only those diagnosed, but also caregivers and families. She explained that current research indicates certain healthy habits and behavioral modifications may help reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. She expressed support for the partnership with Northern Nevada Public Health to increase brain health awareness within the community and noted that since Nevada is significantly affected by Alzheimer's disease, emphasized the importance of public education, reducing stigma, and

community collaboration. Ms. Rubarth thanked the board and community partners for their support and assistance in raising awareness.

Chair Reese asked Ms. Rubarth to share some of the habits we can do to reduce our risk of developing cognitive decline or dementia.

Ms. Rubarth referenced a study that stated that identifying factors include nutrition, exercise, regular health monitoring, and remaining cognitively engaged through learning new skills and activities. She noted these habits may help support brain health and reduce dementia risk. Ms. Rubarth offered to provide additional information and resources to interested individuals.

## 7. Consent Items.

- A. Possible approval of April 23, 2026, Draft Minutes.
- B. Approve the Notice of Subaward from the State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public and Behavioral Health in the total amount of \$580,869.00 (\$58,086.90 cash match) retroactive to July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 in support of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Public Health Preparedness Program, and authorize the District Health Officer to execute the Notice of Subaward, any future amendments and MOU agreements with partnering agencies.
- C. Recommendation to approve the FY26 prepayment for two years, in an amount not to exceed approximately \$151,100.00, to Patagonia Health EMR for services under the existing multi-year agreement. This prepayment supports the electronic medical record system that is essential to the operations of the Community and Clinical Health Services Division.
- D. Acknowledge receipt of the Health Fund Financial Review for April, Fiscal Year 2026.

**Board Member Anderson moved to accept the consent items and Board Member Ituarte seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.**

### **End of Consent Items.**

9. Recommendation to accept the REMSA Health Monthly Franchise Report for April 2026 which includes REMSA Health Accounts Receivables Summary, Compliance by Zones, Average Response Times, Incident Details Reporting, Summary Penalty Fund Reconciliation, Personnel, Ground Ambulance Operations Report, Patient Experience Report and Comments, Education Report, Public Relations Report, and Frequently Asked Questions, and provide possible Board direction.

Barry Duplantis stated that increased healthcare access challenges, including anticipated Medicaid eligibility changes and Nevada's uninsured rate, are expected to increase demand on the 911 system for both emergency and non-emergency healthcare services. He also discussed a recent proposed federal rule related to Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) funding and stated that while REMSA would not be directly affected, government agencies partnering with REMSA could experience funding impacts beginning in 2029.

In April 2026, REMSA responded to 8,067 EMS calls and transported 5,297 patients to area hospitals. Average priority-one response times were reported as 5 minutes 29 seconds in Reno, 6

minutes 10 seconds in Sparks, and 8 minutes 47 seconds in Washoe County. Priority-two response times were 7 minutes 5 seconds in Reno, 7 minutes 46 seconds in Sparks, and 9 minutes 35 seconds in Washoe County. REMSA remained compliant with franchise response requirements in all service zones.

Mr. Duplantis stated that quality of clinical care remains the organization's primary focus and described REMSA's call triage and dispatch process. He also addressed prior questions regarding instances where Sparks Fire personnel arrive on scene before REMSA and stated staff had reviewed available data but could not definitively segregate response information by jurisdiction.

REMSA continues to provide emergency fire dispatch services for Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and noted that implementation of a regional CAD system has been delayed. He stated the existing dispatch agreement would continue as needed.

Mr. Duplantis reviewed REMSA's financial structure, explaining that ambulance billing rates do not reflect actual collections received. He stated the average allowed transport billing rate is approximately \$2,261, while the average collection is approximately \$639 per transport, compared to an estimated service cost of approximately \$701 per transport. He discussed reimbursement differences among Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, and uninsured patients and noted Nevada Medicaid reimbursement rates are comparatively low.

He further discussed REMSA's tiered EMS response system, workforce compensation structure, and integrated health program focused on frequent EMS utilizers and vulnerable populations, including individuals experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges.

Mr. Duplantis reported that REMSA's April customer satisfaction score was 94.84 percent and noted positive feedback regarding EMS personnel care and professionalism.

He also stated REMSA has participated in discussions related to the regional fire services study and reported that the meet-and-confer discussions had concluded.

Jennifer Walters provided an overview of REMSA's EMS Explorer Program, which launched in March for youth ages 15 to 18. The program is a career exploration initiative conducted in partnership with the Scouts of America Exploring Division and is designed to introduce participants to career pathways within emergency medical services.

The program is led by REMSA EMS instructors and includes participation from specialty teams such as search and rescue, tactical medics, and ski patrol personnel. Participants receive leadership training and may earn certifications including First on the Scene and Healthcare Provider CPR, which may serve as prerequisites for EMT basic training.

She further stated the program is offered at no cost to participants through support from the Community Investment Fund and partnership with Northern Nevada Public Health.

Mr. Anderson thanked Mr. Duplantis and REMSA staff for their responsiveness in reviewing discrepancies related to EMS response time reporting data and stated appreciation for the organization's efforts to better understand differences between reported figures.

He also expressed appreciation for REMSA's assistance in addressing concerns regarding ambulance insurance coverage and reimbursement issues, including comparisons involving average charges and insurer payment determinations.

**Vice-Chair Andriola motioned to accept the REMSA Health Monthly Franchise Report for April 2026. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.**

## 10. Staff Reports and Program Updates

- A. Air Quality Management – American Lung Association Releases 2026 State of the Air Report, EPA Extends Fuel Waivers for a Third Time, Divisional Update, Program Reports, Monitoring and Planning, Permitting and Compliance.

Francisco Vega summarized the American Lung Association's 2026 State of the Air Report, noting local grades of C for ozone, F for short-term PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and a passing grade for annual PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Mr. Vega clarified that the American Lung Association uses standards that differ from those established by the EPA, which may account for differences in reported results.

Mr. Vega also provided information regarding fuel waivers and noted that while such waivers may present short-term air quality concerns, they may also provide economic benefits. He reported that there were no air quality exceedances during April.

Mr. Vega announced the grand opening of the new Verdi air monitoring station and expressed appreciation to Councilmember Anderson for participating in the event. He further reported that the division returned to 100 percent compliance with jurisdictional plan review timelines during April.

Dr. Ituarte asked for additional clarification regarding trends shown in the ozone day graph, specifically noting lower ozone levels during the periods from 2009 to 2011 and from 2022 to 2024, with higher peak periods occurring in between, and requested further explanation regarding the factors contributing to those fluctuations.

Mr. Vega responded that he did not have a definitive explanation for the fluctuations in ozone levels reflected in the graph but stated staff would review the data further and provide additional information. He noted that the economic downturn occurring between 2009 and 2011 may have contributed to lower ozone levels during that period, but clarified that this was only a preliminary assumption.

Mr. Anderson asked whether the Air Quality Management Division receives notification from the state or other agencies when fuel subject to a waiver, including fuel that would otherwise be out of compliance for the region, is brought into the community so that potential air quality impacts can be monitored and compared to fuel distribution activity. He further suggested that identifying the timing of fuel deliveries and comparing it with air quality changes could be useful for monitoring purposes.

Mr. Vega responded that the Air Quality Management Division is not notified regarding specific fuel deliveries, including deliveries of fuel subject to waivers or otherwise non-compliant

specifications. He explained that the division does permit fuel storage tank facilities, including gasoline dispensing facilities, and conducts inspections and testing of those permitted tanks; however, it does not receive information on individual fuel shipments or delivery contents.

He further noted that fuel waivers of this type occur on a fairly regular, often annual, basis and that the division continuously monitors air quality monitoring stations for any resulting impacts. Mr. Vega stated that any concerning trends or impacts identified through monitoring would be addressed and communicated as necessary.

**B. Community and Clinical Health Services – National Adolescent Health Month; Data & Metrics; Immunizations, Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Program, Reproductive and Sexual Health Services, Maternal Child and Adolescent Health, Women Infants and Children, and Community Health Workers.**

Christina Sheppard reported that, based on guidance from the Nevada State Office of Epidemiology, RSV prevention efforts were extended through April 30 to continue protecting eligible infants, young children, and pregnant individuals while RSV circulation remained present in the community.

Ms. Sheppard also discussed a continued shortage of Bicillin used to treat syphilis, noting that the FDA authorized temporary importation of an alternative medication, which the clinic secured in limited supply. That medication will primarily be used for pregnant individuals with syphilis and others unable to complete oral antibiotic treatment regimens.

She further reported that the WIC program partnered with the communications team to distribute program information to approximately 100 community organizations to support participation in local WIC services.

Ms. Sheppard recognized National Nurses Week (May 6–12) and acknowledged the contributions of public health nurses in providing prevention, education, and outreach services to the community.

**C. Environmental Health Services Program – Consumer Protection (Food Safety Plan Review & Operations, Commercial Plan Review, Foodborne Illness, Special Events, Permitted Facilities); Environmental Protection (Land Development, Safe Drinking Water, Vector-borne Disease Surveillance, Waste Management / Underground Storage Tanks).**

Rob Fyda reported that staff conducted a risk factor workshop on April 28, which was attended by nine food establishments. He also noted that the land development team completed a real estate outreach event in April attended by 27 participants.

Mr. Fyda stated that staff responded to a confirmed foodborne illness outbreak and conducted an ongoing environmental health investigation, including interviews, environmental sampling, and food sampling, which remains in progress.

He further reported that vector season has begun, with surveillance activities underway and the program supported by three interns.

Mr. Fyda described a potential pilot project in coordination with the County Manager's Office and KTMB focused on rapid response cleanup of smaller sites, noting that the concept is still in development and under evaluation.

- D. Population Health – Epidemiology, Statistics and Informatics, Public Health Preparedness, Emergency Medical Services, Vital Statistics, Sexual Health Investigations and Outreach, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention.

Nancy Diao reported that May is Older Americans Month and highlighted ongoing chronic disease and injury prevention efforts focused on senior falls prevention. Dr. Diao described a multimedia fall prevention campaign in English and Spanish running through May, directing residents to available resources. She also noted staff participation in the County's annual information fair and promotion of an upcoming "Stepping On" evidence-based fall prevention workshop scheduled to begin in June. She explained the program is a 7-week series designed to reduce fall risk and increase confidence among older adults, citing evidence indicating such programs can reduce fall risk by up to 35 percent, emphasizing that unintentional falls remain the leading cause of injury-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations among older adults in Washoe County. There will also be an expanded "Enhanced Fitness" fall prevention exercise program beginning at Sierra Crest Senior Living.

She noted two health alert network publications were issued related to a hantavirus and an Ebola virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. She noted no confirmed U.S. cases and ongoing traveler monitoring by epidemiology staff.

Respiratory virus season has ended, with influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 circulating in staggered patterns throughout the season. Influenza hospitalization rates peaked at the highest level observed in five seasons, though overall activity was lower compared to the prior season, while COVID-19 remained at historically low levels.

She also reported 30 pertussis cases year-to-date, primarily among individuals aged 11 to 18 years, with an increasing proportion of unvaccinated cases compared to prior patterns, and noted an increase in reported outbreaks in May compared to April, primarily related to gastrointestinal illnesses, which are being actively monitored by public health staff.

Vice-Chair Andriola expressed support for the fall prevention initiatives and noted ongoing capacity constraints. She suggested expanding outreach by conducting in-person visits to senior centers throughout the community to provide program information and access to services. She also recommended presenting information at the Washoe County Senior Advisory Committee meeting and distributing printed flyers at senior centers to supplement social media outreach, noting that not all seniors utilize online platforms.

- E. Office of the District Health Officer Report – Northern Nevada Public Health Communications Update, Accreditation, Quality Improvement, Workforce Development, Community Health Improvement Program, Equity Projects / Collaborations, Community Events, and Public Communications Outreach.

Chad Kingsley provided updates on current public health matters and administrative items. He reported ongoing coordination with the CDC and national partners regarding hantavirus and Ebola virus monitoring. There are currently no confirmed hantavirus cases or individuals under surveillance in Nevada, and no anticipated impacts to the state from monitored individuals. He further noted that Ebola-related guidance is being closely monitored in coordination with CDC and that overall risk in Nevada remains very low.

Dr. Kingsley also provided an update on the meet-and-confer process with REMSA, stating that all submitted items have been reviewed and are currently under legal review, with findings expected to return to the DBOH in June.

He will be absent during the June Board meeting and noted that Deputy DHO, Erin Dixon will be present.

Dr. Kingsley verbally acknowledged an adjustment to the public health vaccination fee schedule, specifically related to a meningitis combination vaccine, stating the adjustment was made to ensure appropriate reimbursement under the Washoe County fee schedule.

#### **14. Public Comment.**

Having no requests for public comment, the public comment period was closed.

#### **15. Board Comment.**

Vice Chair Andriola disclosed that Dr. Day had contacted her regarding the earlier public comment item and forwarded her an email related to the matter. She emphasized the importance of transparency and stated that the issue involved increased permitting fees for certain nonprofit or non-traditional event activities. She suggested that the current fee structure and exemption criteria may warrant review, noting that not all organizations function as traditional event promoters. She proposed that consideration be given to a tiered or alternative fee approach that could account for different types of nonprofit or community-based activities and referenced a significant increase in fees, stating that broader policy review could help address impacts on similar organizations. She requested feedback from staff and indicated interest in further discussion of potential policy options.

Chair Reese stated that the matter regarding the fee structure will be discussed further with Dr. Kingsley and will be brought back for future consideration.

**With no additional requests from the Board, this comment period was closed.**

#### **Adjournment.**

**The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.**