
PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL MEETING - April 10, 2023

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL MEETING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS taken on Monday,
April 10, 2023, commencing at 11:00 a.m., all
parties appearing remotely via Microsoft Teams,
before Janice D. Burness, Registered Professional
Reporter, Certified Court Reporter, and Notary
Public.

**CERTIFIED
ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT**

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PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

- Michael Gross, Chair
- Dennis San Filippo, Vice Chair
- Stephanie Carey
- Richard Censullo
- Carol Chamberlain
- Paul Roman
- Suffiyah Webb

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STAFF PRESENT

- Acting Deputy Commissioner Dr. Margaret Fisher
- Erlin (Jess) Rivera, Secretary

1 MR. GROSS: Okay. At this point, may I
2 have approval of the minutes of the
3 March 13, 2023, meeting?

4 Do I have a motion?

5 MR. ROMAN: Before you do that, Mickey, I
6 have corrections.

7 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yeah, I have corrections
8 also.

9 MR. GROSS: Go ahead, Dennis.

10 MR. SAN FILIPPO: On page 13, line 16, the
11 motion for nominations, my yes vote was not
12 recorded.

13 And also on page 18, line 17, my motion to
14 adjourn wasn't recorded as a yes.

15 Just making those corrections for the
16 minutes.

17 MR. GROSS: Madam Clerk, can you make
18 those corrections?

19 MR. ROMAN: Mickey, this is Paul Roman. I
20 have one other correction.

21 MR. GROSS: Sure.

22 MR. ROMAN: Page 4, after the initial roll
23 call it says we have five members. There were
24 actually six.

25 MR. GROSS: That is correct.

1 MS. RIVERA: I said six. I didn't say
2 five.

3 MR. GROSS: All right. Can we make that
4 correction if that's correct?

5 MS. RIVERA: It's been corrected.

6 MR. GROSS: All right.

7 MR. ROMAN: So I'll move the minutes.

8 MR. GROSS: Do I have a second?

9 MR. SAN FILIPPO: I'll second that motion.

10 MR. GROSS: Madam Clerk, roll call.

11 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?

12 MR. GROSS: Yes.

13 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?

14 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes.

15 MS. RIVERA: Richard Censullo?

16 MR. CENSULLO: Yes.

17 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?

18 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

19 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?

20 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.

21 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?

22 MS. CAREY: Yes.

23 MS. RIVERA: We have six.

24 MR. GROSS: With that said, we're waiting
25 on the Commissioner, so I'll move right ahead, and

1 then when the commissioner gets there we'll let
2 her jump in.

3 Approval of the bylaws.

4 First off, I hope everyone read the
5 bylaws. They're pretty simplistic.

6 Does anyone have any issues or comments
7 about the bylaws?

8 MR. CENSULLO: I do.

9 If I may, let me just start by saying that
10 the purpose of the bylaws is the organization of
11 the Council. It's an internal document and its
12 purpose is for us to be organized; set forth the
13 minutes, set forth the election dates, et cetera.

14 But what the bylaws does not do, it's not
15 legislative, which means it does not mandate on
16 any other department any requirements or nothing
17 that would be in conflict with statutes or
18 regulations.

19 Now, with that being said, the first part
20 of the bylaws is a little bit redundant. It
21 basically renarrates Title 26:1.1, et seq., when
22 it talks about the members and where the members
23 should come from.

24 That's already been covered by statute.
25 It's not necessary in the bylaws.

1 The second problem that exists is if you
2 look at Number 4, it talks about a quorum. Four
3 members of the Council -- 4A -- 4.1A, Four members
4 of the Council shall constitute a quorum.

5 If that was in effect last year, we
6 wouldn't have been able to meet for over a year
7 because at one point we only had three members of
8 the Council.

9 The proper language would be a quorum
10 would be constituted by a majority of the
11 attending board members.

12 There's a lot of other issues here. If we
13 go down to Number -- continuing on Section 4, if
14 we go down to Number 3, Special Meetings.

15 While the Commissioner can request a
16 special meeting, I don't think the Commissioner
17 wants to hold a meeting of the Council. I think
18 that's still the chair or vice chair, et cetera.
19 I think that that needs to be changed a little
20 bit.

21 And there's also a requirement that the
22 Commissioner or somebody from her department shall
23 -- (indiscernible) is the word -- attend the
24 meetings of the council.

25 Again, I don't think that this Council can

1 legislate. I don't think that we can require
2 another division to do anything.

3 The purpose of the bylaws is basically an
4 internal document for the Council and for the
5 Council only.

6 We cannot require the Commissioner or any
7 of her designees to attend meetings of ours. If
8 she wants to, that's great. As she knows she's
9 always invited, but we cannot require it.

10 So in keeping with that and numerous
11 others -- I don't want to go into all of the
12 inconsistencies, but I would be willing to review
13 the document and to submit an updated draft if we
14 could go ahead and postpone the passage of this
15 because I think it's wrong.

16 MR. GROSS: Do I have any other comments
17 from the Council?

18 MR. ROMAN: Yeah.

19 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Excuse me, Paul.

20 MR. ROMAN: Sure, Dennis. Go ahead.

21 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Let me just get this
22 out.

23 In the bylaws there's a question on Roman
24 Numeral II, Page 4, Item 4, where it gets into
25 each officer shall hold office for one year.

1 If you read that section there, there's a
2 lot of questions there.

3 I myself have been serving for 18 years.
4 And since we are advisory, I think the department
5 has to really look over that terms of office as to
6 when reappointments should be made, whether
7 they're held or not, and how long.

8 The bylaws call for holding office for one
9 year. I was appointed to a four-year term back in
10 2005.

11 MR. GROSS: I think it was seven, Dennis.

12 MR. SAN FILIPPO: I think some of these
13 items have to -- I know mine was seven.

14 When I was appointed by Governor Codey
15 back in 2005, it was a four-year term. It went
16 from March 21, 2005, to June 30, 2009. So I've
17 been serving, awaiting a renominee, for quite a
18 while.

19 And I think the responsibility really
20 happens where advisory -- it has to be with the
21 departments to monitor our terms of office and see
22 who comes up for reappointment.

23 So I think the bylaws -- Richie, when
24 you're doing your update, maybe we can include
25 something on that section.

1 MR. CENSULLO: Exactly, Dennis.

2 But I think what those -- Section 2 was
3 referring to was the office of chair and vice
4 chair. I don't think it was referring to the
5 actual appointment as members of the Council.

6 That, I think, is set forth in
7 Title 26:1.1, and I think that that cannot be
8 changed by our bylaws. We can't change that.
9 That has to be done by legislation.

10 So I think what we need to do is reexamine
11 the bylaws and do only what's within our power to
12 do. Most of the things that are set forth in the
13 bylaws, in legal terms we would call it to be
14 ultra vires; beyond our power to do or to perform.

15 So I think we need to retract a little
16 bit. Certainly it's within our power and within
17 our jurisdiction to do as an organization as a
18 Council, as an advisory board, and not get into
19 what the legislator or the state or any other
20 department needs to do.

21 I think we've extended far beyond where we
22 should be, and I'm willing to work --

23 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes, but Item 4 -- under
24 Roman Numeral VII, Item 4 says, Each officer shall
25 hold office for one year and until his or her

1 respective successor shall be duly elected. No
2 officer shall serve in the same position for more
3 than three years in succession.

4 I think that whole section has to be
5 looked at.

6 MR. CENSULLO: Yeah, I believe that has to
7 do -- when it says "officer," I believe that's the
8 chair and vice chair. And that's what we were
9 talking about with you and Mickey, et cetera; that
10 it was okay for you to be the chair and vice chair
11 for a year.

12 And if there is no opportunity to continue
13 in that position, but -- and then you can step out
14 for a year and then someone else would serve as
15 chair, and then you could go back again as chair
16 after you stepped down. I believe that was what
17 the old bylaws had basically inferred.

18 But I don't think it has anything to do
19 with your appointment because your original
20 appointment by the governor, as all of us, was for
21 seven years.

22 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Well, I see that, but I
23 still think there should be clarification for
24 standing members as to monitoring when their
25 appointments are filled whether they should have a

1 reappointment.

2 I think that should be done by the
3 department.

4 MR. CENSULLO: Right. It doesn't belong
5 in the bylaws. I think we can just strike that
6 out.

7 DR. FISHER: So just to remind you, on
8 page 1, 2.1, Each member of the Council shall be
9 appointed by the governor, by and with the advice
10 and the consent of the Senate, for a term of seven
11 years and until his or her successor is appointed
12 and qualified.

13 So that is actually right on the first
14 page, the -- that term, and -- sorry to interrupt.
15 I just wanted to clarify that.

16 Mickey, you have several people with their
17 hands up.

18 MR. ROMAN: I had three changes that I
19 submitted a while back. Two of them were put into
20 the draft that you have currently, the 6 April
21 draft.

22 The first one had to do with changing in
23 the section on appointing all subcommittees, and
24 that was fixed. So that's the first one.

25 The second one had to do with changing the

1 order of a couple of things.

2 So those things were picked up.

3 The one that was not picked up is a
4 suggestion that be put in Section 6, create a new
5 -- hold on. Roman Numeral VI. Let me get my
6 ducks in a row, please -- create a new Section 2
7 and renumber 2 and 3 to 3 and 4.

8 But the new Section 2 would read, Prior to
9 the January meeting, the Commissioner or designee
10 shall provide for each Council member a current
11 list of members, including their mail, phone,
12 email contact information, date of appointment,
13 position they're filling per the statute, and the
14 date of their term and when it expires so that
15 there's continuity for everybody as to who's who.
16 That would, again, be in Roman Numeral VI, a new
17 Section 2.

18 DR. FISHER: As you know, Paul, the reason
19 I didn't do that was I didn't feel it needed to be
20 in the bylaws.

21 MR. ROMAN: Okay.

22 DR. FISHER: We certainly can ensure that
23 that happens, but it just didn't seem like
24 something that really was required for the bylaws.

25 MR. ROMAN: Okay.

1 DR. FISHER: So these bylaws did go out to
2 everyone on the committee. We asked for your
3 input, and certainly we're happy to hear it.

4 The bylaws were prepared with the input of
5 our lawyer here at the Department of Health. So
6 whatever is in there was -- has already been
7 looked at by the legal team, so just so you're
8 aware of that.

9 And now I'll be quiet again so Stephanie
10 and Carol can ask their questions.

11 MR. GROSS: Is there anyone who would like
12 to be heard?

13 MS. CAREY: Yes. So I'll make two
14 technical comments and then one mission comment.

15 So first -- so, Rich, I would respectfully
16 disagree about the quorum members. We need to
17 make sure that we have at least four members on --
18 for quorum, and we should never allow the quorum
19 to drop so far below its stated number of
20 membership again.

21 So we will have to be vigilant and remind
22 the department as full terms are expiring or as
23 vacancies occur about the necessity of keeping
24 those Council slots filled.

25 And then -- let's see.

1 And then secondly -- the second technical
2 thing is the term limits for the chair and the
3 vice chair certainly make sense so that we can
4 rotate through the expertise on the board and,
5 again, make sure that we constantly are up to full
6 staffing on our board -- on our Council, I should
7 say -- and bring in those fresh insights.

8 Now, the purpose-driven portion of my
9 comments are in the previous version of the bylaws
10 the duties of the Council were basically on the
11 first page of the document.

12 In this version it's buried toward the
13 back, although those duties remain the same as far
14 as being advisers and contributors to be of
15 assistance to the department.

16 I just want some record that this Council
17 is a wealth of expertise to help supplement and
18 reinforce the efforts of the department.

19 We are an asset to help the department in
20 its mission, and we can be advocates for the
21 adoption of evidence-based practice and best
22 practices in public health, to be a backstop and
23 an advocacy -- advocate in our advisory role for
24 adoption of best properties.

25 So let's keep those purposes, those

1 duties, on the front page so that we can remain
2 mission focused and give the best advice we can to
3 help the department achieve its mission.

4 MR. GROSS: Would anyone else like to be
5 heard?

6 MR. CENSULLO: Yes, Mickey, if I could,
7 just in response.

8 Two years ago -- as you know and as Dennis
9 knows, we don't appoint the members to the
10 Council. That is done by nomination of the
11 governor and with the consent and advice of the
12 Senate.

13 So we don't have any control over the
14 members. And we have dropped due to resignations,
15 unfortunately due to passing of some of our
16 members -- that we have dropped down to where we
17 only had three members of the Council.

18 And I understand, Stephanie, where you're
19 coming from, but under your idea the Council would
20 not even be able to meet because we wouldn't even
21 have four members.

22 We only had three, and it was through no
23 fault of our own. We advocated for it. We've
24 been asking almost at every meeting what is the
25 status.

1 However, if we dropped this or increased
2 this to four, you would tie the hands of the
3 Council, and we wouldn't even be able to hold a
4 meeting until such time as the governor and
5 legislature was able to get together and appoint
6 additional members so we could get up to the four.

7 I don't think that we want to create a
8 crisis like that within the State of New Jersey,
9 especially in public health when our advice and
10 opinion is relatively very important, especially
11 during a pandemic situation.

12 So I think the quorum aspect of it is
13 critical, it's vital, and it would have absolutely
14 cut off the Council completely from giving any
15 advice to the Commissioner or to the department if
16 we kept the quorum at greater than three.

17 Again, not to be redundant, but we only
18 had three members through no fault of our own, and
19 we would not even have been able to meet if that
20 stayed in place.

21 MR. GROSS: Rich, I agree with you
22 wholeheartedly.

23 Sometimes it's a numbers game of us trying
24 to get members together, and our job is to advise
25 and to move forward.

1 And, you know, again, we went through some
2 really tough times, and I would not like to see us
3 get -- no disrespect to anyone -- into a logjam
4 here. Three's a good number, let's stick with
5 that.

6 But here's what I'm going to suggest:
7 We've got some great ideas. What I would like to
8 do -- hopefully we'll have a new chairman very
9 shortly -- is everybody send their emails to Jess
10 on what we'd like to have done.

11 Hopefully our new chairman -- and
12 certainly I will volunteer to sit with him if he
13 decides that's what he'd like -- and try to
14 straighten out this problem with the bylaws and
15 then we move forward, because we could be here for
16 three days going over this.

17 And I certainly respect everyone, but what
18 I'm suggesting to all board members is let's shoot
19 Jess some emails. Hopefully, our new chairman
20 will be receptive to the idea and we can sit down
21 and kind of make sense.

22 But I do absolutely agree with Rich when
23 it comes to Number 3.

24 Thank you. That's my comment.

25 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Let me make a

1 recommendation.

2 Rich Censullo has already offered to make
3 some changes, the recommended changes. He also
4 holds a degree as an attorney and I trust that he
5 would make the right responses, rather than
6 everyone filtering in.

7 If they wanted to send their comments to
8 Rich directly through email, I think -- I don't
9 think Rich would mind.

10 Rich, you correct me if I'm wrong.

11 MR. CENSULLO: No, Dennis.

12 And no disrespect for the legal beagles
13 that have put this together, but I was a little
14 surprised that attorneys had reviewed this and
15 okayed it because first-year law students know
16 that bylaws are basically just a document to help
17 organize a committee or to help organize a
18 division. It does not legislate it, and there are
19 certainly many things that bylaws are not supposed
20 to do.

21 Now, we're governed by Roberts Rules of
22 Parliamentary Procedure, as well as WestLaw and
23 Lexus. And all three of these groups have very
24 strong indicators of what bylaws for an
25 organization is supposed to do and not do.

1 So I would suggest that attorneys read
2 this and keep their recommendations in keeping
3 with the Lexus, WestLaw and Roberts Rules of
4 Parliamentary Procedure.

5 Because this document goes beyond -- as I
6 mentioned the term of ultra vires, it goes beyond
7 what we have the power to do. We cannot
8 require --

9 MR. GROSS: Paul, it's going to be your
10 show very shortly. What do you think?

11 MR. ROMAN: Oh, boy. With all due respect
12 to Rich -- hello?

13 MR. GROSS: Yeah, go ahead.

14 MR. ROMAN: Can you all hear me?

15 Okay. With all due respect to Rich and to
16 Dennis, who have really -- and Mickey -- who have
17 weathered this thing for all of these years and
18 not have the muscle to make anything happen
19 because the governors, past and present, chose not
20 to act.

21 So until some of us were able to scream
22 loud enough to get appointed, it was a mess.

23 And I respect all the angst that you
24 experienced; however, if we stop again and want to
25 rewrite the entire document, we're going to be

1 doing this for a long time.

2 Rich, I understand that you're a J.D. Is
3 that correct?

4 MR. CENSULLO: Yes, I am.

5 MR. ROMAN: Yeah. So your comments are
6 well received from the legal perspective.

7 However, with regard to the number four,
8 the quorum thing, in state law for nonprofit
9 corporations and for other bodies -- but not
10 government -- there is a provision that says four
11 or a majority. So that's where that number four
12 comes from, I believe.

13 I don't want to speak for Joy Lindo, the
14 attorney or anyone else, but just that's where I
15 think that number came from.

16 And the fact that we have six members --
17 actually, seven -- appointed now to move forward,
18 I don't really see that three or four is a
19 problem. I just don't see that.

20 As to some of the other comments Rich
21 made, I do think they bear review. There's
22 certainly -- you know, comments are welcome from
23 any of us, and that's the way it should be.

24 But, you know, they did send this thing
25 out on the 23rd of March and asked for comments,

1 and I think I was the only one that sent anything
2 in in writing. And Rich's office did accept two,
3 and you heard a comment about the third one, which
4 is something that should be done by policy, if not
5 by bylaws, about keeping a roster, an accurate
6 roster.

7 But I just don't want to see this thing
8 dragged out and dragged out, although -- you know,
9 I'd kind of like to see us just approve this
10 pending continued review.

11 It's a living document. It's not
12 something that we have to stop and -- you know, in
13 the middle of the street and say that's it, nobody
14 moves.

15 So I'd kind of like to go forward. It's
16 just -- but again with the provision that any
17 member of the Council certainly is welcome to
18 submit comments in writing. That's my feeling.

19 MR. GROSS: Does anyone else have any
20 comments? What's everybody's pleasure? What
21 would everyone like to do?

22 I kind of like Paul's idea: Let's move
23 this forward, and then make some changes.

24 But then again, I'm not a lawyer.

25 What's everyone want to do?

1 MR. CENSULLO: Mickey, I really have a
2 problem moving forward with a document that I know
3 is not supported by law.

4 I mean, I could go on and on and on. I
5 mean, even Number 5 where it talks about the Open
6 Public Meeting Act, and all of our meetings are
7 open and subject to Open Public Meetings.

8 There are going to be times when we're
9 going to have to close a meeting and we're going
10 to talk about a personnel issue, or there are
11 issues that may come before the Council that may
12 not be subject to Open Meeting, the law doesn't
13 allow it to be. That needs to be provided for.

14 I think making this a very simple
15 document, I think postponing this for one month
16 and giving Jess our recommendations and letting
17 her present a draft document, I think is wise.

18 Again, there are certain things in here --
19 I don't want to be redundant. The mandate for the
20 Commissioner to attend meetings, for example. I
21 mean, I could go on and on and on with examples of
22 things that we have no business doing.

23 I think it's an embarrassment to vote on
24 something like this, and I think it's completely
25 wrong.

1 Like I said, the Commissioner is certainly
2 welcome to come to any meeting she wishes to. She
3 can certainly ask the chairman to call special
4 meetings, but we have no business mandating it.
5 We are not the New Jersey legislature, we're not
6 the Senate or the Assembly. And I think it's
7 completely wrong.

8 And I think we should breathe a little
9 bit. We've been without a document like this for
10 a long time. I think this gives us an
11 opportunity.

12 While I understand the old bylaws are
13 still in effect -- so we're not without bylaws --
14 this is an opportunity for us to cleanse the
15 document, to get all the wrinkles out, and to
16 consider it at our next meeting. I don't think
17 anything is going to change by then.

18 DR. FISHER: Actually, the bylaws are not
19 in effect because they were never signed. So
20 there actually are no bylaws at the moment.

21 So this was a revision of what was the
22 formal draft; but unfortunately, no signed copy of
23 this is in existence. So without the signature
24 there, they actually don't exist.

25 But you're right that we continue to

1 operate on the basis of the unsigned bylaws.

2 So just a little clarification there.

3 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Listen, I concur with
4 what Richie says, and I think we should put this
5 off until we have a better document.

6 MR. GROSS: What does everyone else think?
7 Stephanie, what do you think?

8 MS. CAREY: I think that not making the
9 perfect the enemy of the good, if we adopted this
10 version as our 2023 bylaws and then name a liaison
11 to legal or the department on who would be doing
12 -- who would be doing the rewrite for our 2024
13 bylaws -- if we have no legal bylaws at this time,
14 again, this document is an improvement, but we can
15 then work on the next iteration for 2024.

16 MR. GROSS: I'm going to say right now
17 let's -- it's certainly not a perfect document,
18 but we're operating with no document.

19 I'm going to put it on the floor as a
20 motion that we pass the bylaws with a contingent
21 that we have to sit down and redo these bylaws.

22 But we need something, we need something
23 to start with.

24 So with that said, I'm putting a motion on
25 the floor for these bylaws.

1 MR. ROMAN: Just state your motion,
2 Mickey, just so we all understand.

3 MR. GROSS: I make a motion that we
4 approve the bylaws as they're written in the
5 agenda, with the condition that we will have a
6 member of the Public Health Council that will sit
7 and make revisions and recommendations to the
8 board down the road.

9 Do I have a second?

10 MR. ROMAN: Yeah, I'll second it.

11 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Carol Chamberlain.

12 MR. GROSS: Okay. Madam Clerk, roll call.

13 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?

14 MR. GROSS: Yes.

15 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?

16 MR. SAN FILIPPO: I'm reluctant, but I'll
17 say yes.

18 MS. RIVERA: Richard Censullo?

19 MR. CENSULLO: No.

20 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?

21 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

22 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?

23 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.

24 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?

25 MS. CAREY: Yes.

1 MR. GROSS: Okay. The next order of
2 business is -- I'm driving, so bear with me, guys.

3 I think the next thing is to pick the new
4 chairman, correct?

5 DR. FISHER: Yes.

6 MR. GROSS: Does somebody want to make a
7 motion?

8 MR. SAN FILIPPO: I move that Paul Roman
9 move into the chair position.

10 MR. GROSS: I'll second that.

11 Roll call.

12 Is there any other nominations from the
13 floor for chairman?

14 I'm sorry.

15 Is there any other nominations?

16 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Do you need a nomination
17 for vice chair at this point?

18 MR. GROSS: Well, let's do the chairman
19 first.

20 With that said, can we have a vote on the
21 chairman?

22 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?

23 MR. GROSS: Yes. Paul Roman, yes.

24 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?

25 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes.

1 MS. RIVERA: Richard Censullo?

2 MR. CENSULLO: Yes.

3 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?

4 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

5 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?

6 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.

7 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?

8 MS. CAREY: Yes.

9 MR. GROSS: Well, there you go.

10 Paul, congratulations.

11 MR. ROMAN: Thank you very much, Mickey.

12 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Congratulations.

13 (Multiple speakers.)

14 MR. ROMAN: I appreciate all that you and

15 Dennis and Rich have done over the years.

16 MR. GROSS: Okay. It's your show, go

17 ahead.

18 MR. ROMAN: Well, I'll open the

19 nominations for vice chairman.

20 Am I allowed to make a motion as chairman

21 or not?

22 MR. GROSS: Why not?

23 MR. ROMAN: Okay. So I would like to move

24 that Dennis San Filippo be -- I'd like to nominate

25 him for vice chair.

1 MR. CENSULLO: I'll second that.

2 MR. ROMAN: Any other nominations?

3 Hearing none, roll call vote.

4 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?

5 MR. GROSS: Yes.

6 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?

7 MR. SAN FILIPPO: They keep pulling me
8 back in. Yes.

9 MS. RIVERA: Richard Censullo?

10 MR. CENSULLO: Yes.

11 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?

12 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

13 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?

14 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.

15 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?

16 MS. CAREY: Yes.

17 MR. ROMAN: Congratulations, Dennis.

18 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Thanks, Paul. I'm happy
19 to help until I'm replaced.

20 MR. ROMAN: Okay. Well, Council members,
21 fellow Council members, I'm not going to make a
22 speech, my God. I do thank you for your vote of
23 confidence.

24 And I've been sitting in on these meetings
25 as a member of the public, actually, for a couple

1 of years now and hoped that there was some chance
2 that the governor would finally open the door, and
3 I'm glad he did.

4 I think we've got a great team building
5 here, and the people that have come on -- besides
6 me, forget me -- but the people that have come on
7 recently are really, really world-class public
8 health people, and I'm proud to be a member of
9 this group. And I will do my darndest to try to
10 get it back up to its former self, and in the
11 meantime to get some things covered.

12 Rich, I hope the offer still holds that
13 you will take comments and try to put something
14 together for us as a living document.

15 MR. CENSULLO: Absolutely, Paul. Whatever
16 we can do and be supportive, absolutely, count on
17 it.

18 MR. ROMAN: Thank you very much.

19 And Dennis was the vice, is the vice, and
20 I appreciate your effort to -- or your offer to
21 stay on board.

22 So I don't want to sound like I'm fumbling
23 around here, but, you know, when you start
24 something you've got to make sure you don't
25 embarrass yourself.

1 I do have a couple of quick comments
2 before we get -- is the Commissioner on board yet?

3 DR. FISHER: The Commissioner is not, but,
4 Paul, I'll have a short report.

5 MR. ROMAN: Okay. Before you do that, I
6 just have a couple of comments that you can
7 respond to in a future meeting.

8 In regard to the big grant, the LPIC (ph)
9 or whatever the acronym is, but the big, big, big
10 grant that's going out for a second time around,
11 it's been suggested that maternal and child
12 health -- which is so important right now and
13 happens to be the governor's lady's key issue --
14 that maternal and child health as parameter --
15 mandated parameter be put into the listing of
16 things that folks can go do on that second
17 go-around for the big grants. That's a
18 suggestion. Okay?

19 The second thing I wanted to mention is
20 that this Council is responsible -- thanks to
21 Dennis and Rich, I guess -- for getting the
22 Commissioner to do some research and find -- in
23 conjunction with the Department of Education, I
24 think, and the Department of Human Services -- the
25 money to get HEPA filters distributed to school

1 systems that don't have the money or don't have
2 the resources or whatever.

3 It came out in a notice from the
4 Commissioner, I guess, and also I think the
5 governor's office put something out about the
6 action taken and the money that's going to be
7 there.

8 So to especially the three, so to speak,
9 charter members of this group, I want to thank you
10 for bringing that up, and thanks to the
11 Commissioner for acting on this.

12 So this is actually something that the
13 Council did. We did it in an advisory capacity,
14 but the Commissioner was wise enough to take the
15 advice and act on it.

16 So thanks go to everybody that brought it
17 up and acted on it. I just wanted to mention
18 that.

19 Having said that, I think we're about to
20 hear from the acting deputy, Dr. Fisher.

21 You're on.

22 DR. FISHER: Thanks, Paul.

23 This is Meg Fisher. First of all, I want
24 to welcome Dr. Webb to the meeting. She did note
25 that she would be delayed because she had an

1 emergency in the operating room.

2 So we're really delighted to have you join
3 this group and look forward to your input.

4 DR. WEBB: Thank you.

5 DR. FISHER: Let me tell you what's
6 happening here in New Jersey.

7 I have pretty good news on the contagious
8 disease fronts. We continue to have low amounts
9 of influenza throughout the state. Right now it's
10 mainly influenza B.

11 And while we've had a slight uptick in the
12 numbers of people with influenza B, the entire
13 state remains in low numbers as far as the
14 prevalence of disease.

15 I also have very good news on COVID-19.
16 We are seeing decreasing numbers throughout the
17 state. Almost all of the state is -- for
18 community transmission is actually green now,
19 meaning that we're -- the usual things.

20 We can be pretty happy to see this low
21 number of cases.

22 For health care purposes, the state is
23 actually in yellow -- most of the state -- with an
24 occasional orange.

25 So that means that we can also decrease

1 some of the things that are being done in
2 hospitals as far as mask wearing and distancing
3 and the number of people in rooms.

4 So you will see that there will be some
5 decrease in the amount of preventive measures that
6 are taking place.

7 But of course I would remind all of us
8 that the disease is not over. We still have lots
9 of COVID-19 throughout the state. People are
10 still susceptible to it, and we are seeing --
11 still seeing death.

12 As always through the pandemic, most of
13 the deaths are in older people. So for those of
14 us who are older, such as myself, I will continue
15 to be wearing a mask in situations where I'm
16 indoors, in situations where I could be exposed.

17 So this is really more the preventive
18 measures. You really should think of yourself;
19 what are your risks, where are you going and how
20 can you best protect yourself going forward.

21 The other big news at the Department of
22 Health is that we are getting ready for our
23 reaccreditation.

24 And as Paul Roman knows for sure, it's a
25 big deal for accreditation and reaccreditation.

1 And we are now doing this at the system level,
2 right here at the department level. So lots of
3 work is going through for that.

4 In the future we will definitely have some
5 rules to bring to the Council. We haven't had any
6 in a while, but there are lots of rules that are
7 in the process of being made. So we will get that
8 information to you.

9 We'll also be updating you on what's
10 happening with our CDC grants.

11 And, Paul, I'll check on the other grants
12 that you were talking about for local public
13 health. I believe they would have the opportunity
14 to use those funds for maternal and child health,
15 but I'll make sure that that's the case.

16 I don't know if Shereen Semple is on the
17 call or not. I don't see her -- I don't see her
18 name. I believe she's on vacation. So she's not
19 here, but we'll -- I'll follow up on that.

20 Thank you for that suggestion.

21 MR. ROMAN: Thank you.

22 DR. FISHER: And I think that's really all
23 I have to report.

24 I'm sorry that the Commissioner could not
25 be with us. She is actually tied up at a

1 different meeting and was, therefore, unable to
2 join us.

3 But thank you for the opportunity to give
4 you my update. That's all I've got.

5 MR. ROMAN: Thank you, Dr. Fisher.

6 I guess at this point I'd like to open the
7 meeting to the public. I need a motion to do
8 that. I don't think --

9 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Before you do that.

10 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

11 MR. SAN FILIPPO: I would like to see some
12 kind of notification -- or I wonder if any
13 notifications were sent to local health
14 departments to make them aware that money was
15 available to upgrade their school ventilation
16 systems.

17 MR. ROMAN: Yes. NJACCHO sent out a
18 notice to everybody. I've got it in front of me,
19 as a matter of fact. It came out on the 30th of
20 March. It was a message from Jamie Weller who is
21 with, I guess, the Department of Health.

22 And it was sent out to all of the health
23 officers, and it talks about the prevention and
24 control of infectious diseases and then something
25 from the Department of Education. There's a bunch

1 of links on this thing.

2 Again, it was a notice that Linda Brown
3 from NJACCHO sent out on March 30th at 9:04 in the
4 morning, if anybody wants to go back and look for
5 the thing. So that refers to the HEPA purifiers
6 and filters and how to go about it.

7 Jamie Weller is the deputy director,
8 Office of Local Public Health. She works for
9 Shereen.

10 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Thanks, Paul. That's
11 great.

12 MR. ROMAN: Yeah.

13 MR. CENSULLO: Just one thing on behalf of
14 all the Council, is I would like to take this
15 opportunity to thank Mickey for his long term of
16 service. I know Mickey is going to be staying
17 with us on the Council, thank goodness. His
18 expertise and advice is always appreciated.

19 He's done an excellent job, and I know
20 that you will follow in his footsteps as well.

21 So we're in good hands, but, Mickey, I
22 want to thank you on behalf of the Council for
23 your time and your effort and leading us through
24 very difficult times, including a pandemic.

25 Thank you, Mickey, and enjoy your time

1 off. Now it's up to Paul.

2 MR. GROSS: Thank you for your kind words.

3 Paul, the one thing that you're going to
4 learn, as I did, number one, you have great
5 members of the Public Health Council, but you're
6 also going to learn what great members you have in
7 the State Department of Health.

8 I said it before and I'll say it again:
9 Members of the State Department of Health are
10 heroes. And I repeat, use the word heroes.

11 What they did during COVID was heroic.
12 They saved countless, countless lives by making
13 serious decisions.

14 And this is the last time you're going to
15 hear me talk on it, but I could tell you right now
16 our Commissioner, our Deputy Commissioners,
17 Shereen and everyone that's there, they're heroes,
18 and no one should ever forget the great efforts of
19 them.

20 Thank you, and I'll keep my big mouth
21 shut. Thank you.

22 MR. ROMAN: I'd like to make a motion to
23 issue a vote of thanks to Mickey on behalf of the
24 Council.

25 Would somebody second that?

1 MR. SAN FILIPPO: I would be glad to make
2 that motion.

3 MR. ROMAN: Okay. Could we get a roll
4 call?

5 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?

6 MR. GROSS: I'll abstain since it's about
7 me.

8 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?

9 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes.

10 MS. RIVERA: Rich Censullo?

11 MR. CENSULLO: Yes.

12 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?

13 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

14 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?

15 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.

16 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?

17 MS. CAREY: Yes.

18 MS. RIVERA: Suffiyah Webb?

19 DR. WEBB: Yes.

20 MR. ROMAN: Okay. I'm not a computer
21 whiz, but I see a hand up, CM. Is that Chris?

22 Chris, just wait, because I've got one
23 more thing to do before we go to the public.

24 MR. MERKEL: Sure.

25 MR. ROMAN: I just want to ask if other

1 Council members have any other comments before we
2 open it up to the public.

3 Hearing none, a motion to open to the
4 public.

5 MR. SAN FILIPPO: So move.

6 MR. ROMAN: Okay. Roll call.

7 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?

8 MR. GROSS: Yes.

9 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?

10 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes.

11 MS. RIVERA: Richard Censullo?

12 MR. CENSULLO: Yes.

13 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?

14 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

15 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?

16 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.

17 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?

18 MS. CAREY: Yes.

19 MS. RIVERA: Suffiyah Webb?

20 DR. WEBB: Yes.

21 MR. ROMAN: Okay. I see one hand up, it's
22 Chris.

23 So, Chris, the floor is yours.

24 MR. MERKEL: Thanks, Paul.

25 Good morning, everybody. Chris Merkel.

1 I'm the president of New Jersey Association of
2 County and City Health Officials.

3 I know most of the people on the call.
4 Just a few comments.

5 First of all, I wanted to congratulate
6 Paul on being the chair.

7 Congratulations, Paul.

8 And thank Mickey for his years of service.
9 I know he's still going to be on the Council, but
10 I wanted to thank Mickey for stepping in. A very
11 difficult situation to be in as president.

12 I know we've had many conversations,
13 Mickey, so thank you so much.

14 I wanted to next just briefly talk about
15 two bills currently waiting a hearing in the
16 Senate and Assembly Health Committees.

17 Most of you are aware of them by now --
18 that's all I talk about anymore -- S2413 and
19 A4115, which appropriates \$10 million in the
20 Public Health Priority Fund, PHPF, which we know
21 went away in 2010. I know Paul's a big proponent
22 of it. And I just wanted to talk about the bills
23 and really ask for the Council support for these
24 two bills.

25 As you know, we have a lot of grants.

1 Deputy Commissioner Fisher talked about some of
2 the grants.

3 But as I've stated, and I continue to
4 state, while these grants are appreciated from the
5 State Department of Health, they do not provide
6 flexible sustained funding, and a lot of them have
7 expiration dates and they will go away.

8 So we were in this pattern of crisis
9 funding. Crisis funding is great, but it will not
10 sustain the public health workforce moving forward
11 in this state and not prepare us for the next
12 public health emergency. So I wanted to throw
13 that out there.

14 I also wanted to comment on Mickey's
15 comment related to the State Department of Health
16 being heroes. Yes, I agree a hundred percent. We
17 appreciate our State counterpart's support through
18 this pandemic.

19 But I would be remiss if I did not also
20 say that the local health departments, the people
21 on the ground, the boots on the ground who have
22 been busting their rears the last three years to
23 protect as many residents here in this great
24 state, they are also public health champions and
25 public health heroes.

1 We just went through Public Health Week,
2 so, you know, I would be remiss if I -- if that
3 was not mentioned. So Public Health Week is a
4 time to recognize all the public health heroes
5 here in the state.

6 And I know a lot of my counterparts are on
7 this call, a lot of local department health
8 officers. So I would like the Council to
9 recognize the local health department heroes here
10 in the State as well.

11 So I will stop there.

12 Thanks, Paul.

13 MR. ROMAN: Thank you, Chris.

14 And I also want to recognize Chris's op-ed
15 that he did for the -- he put an op-ed in the
16 New Jersey Spotlight a couple of days ago, and it
17 was well-written and well-thought out and it was a
18 real hammer that we need for this campaign to get
19 these two bills passed.

20 So I just wanted to say that. I hope I
21 wasn't out of line as chairman of the Public
22 Health Council.

23 MR. MERKEL: Thanks, Paul.

24 Just real quick on that note.

25 Thank you for recognizing the op-ed. I

1 think it was very important and very timely.

2 A few of our members also -- really wrote
3 it and revised it. I'm not going to take total
4 credit for it. Two of our long-time health
5 officers in the state I wanted to give credit to,
6 Megan Avalon and Peter Talbot.

7 So thanks, Paul.

8 MR. ROMAN: Thank you.

9 Any other public comments? I don't see
10 any hands. I'm not a big computer expert, but I
11 don't see any little hands up anywhere, so I'll
12 move on.

13 I have two other things.

14 Number one, to Dr. Fisher from a
15 discussion earlier this afternoon or this morning,
16 whatever it is -- this morning -- would you please
17 see if someone can put together a roster of the
18 current members of the Public Health Council with
19 their contact information, with their dates of
20 appointment and the dates of the term expirations
21 and such, so we all know who the players are.
22 This is something we haven't had in a long, long
23 time.

24 Before I got appointed, I had asked -- I
25 guess it was Jess when she first came to work in

1 her new job working as staff for the Public Health
2 Council to get us some rosters. So I've got
3 information on the original three members, but now
4 that we have seven members it's really time to put
5 a roster together so we all know who each of us
6 are and how to talk to each other.

7 So if the department could work on that, I
8 would greatly appreciate that.

9 DR. FISHER: Thanks, Paul.

10 We will absolutely do that, and I would
11 appreciate if everyone sends the email address
12 that you would like to be with that roster.

13 And I would say the roster is for internal
14 distribution, so please put an email address and a
15 phone number if you want to, and we will put that
16 together and get it out before the next meeting.

17 MR. ROMAN: Thank you very much.

18 One other item that I have, and that is
19 the list of dates for the Council meetings.

20 There is a published list that was sent
21 out I guess early in the year -- or actually, it
22 might have been sent out last December, I'm not
23 sure -- but we've been adhering to it, and that's
24 okay.

25 The next day listed is May 8th, followed

1 by June 12th, followed by July 10th, followed by
2 August 14th, followed by September 11th.

3 September 11th is Patriots Day. Is that a
4 State holiday? I think it is.

5 DR. FISHER: We don't think so, but we'll
6 check it.

7 MR. ROMAN: Okay. I don't have a problem
8 with the date for me, but I don't know if it
9 affects other people, especially the State folks.
10 So if we need to change that, just let me know and
11 let all of us know.

12 The other date change that is right after
13 that is October 10th -- and that's due to a
14 holiday conflicting with a date that would have
15 normally been held -- and November 13th and
16 December 11th.

17 Those are the dates, and so now you have
18 it for the minutes and you can pick them up from
19 there.

20 Okay. Motion to close to the public.

21 Sorry, I forgot to do that.

22 MR. CENSULLO: Motion.

23 MR. ROMAN: Second?

24 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes.

25 MR. ROMAN: Roll call to close.

1 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?
2 MR. GROSS: (No audible response.)
3 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?
4 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes.
5 MS. RIVERA: Richard Censullo?
6 MR. CENSULLO: Yes.
7 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?
8 MR. ROMAN: Yes.
9 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?
10 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.
11 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?
12 MS. CAREY: Yes, close public comment.
13 MS. RIVERA: Suffiyah Webb?
14 DR. WEBB: Yes.
15 MR. ROMAN: Okay. Last item, just from me
16 to the staff.
17 I plan to make contact with Dr. Fisher and
18 Commissioner Persichilli and take the invitation
19 that the Commissioner had extended to me
20 contingent on whether I was going to be the chair
21 or not.
22 I do want to meet with the key players and
23 discuss the future of the Council and some ideas
24 that we have, that they have, and see where all of
25 this is going so that we have some synergy and

1 some collaboration and not have to be nipping at
2 each other in any way, shape or form.

3 I'm very pleased and privileged to be in
4 this role. I'll try to do a darn good job.

5 And with that, unless somebody has
6 anything from the members of the Council, I'll
7 entertain I motion to adjourn.

8 Does anybody have anything else?

9 MR. CENSULLO: Yeah, Paul. The vote to
10 make you chairman was just not a vote to make you
11 chairman. It was a vote of support, a vote of
12 support by all of us.

13 So at any time if you need any one of us
14 or multiple numbers of us, please don't hesitate.
15 We're here to help. We're all here for the same
16 mission, and we'd like to serve and help. I think
17 it benefits everybody.

18 So we're one team, one purpose, one
19 direction, one mission, and working with a great
20 Commissioner and a great staff. We're very
21 fortunate and very blessed.

22 So, Paul, I want to wish you the best of
23 luck, and please count on our support.

24 MR. ROMAN: Thank you very much, Rich.

25 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Paul, that goes ditto

1 for me.

2 MR. ROMAN: Thank you, Dennis.

3 I see all the heads shaking. Thank you.

4 At this point I'll entertain a motion to
5 adjourn.

6 MR. CENSULLO: Motion.

7 MR. SAN FILIPPO: So moved.

8 MR. ROMAN: And, Rich, you're seconding?

9 MR. CENSULLO: I second that, yes.

10 MR. ROMAN: Roll call.

11 MS. RIVERA: Mickey Gross?

12 MR. GROSS: Yes.

13 I was muted before, I apologize.

14 MS. RIVERA: Dennis San Filippo?

15 MR. SAN FILIPPO: Yes.

16 MS. RIVERA: Richard Censullo?

17 MR. CENSULLO: Yes.

18 MS. RIVERA: Paul Roman?

19 MR. ROMAN: Yes.

20 MS. RIVERA: Carol Chamberlain?

21 MS. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.

22 MS. RIVERA: Stephanie Carey?

23 MS. CAREY: Yes.

24 MS. RIVERA: Suffiyah Webb?

25 DR. WEBB: Yes.

1 MS. RIVERA: We can adjourn.

2 Have a good day.

3 MR. ROMAN: Okay. Thank you.

4 (The meeting concluded at 12:04 p.m.)

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Dated: April 21, 2023