

**MINUTES of the REGULAR**  
**REGIONAL HEALTHCARE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**of SAN MIGUEL COUNTY, NEW MEXICO**  
**HELD SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 AT 5:00 PM**

**SMC HealthCare Study & Planning Committee**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The San Miguel County Healthcare Study Committee held a special meeting on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2023 at 5:00 PM at New Mexico Highlands University 800 National Ave., Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701. Harold Garcia called this meeting to order at 5:10 PM.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Roll Call

The record will show a quorum is present.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion to approve Agenda made by Edward Sena, Second by Josef Jaureguiberry. Motion carried.

**4. PUBLIC INPUT FORUM**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**5. WELCOME and BRIEF DISCUSSION of SMCs GOALS FOR COMMITTEE – PRESENTATION of RESOLUTION & ACTION, if necessary**

Mr. Harold Garcia, Chairman- San Miguel County Commission, introduced Mrs. Christina Rivas-Campos who was highly recommended by the Governor's Office to represent San Miguel County and interests with this program. Mr. Garcia also introduced Mr. Joe Lupica who is the Chairman of Newpoint Healthcare Advisors out of Phoenix, AZ. San Miguel County initially budgeted \$50,000.00 to do this study but the Anchorum out of Santa Fe is going to pay for the services and contracted Newpoint Healthcare Advisors to provide the services. Mrs. Cristina Rivas-Campos- has been in the hospital field since 1993 in Santa Rosa, NM who experienced a far worse crisis with less resources. Doctors were leasing out the hospital from the county and

negotiations came to a standstill, the hospital was losing a lot of money, doctors left in the middle of the night and had stripped the hospital of supplies, equipment, medical records and much more. Governor Bruce King asked Presbyterian and UNM to help get this hospital up and going again. The hospital became bankrupt in 1999 and was then taken over by the county. Mrs. Rivas-Campos has served on many committees like UNM, she was appointed by the Obama Administration to the National Advisory Committee for Rural Health and Human Services. She has also been on the New Mexico Hospital Association Board for the last 17 years, and also made it all the way to the American Hospital Association of Trustees. Mrs. Rivas-Campos emphasized that her roll is not to tell Alta Vista Regional Hospital what is wrong with them and her roll is not to fix what the hospital eventually decides to identify is wrong, she stated that her role is to navigate and provide a level of interpretation and prospective from her experiences and provide resources to model from. Mr. Joe Lupica- Newpoint Health, specializes in operations improvement, he introduced the Principle of Newpoint Health, Brett Norell, who joined via Zoom. Brett is in charge of the performance improvement group. Mr. Lupica shared his experience where he has seen hospitals close, he has seen a hospital who thought they were closing and then at 2 a.m. closed a deal to save the hospital. Mr. Lupica emphasized the word confidence, to have confidence in our hospital. It is not dying; it may be struggling but not going to just be gone. The hospital is a community asset. Mr. Lupica asked that each member state something that is on their mind, and suggested a "theme" and think of a time when Alta Vista was great, describe it to him as if they are living in that era, present tense. Mr. Lupica and Mrs. Rivas-Campos came up with the idea after consulting to do Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

#### **6. INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS & TWO MINUTE DESCRIPTION BY EACH COMMITTEE MEMBERS IDEAS AND GOALS FOR HEALTHCARE STUDY GROUP**

Mr. Harold Garcia introduced each member

**Kenneth Medina, Commissioner – San Miguel County Commission:** We care for our community, surrounding communities, we care for the health care that is coming out of Alta Vista. We do not want to step on any toes, we want to help on finding a solution or provide any help to the hospital to fully staff our hospital again. A lot of elderly in our community that are low income. Wants to see: We need the OB, Intensive Care Unit.

**Dr. Michael Lopez, Owner- Dr. Lopez Family Practice:** Has had his own private practice for 42 years here in Las Vegas and when he first opened, we had a pretty well functioning hospital with very little transfers, because everything was done here, but when corporate took over, it has been a disaster. Wants to see: Get rid of hospital and go back to community hospital. Alta Vista is the most dysfunctional hospital that he has ever seen.

**Robert Nelson, Interim CEO and Interim Chief Nursing Officer - Alta Vista Regional Hospital:** since July 17, 2023 was in the Marine Corp for 4 years, went to Penn State for Bachelors and university of Pittsburg MBA Master Health Administration past 23 years has been a director clinical background is neurovascular trauma ICU nurse. Over the years has worked 10 years for HCA, at University of Pittsburg for 6 years on the not-for-profit side, worked for joint commission for 6 years as a stroke surveyor spent the past 6 years as Chief Nursing Officer. Worked in Oklahoma before coming here. Mr. Nelson has a 6-month contract but would easily sign a longer contract and is willing to be here for as long as the community needs him. Starting to recruit staff. The hospital will probably meet budget for surgeries and procedures next month for the first time in a long time. His goal is to work with the board to get the hospital back to where it should be.

**Keith Tucker, Chair - Alta Vista Regional Hospital:** has been associated since it was Northeastern Regional Hospital, over 20 years. Had never seen the Resolution, Mr. Garcia mentioned that he gave it to the CEO at the time Caleb O'Rear. Mentioned that Mr. Nelson has a good reputation and is happy to have him as the interim CEO, and also mentioned that there were several of Alta Vistas Board Members present as well because they did not know what to expect from this meeting. Mr. Tucker worked 30 years of Finance before he taught Economics and Finance at NMHU. Mr. Tucker went on about he didn't care what the name of the hospital is, we just need a hospital here in our community what we need is collaboration from the community so that we have people that are wanting to come to Alta Vista. How do we do that in a community that has shortages in housing, school districts declining, amenities that are declining as well, overall declining population? Why are we sending people to Santa Fe for services we could provide? Any type of help we can get is appreciated but once again it is a private hospital and is not owned by the people here it is owned by a corporation but anything is for sale so if that is an option then that is something we need to legitimately consider in order to keep a functioning hospital in the community.

**Pat Leahan, Director- Las Vegas Peace of Justice Center:** Noticed in resolution that community health needs assessment, confirmed that it will be done by Mr. Garcia. Agreed and shares the same thoughts as Dr. Lopez on his experience with the hospital. 80% of hospitals in the US are private not-for-profit, privatized medicine in the lowest income counties and communities for Ms. Leahan is not a good thing and thinks that's partly where the hospital falls apart. Wants to see: Patient-centric (patients and their families) approach prioritize their comfort and convenience throughout their medical journey, a website that is comprehensive current website has wrong information, focused leadership those that are trusted by employees, have highly qualified staff will also help build a reputation for the hospital. Ms. Leahan asked former CEO Mr. O'Rear who the Board Members of the hospital were for people in our community

who had reached out to the Peace of Justice Center for that information and he denied any information to her. We also need cutting edge technology that was promised but ended up with equipment that contributed to other injuries. We really need transparent and affordable pricing. Prices are double than what they are in Santa Fe. Coordinated care. Feels like our low-income community deserves good health care and will do whatever she can to help make that happen. Ms. Leahan has done a community assessment with several members of our community of what they expect from the hospital and their health care needs. Ms. Leahan would also like to see the hospital allow midwives to be in the hospital with their patients if the family requested it.

**Leah Joslyn, ER Director - Alta Vista Regional Hospital:** she has been there nearly 3 weeks. She spoke on how the ER is broken and has not been that great but very optimistic and thinks it could be great. She is very motivated as an ER Nurse to make the ER better, her focus is to build an ER that our community can trust and rely on that is full of compassionate and competent nurses that provides them the necessary care and keep them rather than sending them elsewhere unless it is critical and cannot provide the services then provide them transportation that is the cheaper alternative but also the safest alternative. Cost is a big concern to the community as well as to her, part of what she has been doing since being at Alta Vista is working with Mr. Nelson and the CFO going through the transfer logs and studying the data to see if there were other alternatives and if we could have done something different. She is happy to look into anything pertaining to the ER. Education is needed, root out nurses, she wants to build core team that is compassionate and does care about the community and is highly motivated to do so.

**Lawrence Quintana, Employee in HR - Alta Vista Regional Hospital:** for 3 years, has a good relationship with the Union and says that a lot of employees are local and competent. One of the reasons he volunteered to be on the board for Alta Vista is because he wants to see employees succeed and is connected to the community and also wants to make sure that our community does have health care. He is hoping to hear suggestions that will help our community.

**Edward Sena, Medical Community & Local Resident:** Has worked 20 years in medicine, 2 Masters degrees one in Business Administration of Medical Leadership and the other in Physiology, sits on multiple boards, runs the second largest water utility. His mother was an administrator at Northeastern Regional Hospital and he grew up being around there, the hospital was about the community he has not seen Alta Vista being about the community, has not seen a relationship with physicians outside of the hospital which has caused those physicians to refer patients to hospitals out of town. Mr. Sena ran the medical device clinic for Dr. Michael Gurule in 2019 he would see 26 patients a day and it decreased significantly during

COVID-19, he went to the CEO Caleb O'Rear and told him that he had patients with medical devices and needed a list to figure out what he was going to do with them but Mr. O'Rear never gave him a list. Biggest concern is hospital costs for a low-income community. Wants to see: a building between local physicians and the hospital. Currently working with the Governor's Office and local Legislators such as Castellano and Sanchez on a plan on how to recruit and retain physicians. Mr. Sena is hoping to see more people such as the Mayor and more people from the state in these meetings. Wants hospital to re-brand themselves, bring in local physicians, attend local events (read blood pressure measurements, read EKG's), have an open door policy for our community. We have a very uneducated community. If we cannot have services available such as an OBGYN, educate the community with a study as to why, are there not enough babies being born? Don't just take away the services without explanation. Wants an olive branch extended to the community and physicians and have a better line of communication. The hospital should be the center focus of this community just as Northeastern Regional was, they involved the community in a number of different events.

**Josef Jaureguiberry, Local Businessman:** Provides some insight in terms of healthcare for tradesmen in Las Vegas, tradesmen require medical attention quite a bit. Our healthcare is very complicated, and we need a hospital. Infrastructure issues at the hospital. San Miguel, Mora and Guadalupe Counties produce some of the best medical professionals in the world, Dr. Mario Leyba a robotic surgeon from Mora, Dr. Jesus Tafoya is an excellent doctor, Dr. Michael Elliot ER doctor with UNM lived with the Obama family and DC wanted to keep him. Having a trustworthy facility is inviting and something he would like to see.

**Stella Burciaga, Owner - Buena Vida Physical Therapy & Wellness:** Theme is Community; how do we help this hospital and this community, and practitioners that are struggling? The only way is community. Worked at Alta Vista and left because it is for profit, they are not about the patients, it's about the dollar. There is no compassion, so other healthcare in the community suffers because there are patients that are beyond their care but has no where local to send them. 9 months to see a Rheumatologist, 8-9 months to see a Pulmonologist. Several people in the community can help not only the hospital but all the organizations, but they don't because they do not trust the hospital, because it is about money. We need to start with wellness, and healthcare education.

**David Luna, Retired Adolescent Mental Health Behavioral Director- NMBHI:** Has been in Las Vegas since 1980. Mentioned some more local doctors who are from our community that are practicing elsewhere, what can we do to bring them back? Mentioned if there were 100 Leah's (Leah Joslyn) in that hospital we wouldn't be here right now because she is someone who loves what she is doing and wants to be there for the community. A hospital is only as good as its

employees. Billing and costs need to be more clear, especially for the elderly. Elderly needs to know that they are being taken care of.

**Elaine Luna, Board Member - Alta Vista Regional Hospital:** 20 years old was given a job by Northeastern Regional hospital in administration to work in the ER. Spoke on how there were a countless number of people that came through the door each day and she developed a relationship with everyone that walked through that door. A lot of change came to the hospital over the years, a lot of privatization. Went from a 5% department to running the department herself. We need comradery amongst our physicians and co-workers. Perspectives that have been lost, if we can gain that perspective we can bring a lot back and physicians like Dr. Lopez will feel more comfortable with the hospital. Theme is protecting community assets.

**Dr. Humberto Martinez, MD Alta Vista Regional Hospital:** Started January of 2022, felt more comfortable having the ICU backup to perform complicated surgeries that is not there anymore, which makes it more difficult. Background is Surgical Oncology but there is not an in-house Pathologist so it is hard to do intricate cancer case. Works with what he has and strives for the best with a good outcome is what he has to offer the community.

**Dr. Mital Patel, MD Alta Vista Regional Hospital:** Has been at Alta Vista since June of 2020, feels like everything takes time, 3-4 years before a patient starts trusting a doctor. Very confident in joints program, 99% of patients go home the same day. Each hospital goes through hard times, it is everywhere.

**Annissa Apodaca, Director of Operations: Rural Surgical Associates:** General Surgery and Orthopedic practice in Las Vegas, a private practice that is not here to bash the hospital but to help find solutions to the problems that are at the hospital. This practice has offered help with recruitment to the hospital. Theme: Resilience, this is something that we will overcome.

**Joy Ansley, Manager - San Miguel County:** Worked EMS about 5 years ago before becoming the manager. Recently, negotiated a contract with AMR (American Medical Response) to keep them here to provide ambulance services, there were complications and issues that were mentioned by AMR which was mostly communication with the hospital such as transfers, scheduling, ambulances being taken out of service to make transfers.

**Yolanda Ulmer, Vice-President – District 1199 (via Zoom):** The community needs a hospital that can provide the healthcare needed, it needs to re-open the OB department. The hospital is saying they cannot find doctors but the Union is telling them they need to provide a good wage for the doctors. Quorum is the corporation that runs the hospital, they have the resources to be able to provide the healthcare needs for the community instead of taking our monies out of the

state. There needs to be a good and stable healthcare workforce in order to do so, they need to pay them fair wages and improve working conditions.

**Brett Norell, Principal – Newpoint Healthcare Advisors, LLC (via Zoom):** Appreciates all the feedback and sees that there is compassion for the hospital.

Harold Garcia, the community is very resilient and very united. Wants to take this conversation as constructive criticism, wants to see positive results from this healthcare study group. Wants to get the rest of the county commissioners on board with support for the hospital. Continue to work with consultants and believes something good will come from it.

**7. WELCOME MR. JOSEPH LUPICA, CHAIRMAN OF NEWPOINT HEALTHCARE ADVISORS, LLC.**

Introduced Mr. Lupica in item 5.

**8. ADDITIONAL DISCUSSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER**

\*The lack of surgeons and lack of supply inventory for surgeries that the hospital has due to the reps taking their supplies back with them if they are not being used often. \*Transfer concerns were discussed, as well as how expensive a helicopter transport could be for someone in our community that could have been transported by ambulance. \*The hospital is paying a lot of money for traveling nurses who eventually leave due to their contracts being over. Multiple things come into play when getting more traveling nurses because housing is scarce, and having to accommodate their family as well. \*Talk about getting rid of travelers and just have local community nurses in the ER who are invested in the community. \*Community trusting the hospital more when there are more local nurses. \*Harold asked Keith if the hospital was for sale, and if he needed help selling the hospital. Keith stated “we need a hospital in the community, it doesn’t matter what it is called we just need a hospital” \*Presbyterian has offered a new program for Nurse retention because they have come to a realization that this wage escalation, you will never get ahead of it. Adopted an app for nurse self-scheduling. \*Re-open 2 ICU units, there are still some ICU nurses in the community that are willing to come back. \*The hospital had a high amount of patients leaving without treatment and some without being seen which is being worked on. Currently the in-patient patient satisfaction scores are in the 99 percentile but the ER is 7 which is a huge mismatch due to a number of different reasons. One being the way patients were treated having community nurses contribute to patient satisfaction. \*A team of physicians were going to get an urgent care going and the

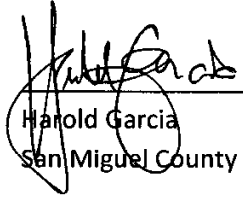
hospital administrator threatened that they would lose their contracts with the hospital. \*KPI's: ICU, Prenatal, Respiratory Therapy, Pulmonary Function Studies \*X-Rays are not reliable, no radiologists in-house. \*Sub-board of community physicians.

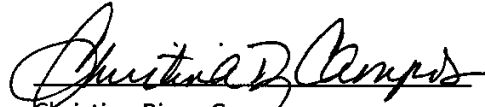
#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn Special Meeting made by Harold Garcia. Second by ????. Motion carried.  
Adjourned at 7:54 PM.

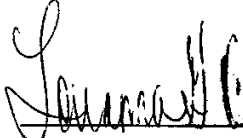


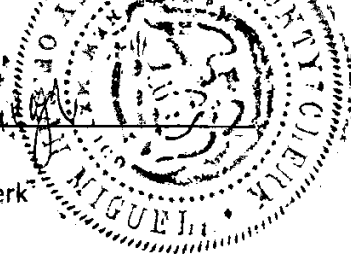
Approved this 9<sup>th</sup> day of **November 2023** as the Official Minutes of the San Miguel County Healthcare Study Committee meeting held 20 September 2023 at the NMHU Student Center, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

  
Harold Garcia  
San Miguel County Chairman

  
Christina Rivas-Campos  
San Miguel County Liaison

ATTEST:

  
Louanna G. Ortega  
San Miguel County Clerk





Minutes submitted by Megan Stroud, Executive Assistant

**NOTICE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

If you are an individual with a disability who is in need of a reader, amplifier, qualified sign language interpreter or any form of auxiliary aid or service to attend or participate in the hearing(s) or meeting(s), please contact the San Miguel County Managers Office at (505) 425-9333 at least one week prior to the meeting or as soon as possible. Public documents, including the agenda and minutes, can be provided in various accessible formats. Please contact the county at the above number if a summary or other type of accessible format is needed