

The Health Council of Marin

Minutes of Regular Meeting: Tuesday, September 25, 2018

Marin General Hospital

250 Bon Air Road, Larkspur Room

Greenbrae, CA 94904

Members Present: Barbara Wientjes (President), Constance Barker, Allan Blau, Bridget Gleason, Kevin Hogan, Jennifer Rienks, Sandy Ross, Claudia Schimmer, Derice Seid Tao

Members Absent: None.

Guests: Rachel Gaunt (Presenter), Paige Hutson (Presenter – Hutson Consulting), Kathy Koblick (HHS), Steven Scott (Consultant), Loretta Rogers (Secretary)

Handouts: *Agenda; hand-out regarding cell towers; memo from Sandy Ross proposing a letter to the Board of Supervisors; draft letter to the Board of Supervisors*

1. **Call to Order:** President Barbara Wientjes called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.
2. **Welcome and Introductions, Loyalty Oath:** President Barbara Wientjes welcomed all attendees and all attendees introduced themselves. Loretta Rogers administered the loyalty oath to the new HCM member, Kevin Hogan.
3. **Public Comment Time:** None.
4. **Approval of the minutes of the June 26, 2018, meeting:** With a change in the date at the heading, Connie Barker moved that the minutes be approved. Alan Blau seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
5. **Presentations Scheduled for the rest of the year:** There was general discussion of this topic. Kathy Koblick agreed to present in October regarding the priorities of the Department of Health & Human Services. In November, there will be a presentation on suicide prevention, arranged by Jennifer Rienks. There is no meeting in December. Regarding presentations for 2019, members suggested the following topics: RxSafe Marin presented by Mr. Mark Dale, to be arranged by Claudia Schimmer; tropical diseases that have moved into the United States; LGBT health issues, particularly those of older, long-term HIV survivors; homelessness in Marin; assuring health care workers can get into Marin in case of a disaster. Confirmed scheduling will take place at a future meeting.
6. **Presentation by Paige Hutson and Rachel Gaunt – “Halting the 5G Wireless Small Cell Technology Rollout”:** Paige Hutson and Rachel Gaunt explained that 5G is the next generation of cellular mobile communications; it succeeds the 4G, 3G and 2G systems. It adds to and does not replace 3G and 4G systems. 5G was developed in the face of rapidly growing demand. The 4G network uses the frequency spectrum from 2 to 6 Ghz. As more and more devices are using this spectrum, congestion has resulted, leading to slower transmission speeds. The industry has now looked to the frequency spectrum of 30–300 Ghz, to acquire more space for expanding the spectrum and increasing speed. However, at these speeds, waves cannot travel as far and cannot penetrate trees, buildings or mountains. So, to overcome this weakness, the industry has created smaller cells to be installed at shorter, direct-line distances, in this case, already-existing telephone poles and lamp posts which means that every 2 – 5 poles can become mini cell powers located 10 to 50 ft. from homes and businesses. Further, all providers can install their own small cells on the same poles, stacking them one on top of another, multiplying the exposure.

Verizon, AT&T, PG&E and other providers are already planning and competing to install 5G small cell technology in business and residential areas, whether the public has agreed to this or not. There are serious health concerns about this technology. 5G is being developed and

implemented without adequate evaluation of the effect of this technology on human health. Peer reviewed research studies have found adverse effects from the electro-magnetic frequencies currently in use and that will be used for 5G. There is significant research showing that long-term exposure can lead to:

- An increase in gliomas of the brain and schwannomas of the heart,
- An increase in tumors in other organs, such as the adrenal glands, the prostate, pancreas, pituitary, lungs and liver
- An increase in glial cell hyperplasia of the brain
- An increase in neurodegenerative diseases and cell damage.

Over 240 scientists and doctors from 41 nations who have published research in the field have appealed to the United Nations, calling for urgent action to reduce ever-growing wireless exposures and they wrote the FCC for a moratorium on the roll-out of 5G, citing the serious risks that to human health and the environment.

Other negative effects include increased fire risk and decreased property values of 20 – 30%.

Unfortunately, the 1996 Telecommunications Act, removed the public's right to oppose cell towers on the grounds of environmental impacts from radiation. Since then, this has been interpreted to include health effects on humans. Also, the current head of the FCC is the ex-head of Verizon and so unlikely to be sympathetic to the public's health concerns.

Paige and Rachel stated that a better and healthier solution to the need for increased capacity is fiber optic cables. They have the advantage of enormous capacity, low fire risk, less expensive, greater reliability, greater security and no public exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Recommendations: Paige and Rachel urged the Health Council to request the Board of Supervisors to pass an "urgency ordinance" to sit on top of the 1998 Telecom Plan, to protect the unincorporated areas of Marin County from 5G cell towers near homes, businesses, and towns. The ordinance should prohibit 5G Small Cells in residential zones, create 500' set-backs and require 1,500' between poles. The ordinances passed in Petaluma and Mill Valley can be used as models. Research needs to be done to find out if and how AT&T and Verizon are bypassing County requirements.

Paige Hutson will send their PowerPoint presentation to Loretta Rogers for distribution to HCM members.

Steven Scott then spoke briefly from his experience as an electrical engineer regarding this issue. He stated that there is an instrument which can measure the cellular radiation, but it is very expensive, around \$100,000 plus an additional \$50,000 for the antenna. He also discussed the relative expense of cell towers to fiber optics. He stated that at present there was no way to block EHF millimeter waves, whereas with some EHF devices such as Smart Meters and "dirty electricity," there are relatively effective ways of blocking them

There was general discussion. Kathy Koblick suggested that this issue would be a good topic for a community event. Sandy Ross passed around a memo, proposing a letter to the Board of Supervisors on this topic, urging the Supervisors to instruct their lobbyists to work on this issue with legislators in Sacramento. Sandy also passed around a draft of the proposed letter. This was briefly reviewed by the Council. Bridget Gleason suggested that this letter be taken up as an agenda item at the October meeting, giving HCM members a chance to review it thoroughly. Sandy Ross stated that the letter should go to the Board now as the Board makes decisions regarding lobbying at meetings in October. In view of this timeline, HCM members proposed the following edits:

- Capitalize the word “members” in the salutation.
- Move the 3rd paragraph to the first paragraph.
- The second sentence in the 3rd paragraph should read, “It hopes the County can find the best way to provide this protection.”
- The second sentence in the 4th paragraph should read, “Has County Counsel been able to make any determination on this?”

Other edits were proposed. With the edit, Sandy Ross moved that the letter be sent to the Board of Supervisors. Connie Barker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. **President’s Report:** None.
8. **HCM member reports and announcements:** None.
9. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 23, 2018, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at Marin General Hospital in the Larkspur Room.