

API Governing Body Special Meeting Minutes

Date: November 21, 2020 / Time: 10:00 am – 12 p.m.

Zoom

	Voting Members and Ex-Officio Members		Non-Voting Members		API Staff and Behavioral Health Continuum of Care Stakeholders
X	Clinton Lasley, DHSS DC FCIS		Adam Rutherford, DOC	x	Tina Cochran, API CFO
x	Elizabeth King, ASHNHA		Jeff Jessee, UA	X	Jomarie Gleason, API QAPI Director
x	John Lee, Director SDS	x	David Moxley, UA		Joyce Atafua, API Acting Public Health Info
	Gennifer Moreau-Johnson, DBH Director		Daniel Delfino, AHFC	x	Promise Hagedon, API Assistant DON
x	Dr. Shane Coleman, ANHB	x	Elizabeth Russo, OPA	x	Erica Steeves, API DON
x	Jason Lessard, NAMI		Dr. Helen Adams American College of Emergency Physicians		Dr. Blandford, API
x	Charlene Tautfest, AMHB Member		Alaska Academy of Family Physicians		Ronald Cowan, API Patient Advocate
x	Dr. Anne Zink, CMO, DHSS		ADH Director (no longer member, need to appoint)		Dr. Audra Yewchin, API Director of Rehabilitation
x	Dr. Alexander von Hafften, APA		Anchorage Police Department		Steven Bookman, DOL
x	Summer LeFebvre, ABHA		Lisa Jaehning, DLC	x	Ashley Christopherson, DHSS
x	Scott York, API CEO	X	Katie Baldwin Johnson, AMHTA	x	Emily Palmer, DHSS
	Adam Crum, Commissioner, DHSS		Dr. Michael Alexander API Chief of Psychiatry, MEC		Guests
	Alaska Primary Care Association member		Beverly Schoonover, AMHB	x	Elizabeth Jenkins, Alaska Ombudsman
			Lisa Fitzpatrick, Alaska Court System	x	Kate Burkhart, Alaska Ombudsman
			Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness	x	Jake Carbaugh
				x	Linda Beecher
				x	Mark Regan, Disability Law Center

Notes: "X" indicates attendance.

"E" indicates excused.

Stakeholder organizations in process of selecting a representative are depicted by **yellow highlight**.

#	Standing Agenda Items	Lead Assigned	Discussion	Action Item	Due Date
1a.	Welcome Introductions (Roll call)	Co-Chair	Elizabeth King Attendance and call to order.	Quorum established Able to conduct GB business	Completed
2.	Executive Session to discuss an HR matter	Co-Chair	Voting members move to Executive Session 10:19 reconvene Motion to approve credentialing for Dr. Swogger Vote all in favor	Executive session	Completed
3.	Discussion for letter of concern		<p>Elizabeth King shared letter that API received. Opened floor for discussion.</p> <p>Doctor von Hafften asked what API will do as well as what the governing body will do and how to respond. He stated that last spring we looked at the scope and responsibility of the governing body and this letter touches on some of the responsibilities and duties of the governing body. Especially Section 3.</p> <p>Scott York: thanked the Governing Body for bringing this letter to larger group and supporting API as they respond. Asked do we need legal guidance regarding the letter?</p> <p>Deputy Commissioner Lasley: we need to determine how we want API to respond. It would be good to go through each item, see which items have been addressed, outline concerns, and create a plan to address those concerns.</p> <p>This letter was submitted anonymously so there is no one to directly respond to but how we respond will set the tone for the future and ensures that individuals with concerns get a response. We want to show we take these extremely seriously.</p>		

Jason Lessard: Coming into this meeting I had questions about legal issues on how to respond. We probably do not want this to be an internal only response and would like to see a larger response. Would a non-State, non-Governing Body review be enough or do we need someone further removed to investigate?

Group discussion regarding outside agency review. Summary is that this would be beneficial but need to carefully consider who will do this review. Group agreed that it's very important to have an appropriate individual who is trusted and demonstrates clear expectations be the one to talk to any API staff about this. Group discussion: Well Path might not be the best since they had a former contract.

Group discussion that this appears to be a staff member who wrote letter. One way to address this could be staff education and more discussion and education around changes at API and following through when there are concerns. For example, allowing time to talk through issues and concerns after they happen and making sure staff are able to address any questions they have.

Governing Body asked API staff if they have specific thoughts. API staff mentioned that the fact there was a letter was presented to API staff by leadership. General agreement that the approach should be multi-pronged including Governing Body support and API response. API staff noted that it might be hard for other staff to address concerns due to historical issues with leadership. There have been there has been a cycle of frustration, leadership changes, an additional concerns and staff might not know who to go to or how to address it. Staff also might have concerns with confidentiality and fear of being reprimanded.

Question is there a formal grievance process at API?
Answer yes there is a formal grievance process as well as staff surveys and review of culture of safety.
However, there have been many leadership changes and leadership styles so this can be difficult to address overtime.

Question does the Governing Bod deal with operations and what responsibility do they have?
Answer: the Governing Body doesn't deal with daily operations and staff do not feel the GB role is to go line by line of the letter to address but more so to provide additional support to all API and ensure this is properly responded to, not left to just internal response.

Additionally, in reviewing Governing Body Bylaws it states that:

The API Governing Body shall act as final arbiter of conflicts between administrative/management groups that cannot be resolved by customary administrative process.

So according to the bylaws the GB has a responsibility at some point to respond, not to interfere, if this continues.

Suggestion that concerns and reviews should start upstream by asking for feedback and going over problems as they come up not just after. One way to do this is to go through every shift, question, situation and make those each a learning point.

Group discussion that they do not want to overreact but also want to show that they take these accusations very seriously. Many items could be discussed and addressed, communication can be increased, but we also want to credit API for all their hard work and this is an area that the Governing Body could show additional support in.

Group continued discussion around what they can do to support API staff overall. Co-chair provided a brief summary of the group discussion highlighting that:

1. Culture of Safety: we could work on a culture of safety by doing a short survey and or third party evaluation to gauge where people are at..
2. Education: here could be some education around items and concerns. There can also be education around things that the hospital is working on.
3. Supporting staff mental health: could do regular check ins with staff and review needs.

Scott York let the GB know that he has talked to staff about this concern and made it up front since he wants to be transparent with staff since that has been a concern with leadership in the past. Scott noticed that this created anxiety and people had more questions after he talked about the letter being sent. API leadership did not send the letter out directly to staff.

Group discussion about how API leadership can talk to staff about the letter. Majority decided sharing the letter was not the best idea because it can make the writer feel uncomfortable or feel pointed out. It would be good to provide a question and answer response to staff and help address any of their deeper concerns. API staff has mentioned that there have been things like this in the past and not all questions have been addressed. It was determined that Scott will compile questions and reach out to the Governing Body for feedback on what he sends next to API staff.

Group discussion and suggestion of a neutral third party to do staff interviews and review if there are systematic issues. There have been concerns with previous surveys and staff has a lack of trust in some ways so we need to ensure we use an appropriate, neutral party.

Kate Burkhardt, Alaska ombudsman, suggested they are available to do a review and have done reviews on API concerns in the past. Kate cited a 2018 investigation with many similar concerns. Many recommendations came out of that review and could do something similar in this case.

Group discussion for support of utilizing ombudsman for third party assessment of API and specifically concerns addressed in the letter.

API leadership will determine a way to respond to staff and will do so in a timely manner. They can provide a Q&A and plan to improve education. Scott can utilize the GB to get feedback prior to sending to staff.

Ombudsman will review concerns and open investigation

Elizabeth King will send out email with bullet points of suggestions by GB.

Question: what happens if this letter is published or shared in the news?

Answer: will work with DHSS Public Information Team to respond.

Motion to adjourn:

1. Charlene Tuatfest
2. John Lee

Meeting adjourned at 11:49

Next Meeting: December 17, 2020
Minutes prepared by: Ashley Christopherson

Approved by: _____

Letter from Co-Chair Elizabeth King following API Special Meeting:

Good afternoon,

Thank you again to everyone who took time out of their Saturday morning to help develop a plan for responding to the anonymous letter received this week! There was a lot of good discussion about utilizing the opportunity provided by this letter to educate staff about what has been accomplished as well as the work that continues to progress in addressing some of these concerns. Several board members shared that the letter also offers the opportunity to build trust and improve the culture of safety at the hospital through direct and transparent communication. The board recommends taking action on the issues of communication, validation, supporting staff wellness, and improving the culture of safety.

These issues and action steps include:

1. **Communication with staff (Transparency)**

- a. The board encourages senior leadership at API to e-mail staff with information about the allegations received and share that the leadership team is taking the allegations seriously and will share findings (Q/A format) from data collected within a given time frame.
- b. The board applauds the work that has been done and supports a continued focus on improving the culture of safety at API with a goal of ensuring staff have opportunities for their concerns to be heard. The board will continue to engage in discussions on how to best improve communication with staff.

2. **Validation of information (Education)**

- a. The board supports utilizing the services of the State Ombudsman's office as a neutral third party to investigate the allegations in the anonymous letter. Since [the Ombudsman has recently investigated some of these issues, and made recommendations for resolving them](#), the Ombudsman will be reviewing API's progress implementing those recommendations and inquiring into remaining issues related to treatment, safety, and how staff can share their concerns and ideas with management effectively.

The office of the Ombudsman is a governmental agency dedicated to investigating complaints against businesses, financial institutions, or government departments or other public entities, and attempts to resolve the conflicts or concerns raised, either by mediation or by making recommendations.

3. **Providing resources for Staff (Care and Safety)**

- a. The board recognizes that API staff have been under an incredible amount of stress, and that personal and professional challenges for many have been exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The board recommends sharing the state of Alaska support hotline for health care providers: 1-844-985-8275.

The board suggests conducting check-ins with staff before/ after shift to see how they are doing, as well as using that time to hear what is going well and what needs improvement.

Please feel free to contact me if there are any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Warm regards,

Elizabeth