

***VITAL RECORDS IMPROVEMENT FUND
ADVISORY COMMITTEE***

To The New Hampshire Department of State

-MINUTES-

***Friday
May 15, 2009***

Approved Minutes

-MINUTES-

Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee Meeting

May 15, 2009

Archives Building
2nd Floor Conference Room
71 South Fruit Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Stephen M. Wurtz, Acting State Registrar
Dr. David Laflamme, Data User, DHHS Appointment
Joe Gray, Rochester City Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
Patricia Little, Keene City Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
David Scanlan, Deputy Secretary of State, SOS Appointment
Dr. Frank Mevers, State Archivist
Debra Clark, Town Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
Vicki Tinsley, Representing Theresa Pare-Curtis, OIT CIO Appointment

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Thomas A. Andrew, MD, Medical Examiner Appointment
Nelson Allan, Public Member, SOS Appointment
Robert Carrier, Funeral Director Association Appointment
Joanne Linxweiler, Auburn Town Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
Anna Thomas, Municipal Data User, DHHS Appointment
Stephen Norton, Vital Records User, DHHS Appointment

GUESTS:

Chris Bentzler, DOIT

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Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee Meeting

1. Meeting Called to Order:

- Ms. Little called the meeting to order at 9:44 a.m.

2. Approval of Minutes:

- Mr. Gray made a motion to accept the March minutes with Dr. Laflamme seconding.
- Ms. Little pointed out an incomplete thought in the second bullet of the fifth page of the previous minutes. Mr. Wurtz explained that the thought was that the commitment was still there despite Vital Records being down to one developer. Ms. Little asked if the meeting handouts would be sent to members per Dr. Laflamme's recommendation. Mr. Wurtz replied that they would be. It was suggested that they be posted along with the meeting minutes on the website.
- Committee voted unanimously to accept the minutes with Ms. Little's correction.

3. Financial Report:

- Mr. Wurtz distributed a handout forwarded to him by Ms. Penney. He reported that he had also had a short discussion with Mr. Manning where he obtained additional information on the grant program to report.
- Ms. Little asked what the \$27,000 in the printing and binding category was for. Mr. Wurtz explained that it was a general category that covered the reproduction/creation of forms and documents used by Vital Records. She then asked if the transfers to OIT were up to date. Mr. Scanlan replied that those transfers generally had a two to three month lag. He estimated there was probably \$100,000 still owed.
- Mr. Scanlan explained that the second page of the handout reflected revenues to the fund to date. The balance brought forward from last year was \$2.47 million dollars. The revenue to date would be added to that number and the \$631,000 in expenditures subtracted along with an additional \$100,000 for OIT, giving us a pretty good reflection of the current balance of the fund. Dr. Laflamme did the calculations and came up with \$935,868.24 for revenue and \$2,676,458.24 for the fund balance.
- Ms. Little asked if Mr. Scanlan could provide a standard revenue document. He replied that if given at least a week's notice he could do that. Ms. Little asked Mr. Wurtz to provide that notice to Mr. Scanlan. Mr. Wurtz stated that he had been discussing the budget with Mr. Manning and he had been working with Ms. Penney on a report.
- Mr. Gray asked why the March numbers were so large and November's were so small. Ms. Little asked if there was any increased revenue now that the SOSKB application was in place. Mr. Wurtz replied that he could not say that he had witnessed that, but he believed that to be the case.

4. Preservation Grants Discussion:

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- Mr. Wurtz reported that the message Mr. Manning asked him to provide to the committee was that to date the program has spent \$200,000 on assessments and approximately \$700,000 in payouts/materials purchased. He reported that based on outstanding obligations, if each of the rest of the cities and towns request the full \$10,000 grant the exposure to the fund would be an additional \$700,000. After discussing it with Ms. Little Mr. Wurtz explained that the one question he had not asked Mr. Manning was whether there was a time limit on the program. How long the cities and towns had to request the funding?
- Mr. Wurtz was not aware of how many projects were still pending. Mr. Scanlan felt that if a deadline were suddenly put in place it might prompt all the cities and towns to rush to make requests to ensure they do not miss out and that would cause the fund to take a large hit, rather than a more reasonable \$150,000-200,000 per year if projects are not rushed.
- Mr. Gray stated that it was his recollection that the original intent was to put forth the \$1 million dollars the first year to get the program going and to reduce the amount in future years. Dr. Laflamme agreed and added that the committee had set a deadline that was extended by the committee and then cut off. The committee agreed that the deadline was for applications, not expenditure of the funds. Dr. Mevers offered that there should be relatively few towns still in the application phase of the program because the deadline had expired long ago.
- Ms. Little suggested that someone drill down in the applications and determine what the actual exposure to the fund is. Mr. Scanlan replied that it was a bad time to try and task Mr. Manning with that as he was assisting the Governor with contract negotiations and it was the middle of the budget process. He suggested that he, Mr. Wurtz and Mr. Manning could sit down and prepare a report to the committee by the next meeting.
- Mr. Gray suggested that the committee determine what they want their vision of the grant program to be for the future. Ms. Little replied that she could see a line item in the fund budget for records preservation in the future but she was unsure as to what the number should be.
- Mr. Wurtz agreed that a review of the applications was in order. Many of the applicants may have requested improvements to their vaults, but upon further assessment, found their buildings also needed improvements that would require local funding. With the current economy and tight budgets those types of expenditures would be out of reach for most and would make the grant request moot. He felt that all the items that needed to be ordered and purchased had already been purchased and distributed. Mr. Wurtz was not sure how Mr. Manning had arrived at the figure he provided. If it turned out to be just the number of outstanding clerks multiplied by \$10,000 Mr. Wurtz felt that figure was probably quite inflated.

5. MRI Short & Long Term Recommendations:

- Mr. Wurtz distributed a handout to committee members. He reported that the subcommittee had begun work on the RFP process and there was a brief timeline

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outlined in the report. He reminded the committee that NHVRIN had been placed into a “code freeze” for changes other than those legislatively mandated or issues (“show stoppers”) that prevented NHVRIN from operating properly.

- He reported that he was comfortable that there were at least eight vendors out there that had experience and success in this area and that we would be able to find someone capable when the time comes. He felt the idea of hiring a third party to maintain the application and one to do code review were worthy of discussion. Ms. Little asked if the code review duties would be included in the RFP. Mr. Wurtz felt they should be separate as the person(s) would be helpful to have during the selection process and they would be in essence checking the work of the selected vendor to ensure standards are upheld.
- Ms. Little felt it important that the committee determine in what stage of the process the third party be brought in. Ms. Tinsley suggested that they be brought in when there is an application that the selection committee is considering purchasing. Dr. Laflamme thought it might be helpful to have a fresh set of eyes involved in the selection process. Ms. Little added that the last long term recommendation from MRI was to assemble a team for direct NHVRIN support within Vital Records.
- Mr. Wurtz reported that MRI had suggested that the committee reduce or eliminate altogether the PC support. Ms. Little asked Mr. Wurtz his opinion on that suggestion. Mr. Wurtz deferred to Mr. Bentzler who explained that the support was included in the original planning for automation. The state would provide and maintain the equipment. Because of that maintenance it is relatively easy to keep them running effectively. Mr. Bentzler locks them down and has the ability to access the computers remotely if there is a problem and because they are maintained by him they are all basically the same computer.
- Mr. Bentzler questioned how we could stop maintaining them due to the fact that all the software licenses and hardware are property of the Secretary of State. They would all need to be removed in the event that state support was pulled. He explained that when he is contacted about issues by cities or towns that maintain their own equipment the issues are generally much more difficult to address because he has no idea how they are maintained and often the IT staff maintaining them do not understand state requirements.
- Mr. Scanlan suggested putting the maintaining of the PCs out to bid. Ms. Tinsley replied that the committee might be able to find a vendor to maintain the clerk’s computers for less than DOIT but the remoteness of some of the locations could greatly increase the cost. Mr. Bentzler suggested that the current \$120,000 per year to maintain the PCs could be elevated because DOIT has to maintain the servers as well. Mr. Wurtz suggested that if SOS had their own servers they could eliminate the expense of having DOIT maintaining them. Dr. Laflamme suggested hiring an internal Vital Records employee to support the PCs or purchase PCs for the towns outright. Mr. Gray added that the state could provide the computer only and require clerks to get their own software licenses. Ms. Little stated that this was clearly not a short term item and more investigation/discussion would be needed to examine the issues.

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- Mr. Wurtz reminded the committee that MRI suggested doing away with the Seneca Help desk. He explained that something could probably be set up internally that would be less expensive but the committee needed to determine if they would be losing some of the robustness of the support Mr. Bentzler and his co-workers provide. We currently average forty-five calls per month at approximately \$22 per call. All agreed that Seneca is basically just an answering service and if that is all that we need there are cheaper ones to be had. Mr. Wurtz explained that even though Seneca provides service 24 hours a day there is no one for them to send the messages to outside regular business hours. There was discussion about the fact that many of the calls to the Seneca line are for password resets. Mr. Wurtz reported that many of those password reset calls come into and are handled by the business office as well. Mr. Bentzler handles the technical issues and business questions are handled by Vital Records staff. Ms. Tinsley suggested that some of the issues handled by the Seneca help desk be written into the RFP, such as password resets and reminders. Mr. Wurtz and Mr. Bentzler agreed.
- Ms. Little asked where we were with the Business Analyst position recommended by MRI. Mr. Wurtz replied that it was decided that we would not pursue filling that position at this time. They planned to revisit that recommendation at a later date. Ms. Little asked if that decision was based on budgetary issues. Mr. Wurtz and Mr. Scanlan both responded in the affirmative.
- Mr. Wurtz reported that he felt that the working relationship between DOIT and the division had improved since MRI made the recommendation that both entities attempt to improve efforts to work together toward a common goal. Ms. Tinsley agreed with Mr. Wurtz that the working relationship was working out well. Dr. Laflamme added that when this recommendation was made he mentioned that he would like to see more cooperation between the division and DHHS. He stated that he was also very pleased with how things were going now.
- Mr. Wurtz reported that the final recommendation regarding additional security was being accomplished by Ms. Tinsley and her staff working to place the NHVRIN server behind the proxy. Ms. Tinsley explained that the proxy hardware had arrived and the environment was being set up by DOIT staff. Mr. Wurtz added that Vital Records staff had been testing the application behind the proxy for some time.

6. RFP Subcommittee Report:

- Mr. Wurtz reported that the subcommittee had met and established a timeline that he felt might be too aggressive. He stated that he was not going to even suggest that they try and stick with it. In his opinion it would be nearly impossible to come up with a completed RFP by the end of July. He reported that Ms. Tinsley would be meeting with Vital Records staff and reviewing the Statement of Work (SOW) using the RFP from the 2003 NHVRIN RFP. He wants to ensure that new SOW reflects the division's and end-user's needs. Mr. Wurtz explained that the subcommittee felt strongly that the staff that assisted the division with the last RFP be called upon again to assist us as they were very well thought of by staff and vendors alike. He reported that Ms. Tinsley informed him that Mr. Dave Perry would be on board to assist us as he had with the NHVRIN RFP.

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- Ms. Little felt that January of 2010 would be too soon to award a new contract. Dr. Laflamme suggested that the committee might want to consider whether they want a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a Request for Information (RFI). The committee discussed the difference between the two.

7. FY 2010 Budget Development Discussion:

- Members felt the process was pretty straightforward. Deciding how the grant program would be handled needed to be determined.
- Six month extension added to timeline.
- It was decided that Mr. Wurtz would provide a draft budget at the next meeting.

8. Same Sex Marriage Update:

- Mr. Wurtz reported that the news he heard on his way into work that morning was that the Governor would be signing the legislation with some modifications.
- Vital Records staff had been meeting with DOIT staff to see what our exposure would be in terms of the NHVRIN application and forms. The legislation goes into effect January 1, 2010. Mr. Scanlan explained that Vital Records would be expected to have forms available and the capability to provide licenses three months prior to the effective date, as they had with civil unions.
- Mr. Wurtz and Mr. Scanlan explained to the committee that an application process to convert a civil union to a marriage needed to be established in addition to preparing forms and the NHVRIN application for the changes. The civil union and same sex marriage capabilities will coexist during the transition period and Ms. Tinsley felt that might impact her staff.

9. DOIT Update:

- Ms. Tinsley reported that there were two additional DOIT employees cross training on the NHVRIN application which provides some backup to our single developer, who unfortunately is having to take some time to train them.
- Ms. Tinsley reported that Ms. Stewart has been working on the Physician Pronounce and Certify capabilities, but would have to be switching over to the Pandemic Flu project soon.
- Mr. Wurtz explained that the Pandemic Flu grant project was actually three different pieces. The data extract for the health surveillance, changing of the NHVRIN software to accommodate the pronouncing and certification by physicians, and the physician training tool that was being developed to improve the quality of the data.
- Ms. Tinsley explained that her staff would also be bringing up the STEVE server. It facilitates the distribution of information between states and they intended to also make use of that server for the Pandemic Flu project.

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- Ms. Tinsley reiterated that the proxy server environment was being built by DOIT staff.
- Mr. Wurtz informed the committee that he was a little disappointed in the CDC. Despite providing the grant for the Pandemic Flu project they are not yet prepared to accept the data they were asking for in return in the manner they required us to provide it. Until they are able to accept the data in the format they requested, Vital Records staff would be sending it manually.

10. New Business:

- Dr. Laflamme distributed a handout to committee members. He was requesting the committee fund a small data quality improvement project on post partum breast feeding. He requested \$4,230.00 to cover a Harvard graduate student's time interviewing participants to determine why there are discrepancies in reporting. Dr. Laflamme explained that the project and funding request would be dependent upon Institutional Review Board approval.
- Ms. Little stated that she did not think that health data was or had been the focus when the legislation to create the fund was crafted. Mr. Wurtz added that this was a whole new way of looking at funding from this committee. Dr. Laflamme felt that the Pandemic Flu work was precedent for considering this request because DOIT staff time was being used and they are compensated through the fund.
- Mr. Scanlan felt that if the committee granted this request it could set a precedent that is clearly a different focus than what this committee had historically taken and it could open the door to additional requests. He felt there might be a better source for funding, possibly through a grant program. Mr. Scanlan offered that if this research yielded a better way to collect the data the committee would probably be willing to consider changing the way it currently collects it.
- Dr. Laflamme stated that approximately 90% of the data in the Vital Records dataset is health data. Vital Records data would probably only reflect about 10% of it. Ms. Little pointed out that 90% of the revenue is generated by Vital Records and that she wished there was a way to generate additional revenue from all the health data end users. Mr. Wurtz added that this data is outside the scope of NHVRIN. He reminded committee members that Vital Records holds regular meetings with hospital birth clerks in relation to data quality. Dr. Laflamme pointed out that the focus of those meetings is on missing data rather than quality data.
- Mr. Gray stated that he was unsure he would support this type of study, but that he was all for data quality improvement. Ms. Clark asked if the committee was not being asked to "police" the hospital staff. Dr. Laflamme replied that public health works collaboratively with hospitals and all are interested in the same goal. The study is not an attempt at policing hospitals and no one "bringing down the hammer."
- Dr. Mevers stated that initially he supported the idea when he first heard about the project, but he was also concerned about the potential of opening the committee up to multiple future requests that might be for larger and larger amounts of money. Dr. Laflamme suggested that in the next budget the committee remove "preservation" from the title of the grant program and allow anyone apply. A

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specified amount could be set aside and when it ran out the program ends. That would limit the exposure of the fund. Dr. Mevers replied that the preservation grants are for existing records and this project would be improving the quality of new records.

- Mr. Wurtz stated that Dr. Laflamme was looking for a grant from the VRIF to improve data quality similar to the grant that Vital Records sought for the Pandemic Flu from the CDC to create the physician training module. Dr. Laflamme was under the impression that some DOIT staff time was underwritten by the fund for the project. Mr. Wurtz explained that the grant covered all expenses for this project.
- A member stated that she could see the resulting information gained from the project could be beneficial to Vital Records when it comes to training hospital users. Mr. Scanlan did not feel that in the current economic climate the committee wanted to open that door. Ms. Clark felt that if the grants Dr. Laflamme suggested resulted in clerks not receiving grants that might not go over well.
- Dr. Laflamme offered a motion that the committee vote to support providing the funding for the post partum breast feeding project subject to IRB approval. A committee member offered a second to the motion. The motion failed with only one member in favor of granting the funding request.

11. Next Scheduled Meeting:

- The next meeting of the Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee will be held August 21, 2009.

Ms. Little adjourned the meeting at 11:45a.m.