

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2025**

Recording of this meeting can be found linked [here](#). These meeting minutes show the time of specific agenda items. Fast forward the recording to the item of interest to hear detailed discussion.

The Board of Directors of Grossmont Healthcare District held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., via teleconference and in person. Members of the public were able to participate by telephone, Zoom, or in-person at the Grossmont Healthcare District Conference Center, located at 9001 Wakarusa Street, La Mesa, California 91942. For the purpose of these minutes, the listed items are reflected in the order set forth on the posted Agenda. In some cases, discussion of items may have taken place out of sequence during the meeting. Any mis-labeled items on the agenda have been corrected in these minutes.

Directors Present: Robert “Bob” Ayres, Board President
 Randy Lenac, Board Vice President (via Zoom)
 Virginia Hall, RN, Board Secretary
 Gloria A. Chadwick, RN, Board Treasurer
 Nadia Farjood, Board Member

Staff Present: Christian Wallis, Chief Executive Officer
 Tom Scaglione, Chief Administrative Officer
 Amy Abrams, Chief Community Health Officer
 Jeffrey Scott, General Counsel
 Holland Kessinger, Head Librarian
 Harman Sarky, Compliance Coordinator
 Ari Rojas, Community Health Program Specialist

Members of the Public Present:

Kelvin Barrios	Jesse Garcia	Regina Beasley
Fatima Ghoulam	Joe Araiza	Leila Khader
Lorenzo Rodriguez	Joni Vargas	Mohammad Rahimi
Cori Schumacher	Brianna Coston	Stephanie Cook
Ben Clay	Nikki Clay	Victor Diaz
Christopher Awen	Patricia Dillard	Andi McNew
Jorge Viramontes	Kelsey Wadman Hunt	April Bolduc
Jack Shu	Jared (last name not given)	Laura Fink

Melinda Vasquez	Raul Campillo	David Roraff (Zoom)
Tyra Walker, Esq. (Zoom)	Courtney Baltiyskyy (Zoom)	Chelsea Mutual (Zoom)
Julie Roland (Zoom)	Gail Friedt (Zoom)	Councilwoman Lauren Cazares (Zoom)
Miriam Rafferty	Stephanie (last name unknown)(Zoom)	

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by President Ayres. Director Ayres noted that Director Randy Lenac is participating remotely via Zoom at 160 E. Soderberg Road, Allyn, Washington 98254, pursuant to Government Code 54953(b)(2).

B. Pledge of Allegiance *(00:13:17)*

Before Director Ayres led the pledge, he asked for a moment of silence for the victims of the recent tragedy that took place in New Orleans.

C. Approval of Agenda *(00:14:15)*

Director Farjood inquired as to status of the December 6, 2024 minutes and informed those in attendance that Board meeting recordings can always be found on the typed minutes, hyperlinked at the top. The December 6, 2024 meeting minutes will be placed on the January 16, 2025 Board agenda. Director Farjood also objected to the setting of this meeting, citing Director Ayres' comment that "it would be a bad use of taxpayer dollars," when many of the agenda items could have been addressed on the January 16, 2025 Board agenda, causing her to miss work unnecessarily. Director Farjood shared Director Ayres' written comment to her that this January 7, 2025 meeting needed to urgently move forward, due to "a safety issue" (relative to agenda item D(4)) being "identified near the Hubble Fountain [that] needs attention." Director Ayres replied that the rescheduling of the January 7, 2025 Board meeting became necessary, due to a health and safety issue with the railings, and in order to discuss the Board meeting times, due to its importance, rather than waiting for the Policies & Procedures Committee (which did not occur until late January) or the third Thursday Board meeting (which did not occur until January 16, 2025). However, Director Farjood is unaware of any incident taking place in the entire District existence, with no handrails being in existence on the steps near the Hubble Fountain in over 22 years. Since this meeting was not necessary, Director Farjood stated that she will be foregoing her stipend for this January 7, 2025 meeting (\$134), while preserving it for the taxpayers, and asked of her fellow Directors do the same.

Motion was made by Director Chadwick, seconded by Director Hall, and carried (4-0), to adopt the agenda. *(Director Farjood abstained.)*

D. Public Comment *(00:17:54)*

Janessa Goldbeck, Bonnie Price, Dean Lee, Erica Jones, Jordan Ashwood, Lidia Martinez, Marilyn Daniels, and Domingo Luyo all emailed the District to provide public comment. The emails were generally the same and requested that the Board change the meeting time from 9 AM to 6 PM because hundreds of thousands of working people are being excluded, that the survey shows a concerted effort to pretend that 6 PM meetings are not doable, that the 5 PM pilot program was not an honest attempt to engage the public, and that the practice of 9 AM meetings is outdated and excludes working families and young people from engaging with their healthcare district.

Additionally, Kelvin Barrios, Jesse Garcia, Regina Beasley, Fatima Ghoulam, Joe Araiza, Leila Khader, Lorenzo Rodriguez, Joni Vargas, Mohammad Rahimi, Cori Schumacher, Brianna Coston, Stephanie Cook, Ben Clay, Nikki Clay, Victor Diaz, Christopher Awen, Patricia Dillard, Andi McNew, Jorge Viramontes, Kelsey Wadman Hunt, April Bolduc, Jack Shu, Jared (last name not given), Laura Fink, Melinda Vasquez, and Raul Campillo attended the Board meeting in person to give public comment regarding agenda item F(2). All comments expressed strong support for changing the District Board meeting time from 9 AM to 6 PM, emphasizing the need for greater accessibility for working families and young professionals. Many criticized the current schedule, labeling it as outdated and exclusionary, and underscored the importance of accommodating diverse schedules to better reflect the community's needs. Attendees highlighted that prioritizing community engagement over personal convenience is essential, arguing that a later meeting time would likely increase participation and foster a more representative decision-making process. This shift aims to enhance inclusivity and ensure that a wider range of voices is heard within the Board's discussions and decisions. The public demanded that the Board take accountability, citing discriminatory and unprofessional behavior, and adapt its practices to promote accessibility and active involvement from all segments of the community.

David Roraff, Tyra Walker, Esq., Courtney Baltiyskyy, Chelsea Mutual, Julie Roland, Gail Friedt, and Councilwoman Lauren Cazares, all appeared virtually (via Zoom) and echoed the in-person public comments relative to Board meeting times (agenda item F(2)).

The public also noted the outdated Board member photos contained within the auditorium lobby and the absence of Board member contact information on the District website.

Director Ayres thanked everyone for their attendance, commitment to the District, and their observations and opinions.

E. Consent Action Items

There were none.

F. Reports/Presentations/Discussion/Possible Action Items

1. Discussion of Board Survey Relating to the Date and Time of District Board Meetings – Director Ayres *(01:40:45)*

Director Hall’s comments reflected a strong commitment to the accomplishments and transparency of the District. By emphasizing the recent recognition as the Best Healthcare District in California for 2023, she highlighted the commendable efforts made by the District in serving the community. Her defense of the Board's long-standing practice of holding meetings in the morning suggests a belief in the effectiveness of their current schedule, and her mention of the lack of public participation during the 5 PM pilot period last year, indicated that the earlier time did not significantly hinder community engagement. Additionally, referencing the meeting times of other local government agencies served to contextualize the District's practices within a broader framework, suggesting that morning meetings are a common standard among similar organizations. Lastly, Director Hall's discussion of the District's grants and scholarships reinforces its role in supporting community welfare, countering the negative perceptions that may have emerged during public comment. Overall, her statements aimed to advocate for the District's efforts and promote a positive narrative around its impact and operations.

Director Lenac addressed recent comments from a San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) official who referred to the District as the “gold standard” of healthcare districts. He expressed confusion regarding the negative sentiments surrounding the public comments. In his response, Director Lenac emphasized the District’s mission, which focuses on supporting Grossmont Hospital and local community health providers, asserting that they have made significant progress in these areas. He also pointed out that the majority of attendees at District Board meetings are typically Grossmont Hospital staff, community health providers, and District personnel. Given this audience, Director Lenac indicated a preference for maintaining the current Board meeting schedule at 9 AM, suggesting that it accommodates the needs of those who regularly participate.

Director Farjood highlighted the necessity of following the Brown Act during the meeting, especially surrounding agenda item F(1). She also expressed concern that the original survey may have violated this law by initiating discussions that were not supposed to be officially listed. By seeking only the availability of Board members for the meeting, rather than listing preferences, she promoted a more compliant method. Her inquiries aimed to collect individual opinions while maintaining transparency and collaboration, thus adhering to open meeting regulations.

Director Farjood highlighted discrepancies between Board members' survey responses and their actual availability, noting that none of them expressed conflict with a 6 PM meeting, despite their flexible schedules or retirement status. She suggested that the survey results may not accurately reflect their true availability, potentially due to untruthfulness or a lack of consideration in their responses. Director Farjood continued to interview the Board regarding the survey.

Director Lenac argued against scheduling based solely on individual availability, suggesting it overlooked the need for effective District operations. He recommended 9 AM as the ideal time to gather key stakeholders—termed “principal players”—for impactful discussions essential to the District's mission. When questioned by Director Farjood, Director Lenac identified these principal players as primarily consisting of members from Grossmont Hospital and local community health providers, emphasizing their importance in decision-making. Despite some controversy, Lenac maintained his position on prioritizing the schedule to accommodate these crucial participants, illustrating the complexities involved in managing District business. Director Farjood reminded attendees that Grossmont Hospital is owned by the public and that putting Grossmont Hospital schedules and interests above the constituents' is backwards – that the constituents and public elected the Board, not Grossmont Hospital. In contrast, Director Lenac clarified the need to facilitate communication with Grossmont Hospital and was expressing uncertainty about its evening availability, not prioritizing its needs.

Director Farjood expressed concerns about the 5 PM pilot program's effectiveness, noting it shared the same challenges as a 9 AM meeting, as many potential attendees are still at work. She emphasized the need for better scheduling to accommodate community members. Furthermore, she highlighted a significant gap in the District's social media outreach, indicating that many constituents are unaware of the Grossmont Healthcare District and its initiatives. This lack of awareness suggests a need for improved communication and marketing strategies to enhance participation.

Director Hall indicated that while a 6 PM meeting time is convenient for her, she believes that holding meetings in the morning—ideally between 9 AM and 2 PM—would be more effective. She noted that earlier meetings provide clearer perspectives for the Board and help build trust among constituents who rely on the Board to make sound decisions. Director Hall also pointed out that evening traffic can be a barrier for many attendees. When discussing the increased interest in the District compared to last year, Director Farjood suggested that a lack of awareness was the primary reason for the minimal engagement during the pilot program. She emphasized that since informing the community about the District, there has been a notable shift, leading to greater investment and involvement from constituents.

Director Chadwick expressed her belief that the public tends to attend meetings when they feel it is important, trusting that the Board is doing its job well in other instances. She mentioned that the hours indicated in her survey reflect her preferences, but she is willing to meet according to the Board's majority decision. On the other hand, Director Farjood emphasized the importance of accommodating the public's availability and suggested that meetings should be scheduled at times that allow for greater public participation. After some back-and-forth, Director Chadwick confirmed that she could make herself available for meetings at 6 PM.

Director Ayres stated that he attempts to balance his personal and professional responsibilities while considering the needs of his constituents and regular meeting attendees. He prioritizes his family first, followed by his constituents, demonstrating his commitment to both. Although current attendees prefer a 9 AM meeting time, he remains open to the possibility of a 6 PM option if it accommodates everyone involved.

Director Farjood inquired as to the need of having two District Board meetings a month, when sister districts have one. Moving to one meeting at 6 PM would save taxpayer dollars, improve efficiency, lower the amount of time staff spends on preparation, and reduce the risks associated with night driving for all involved. Director Farjood formally asked that the Board consider a 6 PM Board meeting time, once a month.

Director Chadwick proceeded to explain how night driving can prove difficult, especially for older adults and women driving alone; and that as a healthcare district, the Board's responsibility is to keep participants safe. Discussion and clarification then ensued regarding the potential to have a shuttle provide services during an evening meeting.

It appears that the public comments at the Board meeting were centered around several key issues and concerns.

Firstly, the speakers emphasized that as elected officials, the Directors should consider the public's needs and conveniences over their own personal preferences. This sets a tone of accountability and service-oriented leadership.

The public had several criticisms of the recent Board meeting time survey. They pointed out that the original instructions, which asked Directors to provide their "availability," led to a skewed response format that excluded Director Farjood, which may be due to systemic biases related to racism and sexism. The public suggested a redistribution of the survey to better capture the full range of Director availability.

A speaker suggested that the Board consider hosting meetings at various times, specifically proposing that items of public interest be scheduled at 6 PM while keeping other meetings during the daytime.

Comments stated that traffic is not a significant concern at 6 PM, implying that this could be a more accessible time for the public, which proposal aims to increase accessibility and representation in the Board's decision-making processes.

The public also expressed disappointment with the tone and body language of the Board members and General Counsel, suggesting that their demeanor may have come across as dismissive and unwilling to listen to the community's concerns.

Lastly, the public's overall impression was that the Board is set on their current meeting schedule (9 AM) and is unwilling to change, despite the community's requests and needs. The perception is that the Board is not prioritizing the public's interests or concerns, leading to feelings of frustration and marginalization.

2. Consideration of Resolution Changing the Date and Time of Regular Board Meetings – Director Ayres *(02:55:30)*

Motion was made by Director Farjood to change the Grossmont Healthcare District regular Board meeting schedule from the first Tuesday and third Thursday at 9 AM to one meeting on the third Thursday of the month at 6 PM. With the absence of a second, the motion was rejected.

Director Farjood highlighted significant concern regarding accessibility and democracy within the Board's operations. By emphasizing that long-standing practices should not automatically be deemed appropriate, she advocates for a more responsive approach to public engagement. Her assertion that no Board member had a scheduling conflict at 6 PM suggests a disconnect between the Board's decisions and the needs of the community they serve.

In sharing her motivations for running for office, Director Farjood reinforced her commitment to ensuring that all voices are heard and represented. She explicitly condemns the reactions to her request as unacceptable, framing them as a form of bullying that undermines the democratic process. She expressed concern about transparency signaling a broader issue—whether the mechanisms in place truly facilitate public participation or merely maintain the status quo.

Ultimately, Director Farjood called for a reevaluation of the Board's practices to foster a more inclusive environment, asserting that the legitimacy of a democratic institution rests on its ability to accommodate and welcome all constituents. Her stance urges a fundamental shift towards transparency and public access, underscoring the importance of listening to the electorate's needs and preferences.

3. Consideration of 2025 District Holidays – CEO Wallis *(03:02:45)*

The draft 2025 District Holiday schedule was discussed, which was prepared by staff in accordance with standard California state holidays. The draft holiday schedule also listed 4 hours on Christmas Eve and 4 hours on New Years Eve, per last year’s Board approval. Director Farjood explained that the District should also observe the Juneteenth National Independence Day (Thursday, June 19, 2025) in order to honor the historical significance of it in order to demonstrate a commitment to equity, which aligns with District objectives and to foster inclusivity with the community it serves.

Motion was made by Director Farjood, seconded by Director Chadwick, and carried (5-0), to approve the 2025 District Holiday schedule, with the inclusion of the Juneteenth National Independence Day holiday.

4. Facilities Committee – Director Hall *(03:04:35)*

a) Proposed Handrails

District staff and the Facilities Committee recommend the installation of handrails around the Hubble fountain steps as a safety measure, due to staff witnessing a recent patron having difficulty with the steps. Despite the slight aesthetic change, installing the handrails would help ensure the public’s safety. A slight design change to round off the ends of the handrails was discussed.

Motion was made by Director Hall, seconded by Director Ayres, and carried (5-0), to approve moving forward with obtaining price quotes for the Hubble fountain stair handrails, with a curved-end design.

Staff is to obtain quotes for installing the handrails, although staff does state there is currently enough funds within the budget to cover. Mr. Sarky, Compliance Coordinator, is to ensure the new handrail design meets ADA standards and proceed with installation after obtaining cost estimates.

5. Board and CEO Comments *(03:09:10)*

Director Farjood acknowledged the recent positive coverage of the District's Health and Wellness Library in the San Diego Union Tribune and thanked all involved District staff for their hard work.

Director Farjood informed the public of the various programming the District regularly holds, which is made available on the District website.

Director Farjood shared that she recently attended the “It’s a Wonderful Wednesday” District event, held in the Auditorium and thanked the involved District staff.

Director Farjood expressed her concerns regarding the current committee structure, specifically the existence of nine committees. She argued that this is excessive and imposes unnecessary financial burdens on taxpayers, as it does not align with the District's operational needs. To illustrate her point, she compared the District to the City of San Diego, which manages a much larger budget of \$5 billion, serves a population of 1.4 million, and operates with the same number of committees—nine—suggesting that the District's workload does not warrant such a large committee structure.

Moreover, Director Farjood pointed out that other local healthcare districts manage effectively with fewer committees. She emphasized that maintaining too many committee meetings can overextend staff resources, ultimately detracting from their ability to deliver direct services to the community. Consequently, she urged the Board to reevaluate the necessity and quantity of the District's committees, advocating for streamlining processes to ultimately save taxpayer dollars while ensuring efficient governance.

G. Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting(s):

1. Thursday, January 16, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
2. Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

H. Adjournment

There being no further business on **motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously carried, the Board adjourned at 12:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Robert “Bob” Ayres, President, Board of Directors

ATTEST:

Virginia Hall, RN, Secretary, Board of Directors