

- CALL TO ORDER** Northern Inyo Healthcare District (NIHD) Board Chair Best-Baker called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
- PRESENT** Melissa Best-Baker, Chair
David Lent, Vice-Chair
Maggie Egan, Secretary
Laura Smith, Treasurer
Jean Turner, Member at Large
- Christian Wallis, Chief Executive Officer
Allison Partridge, Chief Operations Officer / Chief Nursing Officer
Alison Murray, Chief Human Resources Officer, Chief Business Development Officer
Adam Hawkins, Chief Medical Officer
Andrea Mossman, Chief Financial Officer
Sam Jeppsen, Chief of Staff
- TELECONFERENCING** Notice has been posted, and a quorum participated from locations within the jurisdiction.
- PUBLIC COMMENT** Chair Best-Baker reported that at this time, audience members may speak on any items not on the agenda that are within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- Public Comment:** None
- ADD AGENDA ITEM** Staff requested to add an action item to the agenda under the CEO Report for approval of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Northern Inyo Healthcare District and Bishop Unified School District. It was explained that the item met the criteria for addition due to urgency, as grant funding associated with the Panther Clinic project must be obligated by June 30 and the need arose after agenda posting.
- Public Comment:** None
- Board Discussion:**
Board members discussed whether the item met statutory requirements for adding to the agenda and confirmed the urgency related to expiring funding. There was general agreement that the timing constraints justified adding the item.
- Motion by** Turner to add the MOU Expansion of School Based Health Care Clinics to the agenda
2nd: Lent
Pass: 5-0
- CONSENT AGENDA** The following items were pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion:
March 18, 2026 minutes
Code Gray

Public Comment: None

Motion by Lent to approve the consent agenda minus the items pulled for discussion.

2nd: Egan

Pass: 5-0

March 18, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Board Discussion: Board members discussed revisions to the March 18 minutes, specifically related to a prior agenda item concerning a constituent complaint. A board member noted that their comment directing such concerns to the CEO for proper handling through established processes was not reflected in the minutes and should be added.

Motion by Lent to approve the March 18, 2026 meeting minutes with changes

2nd: Turner

Pass: 5-0

Code Gray Policy

Board Discussion:

Board members identified specific areas of the policy requiring clarification. Under the response procedures (noted in the packet, including section 4d), members questioned whether the language clearly allows staff to call 911 at any point during an escalating situation, rather than implying it is only used after internal response efforts.

Members also noted inconsistent terminology in the policy, including references to both “hospital building” and “hospital premises,” and requested that the language be standardized. Additionally, in the policy introduction (item 1), concern was raised regarding the phrase “minimizing the number of potential harm and injuries,” with clarification requested on whether this refers to the number of individuals affected or should be revised to simply “minimize potential harm and injuries.”

Staff agreed to revise the policy language for clarity and consistency and return the item for future board review.

CONSIDERATION OF
CREDENTIAL ACTIONS
RECOMMENDED BY THE
MEDICAL EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE

Chief of Staff Jeppsen provided a brief overview of the appointments, including new providers joining the medical staff and tele-neurology coverage.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion: None

Motion by Smith to approve credentialing actions recommended by the Medical Executive Committee

2nd: Lent

Pass: 5-0

CEO REPORT

HPSA Re-designation

CEO Wallis presented an update on the Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) re-designation, explaining that the district had previously lost its designation and that it is important for access to grants, loans, and certain policy advantages. He reported that, through proactive work completed with a consultant prior to the issue becoming widespread, the district successfully obtained re-designation.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion: None

City Council and Board of Supervisors Updates in May

CEO Wallis informed the board that he would be presenting quarterly updates to both the City Council and the Board of Supervisors in May, noting that the same presentation would be delivered to both groups to ensure consistent communication.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion: None

Wipfli Lean Event

CEO Wallis provided an update on the upcoming Wipfli-led Lean event, explaining that it is part of the organization's growth strategy and will use data from the recent market analysis to inform facility and service planning. He noted that the session will involve leadership, providers, and staff participating in a multi-day, on-site working session to develop input for the master facility plan, including outpatient clinic planning and space utilization.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion: Board members commented on the progress being made and the value of breaking down planning efforts into manageable phases, noting appreciation for the structured approach to moving projects forward.

ADDED ITEM

MOU – NIHD and Bishop Unified School District

CEO Wallis presented the memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand school-based health clinic services in partnership with Bishop Unified School District and Inyo County Office of Education. He explained that the project includes establishing services at Palisades and expanding access to additional student populations. The MOU allows the district to purchase necessary equipment, with reimbursement through grant funding that must be obligated by June 30, and supports implementation of the Panther Clinic for the upcoming school year.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members discussed the scope of the expansion, including service delivery to multiple school sites and the opportunity to increase access to care for students across the district. Questions were raised regarding the duration and sustainability of grant funding, including whether future funding would be available beyond the initial allocation. Discussion also included potential additional funding sources, and broader benefits of school-based clinics, including improved access, preventive care, and behavioral health support for students.

Motion by Lent to approve the MOU

2nd: Egan

Pass: 5-0

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Capital Spending Update

CFO Mossman presented an update on capital spending, noting that the board previously approved up to \$2 million for capital projects. She reported that approximately \$843,000 has been spent year-to-date, with about \$1.1 million remaining, and identified approximately \$354,000 in savings from projects completed in-house or reclassified. She explained that these funds, along with contingency funds, are planned to be reallocated toward a medical air compressor replacement project expected to exceed original estimates, with some expenditures potentially carrying over into the next fiscal year depending on delivery and invoicing timelines. CEO Wallis explained that capital spending is being managed within the approved total budget, with flexibility to shift funds between projects as needs arise, and noted that future updates will be provided quarterly for transparency.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members made brief comments acknowledging progress on capital projects and supported the approach of providing more frequent updates.

GO Bond Update

Consultant Tom presented preliminary “discovery” findings, explaining that bond repayment is based on assessed property values and tax rates. He noted that the 2005 bond was structured with increases below anticipated growth in assessed values, while the 2009 bond showed significantly higher escalation, which could require increasing tax rates. He reported that in recent years, tax revenue has not consistently covered debt service, resulting in an estimated cumulative deficit of about \$2 million through 2025.

He also identified discrepancies in debt service schedules, noting that while some documents show regular principal payments, others indicate that principal

may be deferred until a large payment in 2035. He stated that this information is still being verified as part of the ongoing analysis.

Rate and Recovery Analysis

Consultant Tom presented a follow-up analysis focused on GO bond tax rate setting and recovery, stating that the goal is to “stop digging” and establish a stable, consistent rate going forward. He explained that the district may be carrying an estimated deficit of approximately \$1 million and that future rate setting should account for recovering any prior deficiencies.

He reviewed current rate fluctuations and emphasized the objective of moving toward a single, stable tax rate rather than annual increases and decreases. He presented preliminary rate scenarios, including maintaining the current rate, decreasing the rate, or increasing the rate to rebuild reserves more quickly, noting that each option has trade-offs between financial stability and taxpayer impact.

He also outlined key assumptions used in the rate model, including projected assessed value growth, timing of tax revenue receipts, and interest earnings on reserves. He noted that the analysis is preliminary and will be refined as additional information becomes available, with the intent of bringing back a recommended rate for board consideration.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members asked about the timeline for decision-making, and CEO Wallis explained that rate-setting decisions will need to occur in June or July to meet county deadlines, with a resolution brought back to the board and submitted to the county for implementation. He noted that key decisions will include setting a long-term rate through 2038 and determining whether to discontinue the Gann limit and potentially recover prior uncollected revenue.

Board members discussed the importance of public communication, including the potential need for outreach or public hearings, and emphasized providing clear, understandable information to the community. There was also discussion acknowledging the complexity of the issue, the amount of analysis completed, and appreciation for the work done to better understand the district’s financial position.

Additional discussion clarified that previously uncollected revenue was not taken from taxpayers but rather not levied, and that future decisions will primarily impact taxpayers. Board members emphasized the importance of balancing financial responsibility with minimizing impact to the community as options are considered.

ESEP Contract

CEO Wallis presented the ESEP (Eastern Sierra Emergency Physicians) contract, noting the district has been engaged with ESEP since 2010 with

renewals every three years. He explained that the contract had previously been below fair market value due to the hospital's financial position, but has now been adjusted to approximately 65% of fair market value. He also described contract components including emergency department, hospitalist services, and clinic support, noting that medically assisted treatment services may be revised depending on provider availability.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members discussed the quality of care provided by ESEP, sharing positive feedback from the community regarding emergency department services and patient experience. There was also brief discussion confirming the contract had been reviewed by legal counsel and was nearing finalization, with minor revisions expected.

Motion by Egan to approve the ESEP contract and authorize CEO Wallis to sign with minor revisions

2nd: Turner

Pass: 5-0

Financial and Statistical Report

CFO Mossman presented the financial and statistical report, noting a strong start to 2026 with February performance significantly exceeding budget, reporting approximately \$6.3 million in income compared to a budgeted loss.

She attributed this to higher inpatient and orthopedic volumes, increased reimbursement rates, and pricing adjustments implemented in December. She also reported receipt of federal payroll tax refunds related to COVID-era employee retention, totaling over \$8 million across two payments, contributing to improved financial performance.

She noted improvements in accounts receivable, reduced bad debt, and progress toward meeting bond-related financial metrics, including debt service coverage and days cash on hand. While income has improved, she explained that cash has not yet fully reflected these gains due to timing of payments but is expected to improve as additional funds are received.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members expressed appreciation for the clarity of the report, particularly the explanation of days cash on hand and how it should be interpreted. Members noted the positive financial performance and improvements compared to prior reports, with comments highlighting the significance of the results. There was also brief discussion confirming the receipt of interest associated with the IRS refunds.

Motion by Smith to accept the Financial and Statistical Report

2nd: Lent
Pass: 5-0

GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE

Board Self-Assessment Action Plan

Board Clerk Reed presented the board self-assessment action plan, noting that items identified through the board's prior self-assessment have been tracked and completed, and the checklist was brought forward for final review and closure.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members discussed the completed action plan and acknowledged the progress made over several months, noting the value of having a structured tool to track and ensure follow-through on identified items. There was also brief clarification on a prior item related to discussions about services in Northern Mono County.

Motion by Lent to approve the Board Self-Assessment Action plan as complete
2nd: Turner
Pass: 5-0

Joint Board Meeting Update

CEO Wallis provided an update on the upcoming joint board meeting scheduled for May 4 at 3:30 p.m. in Mammoth, noting that planning is ongoing and a draft agenda is being developed to guide the discussion.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members reiterated the importance of the upcoming joint meeting and the value of coming together to strengthen collaboration and communication between organizations.

Advocacy Update

Legislative Affairs Lobbyist

CEO Wallis presented information regarding potential engagement of a legislative affairs lobbyist, outlining services including monitoring approximately 20–30 relevant bills annually, prioritizing key legislation, and providing ongoing analysis, reporting, and advocacy support. He explained that this work could require approximately 20–30% of his time if managed internally and described how a lobbyist would provide expertise, relationships, and insight into the legislative process beyond what is publicly available.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members engaged in extensive discussion regarding the value and cost of hiring a lobbyist. Some members expressed concern about the financial impact,

emphasizing the need to prioritize cost containment and questioning whether the expense was justified given current financial conditions. Others highlighted the importance of proactive legislative engagement, noting risks of missing funding opportunities, failing to respond to regulatory changes, and lacking visibility into future policy impacts that could affect the district.

Discussion also included consideration of CEO time allocation, with concern that managing legislative work internally could detract from operational priorities. Members discussed potential alternatives, including relying on existing associations, as well as the possibility of a pilot program to evaluate effectiveness. There was general recognition of the complexity of the legislative environment and the importance of maintaining awareness and influence, particularly for rural healthcare organizations.

Motion by Lent to approve a pilot of the Legislative Affairs Lobbyist
2nd: Egan
Pass: 4-1
Oppose: Smith

AB 2311 – Support Association of California Healthcare District

CEO Wallis presented AB 2311, explaining that the legislation would allow healthcare districts greater flexibility in employing physicians by modifying existing restrictions under California law. He noted that while the bill does not directly impact Northern Inyo Healthcare District at this time, it is relevant to other districts and was supported in alignment with the Association of California Healthcare Districts and partner organizations.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members acknowledged the item and the rationale for supporting the legislation in coordination with partner organizations.

Motion by Egan
2nd: Turner
Pass: 5-0

AB 2665 - Support Tangipa

CEO Wallis presented AB 2665, legislation introduced by Assemblymember Tangipa that includes proposed funding for rural critical access hospitals, including approximately \$2.5 million for Northern Inyo Healthcare District. He noted that due to timing constraints, a letter of support was submitted on April 7 with approval from the Governance Committee Chair.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion:

Board members acknowledged the item and the need to act quickly on legislative opportunities with short deadlines, supporting bringing the item forward for formal ratification.

Motion by Egan

2nd: Smith

Pass: 5-0

Mission and Vision

CEO Wallis presented revised mission and vision statements developed by Jacob Green, incorporating approximately 50 edits based on board feedback from the prior special meeting. He noted that the revisions had been reviewed by the Governance Committee and were being brought forward for formal adoption.

Public Comment: None

Board Discussion: None

Motion by Turner to approve the Mission and Vision

2nd: Lent

Pass: 5-0

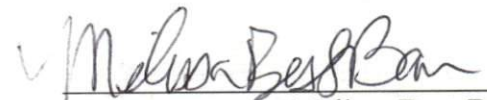
GENERAL INFORMATION

Board members shared positive feedback on employee engagement activities, including attendance at employee birthday celebrations and upcoming hospital week events, noting the importance of staff recognition and morale. A request was made to include employee recognition, such as employee of the month, as a regular informational item for the board.

Additional comments included appreciation for staff follow-up on a community member's care experience and encouragement to continue outreach efforts to support patient confidence.


ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment at 7:25 pm.



Melissa Best-Baker
Northern Inyo Healthcare District
Chair

Attest:



Maggie Egan
Northern Inyo Healthcare District
Secretary