

DRAFT MINUTES

**Massachusetts Health Information Technology Council
Meeting
March 11, 2009
8:45 – 9:15 am**

**Matta Conference Room
One Ashburton Place
Boston, Massachusetts**

AGENDA ITEMS

Before the meeting began, Mr. Szabo distributed copies of a New York Times article.

Secretary Bigby explained that our regularly scheduled meeting was cancelled due to a budget hearing at 10:00 am. However this brief meeting was scheduled because the council should be updated on the progress of the plan and approve our direction moving forward. There needs to be a solid plan in an effort to secure federal stimulus funds. She also mentioned that although Dr. Bell would have desired to call into the meeting, she will be unable to due to her being “On the podium” in Washington, DC.

I. Discussion of letter from MAeHC Board

In the packet sent to council members prior to this meeting, was a letter addressed to Secretary Bigby from the Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative. (A copy of which is attached and incorporated by reference)

Secretary Bigby formally acknowledged receipt of the letter, and understands the concern about the particular organization. She stated that the basic response is that we can not give a \$2M grant due to the council’s goal to be transparent. There must be an open process, with thoughtful deliberation by the council, in regards to the application process for entities wishing to apply for a grant. She then referenced a draft of a response letter that was also sent to the council members prior to the meeting. (A copy of which is attached and incorporated by reference)

Mr. Szabo stated that he doesn’t wish to change the bottom line, but pointed out that the letter comes from a group of stakeholders. He suggested that it may be better to adjust our response slightly to mention that we are trying to move the process ahead as quickly as possible. This should insure that we do not to discourage or give an appearance that we will not do anything until next year.

Ms. Fenichel, mentioned that in an effort to keep transparent, because she currently sits on the board of MAeHC, she will withhold comment.

Secretary Bigby went on to explain that she recently had a meeting with the Senate President. They discussed the need for the Federal Stimulus bill to be integrated into this plan. The Senate President was on board with this.

II. Stakeholder meetings

Secretary Bigby then moved to the next agenda item. In today’s meeting materials council members also received “MeHI Planning Process Outline to target federal stimulus funding”. (A copy of which is attached and incorporated by reference)

Secretary Bigby explained that since we had to move forward, we want to be sure our stakeholders are aware of how the federal dollars change the landscape of what we are doing and

need to be doing in Massachusetts. We need to get in a dialogue with them to get their input. The council should hold stakeholders meetings with a discussion of how federal dollars need to be incorporated into a statewide plan for eHealth. We need to outline to the public how the federal dollars will help frame the plan and funding. Secretary Bigby highlighted bullets on page two that establish things we want to achieve and what we are thinking about as we put a plan in place. There may be additional stakeholders that the council may wish to add to the list, and components we may need to add to the plan.

Mr. Adams commented that he thought this outline captured all the major points, and Mr. Dehner asked if these stakeholder meetings would be a public forum. The Secretary said they would be and Mr. Adams commented that the public meetings were a good idea and that they might also wish to ask all parties (stakeholders) to submit in writing their thoughts in advance that could be shared. The Secretary commented that in retrospect looking at the parties in the document the public health community need to be a participant. Ms. Fenichel asked if the meetings would be community based or would they be individual. All commented they would not be individual. Ms. Fenichel agreed that individual meetings would be rough.

Mr. Dehner mentioned that it might be a benefit to get on paper the questions we are trying to answer. If we do this, then communities or groups might naturally fall into categories. Public health, consumer, and specific questions about what the state of the council or the institute should do to access pots of federal money. Mr. Dehner continued, if for nothing else, it might at least assist in our planning. He also commented that if it were possible, perhaps we could hold “President Obama” style town hall forums that are issue specific. This type of forum might drive who would be on the invitation list. Ms Adair commented that Massachusetts Health Information Management Association (MHIMA) for privacy and security should be included as a stakeholder.

Dr. Koh mentioned it might be good to get a tentative FAQ and “what does this mean for me”? Mr. Dehner pointed out that there are 2 key elements - #1, conveying information to public, how we think the process is about to unfold, and #2 ask for specific input from whoever wants to give it.

The Secretary asked if anyone had comments about the proposed process going forward. Ms. Fenichel commented about the logistics, etc. and that we will have to decide relatively quickly. The Secretary agreed and added that MTC will provide support in regards to choosing venues, invitation lists, etc. Mr. Szabo mentioned that Massachusetts Medical Society could be approached regarding space for the hearings, and maybe a meeting should be held in N. Adams.

Secretary Bigby pointed out that the issues will vary in different areas. Mr. Szabo added that we need to inform someone from technology leadership about the meetings. Secretary Bigby reminded the council that Secretary Bialecki offered to convene industry leaders. Mr. Szabo asked if there was the technology bandwidth to post documents online.

Ms. Fenichel asked a question pertaining to the 2nd bullet on the plan handout. There should be a separate bullet stating “education needs of the consumer.” This should be a priority. Mr. Jackson explained that the EOHED is making good progress in forming a vendor list.

Ms. Fenichel asked if there would be a discussion regarding timelines. Secretary Bigby answered that as a council we are currently putting together a document with a timeline of deliverables. She reiterated that in her conversation with the Senate President, they spoke about dates that were originally laid out in legislation. These dates might need to change due to federal dollars. The Senate President seemed to understand.

Secretary Bigby then encouraged council members that as they look over the bulleted list, they should inform the staff of additional questions. She then asked Mr. Adams for his input. He answered that as we have a dialogue with stakeholders, we immediately need to shape a plan. There could be substantial dollars ready quickly and that puts the council on a fast time line to reshape the plan.

Secretary Bigby expressed that there are things we know will need to be in the plan due to chapter 305 and in the federal bill, even before we get feedback. We will need a parallel process.

Mr. Dehner pointed out that we will need to identify the goals of chapter 305. Find what does and does not line up with the federal process. Then determine if we need to fill that void for the community that is going to access this money and be sure it is heading in the direction of the goals of chapter 305.

He then added that we should put some thought into the Federal actors here, to determine if we can discern who is going to be in the Secretary's office in HHS, then determine the best way to access personnel and get information to and from HHS. We need to be situated to maybe talk to somebody, and determine who is going to be responsible for this at the federal level. Mr. Dehner continued stating that many vendors are going to providers and telling them that they know how to help them get this money. The council needs to set ourselves up to be a central resource. We need to be sure we have the best information. The Secretary then added that she still get emails from vendors (like the one shown at the last meeting). She then commented that the council needs to be sure how we put into our plan an explanation on how we become a centralized resource for providers in Massachusetts. We also need to help them determine that the product they are thinking about is the right product. Mr. Szabo mentioned the emails, and then commented that in regards to the article he shared at the beginning of the meeting, providers can go to Sam's Club or Wal-Mart to get their EMR. Then he stated that if the funds flow through Medicare, it might get people to think, "How am I going to get this money." Concerned folks will make decisions before the Commonwealth gets the word out. If that happens, we will have a mess. We need to communicate with as many physicians as possible.

Secretary Bigby emphasized that as much as possible we need regulations, or require a license, to be sure the EHR is usable, before a provider purchases it. Doctors have to show they are somehow linked to a state HIE. This should be a condition of their bonus, to show there is some functionality through this exchange. We need to be clear.

Mr. Dehner explained that this is a very confusing area for providers, lots of institutes, and organizations and acronyms that all sound the same. They will get to the point when they just say, "Help me to get my Medicare money, I will pay someone to do it." We have to have

mechanisms in place to communicate what our expectations are as a part of the Commonwealth in regards to eHealth; it may get a different kind of attention. Secretary Bigby added that we need swift communication.

Deborah Adair asked who the message would come from that would have the most influence in the state. We want to be sure folks really listen in, and pay attention. Secretary Bigby replied that it should come from her office, a designated authority or some state agency. All the council members agreed that we need to start communication quickly.

Mr. Szabo stressed that the message should include something from the medical society or the Massachusetts Hospital Association. We didn't create the message, but we endorse it. They are going to hear many messages from many folks; we need to get communications that shows an endorsed message.

Secretary Bigby then asked if there were any other questions. Mr. Szabo asked in regards to a deadline for a communication. Deborah Adair commented it should be next week.

Ms. Fenichel explained that she had been on a call recently with a national organization and during the course of that call it was stressed that they would be focused on the term "meaningful use."

Secretary Bigby explained that the bill says the Secretary of HHS will define within 90 days. However, currently there is not a Secretary. The goal is to get her confirmed before the April recess. People were assuming the 90 days start when the legislation passed, but she explained that it could be from the day the Secretary is confirmed.

Mr. Adams agreed that the definition is very important. And the Secretary stressed that we will try to help influence the definition of "meaningful use".

III. Next Steps

The Secretary mentioned our next step is to schedule stakeholder meetings. She would appreciate participation by council members to as many of the meetings as possible. Her office will be in touch about regularly scheduled meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 am.