

RESOLUTION NO.: 2020 - 06

SUBJECT: Support of Public Health Executive Director, Leadership, and Staff

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 27, 2020

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR SUSAN WHEELAN AND THE ENTIRE EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, FROM MARCH 1 TO JUNE 1, 2020

WHEREAS, in this precarious situation of COVID-19, likely the greatest public health crisis of our lifetime, we the El Paso County Board of Health recognize the outstanding leadership and dedication of our Public Health Director Susan Wheelan, our Deputy Director DeAnn Ryberg, and the formidable work, long hours, personal sacrifice, expertise and professionalism of our entire El Paso County Public Health (Public Health) workforce; and

WHEREAS, since Director Wheelan assumed the job of Director, she has reorganized the foundational infrastructure of Public Health's workforce to enhance efficiencies, engage in cross-sector collaboration, own the role of Chief Health Strategist, and promote the data-driven, science-based, best practices of Public Health 3.0. She has established several new entities within Public Health to specifically support COVID-19 operations, creating a highly functioning team capable of addressing this public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Director Wheelan has enhanced transparent, accurate and timely communication, both within Public Health and to partner agencies, the Board of Health, the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners, the Colorado Springs City Council, the media and the residents of El Paso County. This work serves to benefit all stakeholders, promote understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic, and increase awareness of Public Health's response; and

WHEREAS, Director Wheelan has worked closely with the local business community, including the Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC, the El Paso County Economic Development Department, the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, the Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center and others to provide subject matter expertise. She has helped businesses interpret nuanced public health orders and navigate the complexities of allowances and restrictions for business operations, all while forging a path toward economic recovery; and

WHEREAS, Director Wheelan has led the hiring of additional critically needed Public Health staff to enhance COVID-19 operations. Through personal and professional relationships, she has also successfully solicited and employed a significant number of qualified volunteer staff to support Public Health COVID-19 operations in a variety of response areas; and

WHEREAS, under the structure of the Incident Command System (ICS), Public Health staff led the El Paso County response to COVID-19 using experience gained from previous emergency preparedness exercises and real-world events and provided 24/7 command and control for response to the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, El Paso County Public Health and the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management quickly recognized the need for a unified community disaster response and integrated both agencies into a unified Emergency Coordination Center to maximize response capacity; and

WHEREAS, Public Health epidemiologists demonstrated subject matter expertise in outbreak investigation, contact tracing, and spent innumerable staff hours investigating contacts of infected and exposed individuals to save lives. Additionally, Public Health's Data and Analytics Office took the information provided by epidemiologists, added context and analysis, then displayed the data in a manner which was understandable to local clinical care providers, city and county leadership and residents of El Paso County; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Robin Johnson, Public Health Medical Director, and Dr. Leon Kelly, Public Health Deputy Medical Director, who assumed this role during the response in addition to his existing responsibilities as El Paso County Coroner, have worked tirelessly, coordinating with local hospitals, long-term care facilities, businesses, law enforcement and the media to provide expert opinion and education on a variety of COVID-19 related subjects. Furthermore, Dr. Charles Benight, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, worked with Public Health and behavioral health experts to launch the GRIT (Greater Resilience Intervention Team) initiative to address mental and behavioral health impacts associated with COVID-19.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, in recognition of these significant efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the El Paso County Board of Health recognizes Director Wheelan and all of her staff and volunteers for an outstanding effort in this crisis, which has undoubtedly saved many lives and positioned El Paso County to be better able to mount an effective response and get our County back to work as soon as safely possible.

MOVED, SECONDED AND ADOPTED BY THE EL PASO COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MAY 27, 2020, IN COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO.

EL PASO COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

BY: 
President

ATTEST BY: 
Secretary