August 10th, 2021

To: CLHO Board

Fr: Morgan D. Cowling, MPA

Re: CLHO Annual Retreat Options

We’ve received some questions, and concerns, lately about holding the Annual CLHO Retreat in-person. While everyone would love to be able to be together again there are growing concerns about attending an in-person event. That said, canceling or rescheduling the retreat comes with financial penalties. I’ve detailed the pros and cons of the four major options for the retreat.

In preparation for this memo and discussion at the CLHO meeting I called a handful of local public health administrators to get some perspective on attending and in-person event. While a couple of administrators I spoke with would still like to attend in person there were some concerns raised by other administrators. The concerns ranged from capacity to be away from the outbreak at home, perception, to health and safety. There were some concerns over the cancelation penalty those that I spoke with thought it was appropriate to ensure health, safety and participation. Here is a brief overview of the pros and cons of each of the options for the CLHO Annual Retreat moving forward:

**1. Hold the event as planned (no virtual option) with masking and social distancing.**

Pro:

* Contract already signed and rough draft agenda in the works.
* Best opportunity for face-to-face interaction, small groups, and learning from one- another.

Cons:

* Local public health administrators would not attend due to safety or capacity concerns.
* Potential COVID outbreak (eek!)
* Public perception of local public health officials leaving the County and attending a gathering during a pandemic.

**2. Hold the event in person with a virtual zoom option.**

Pro:

* Opportunity for face-to-face interaction, limited small groups and in-person learning and allow virtual participation.
* Allow those who have safety or capacity concerns to participate.

Cons:

* Fewer attendees will decide to participate in-person due to the virtual options.
* Actual retreat agenda would be very challenging to hold with zoom AND in-person.
* Those in the room together would still have to interact with a screen.

**3. Cancel the Annual Retreat and move to 100% virtual (zoom)**

Pros:

* Everyone would be able to attend.
* Virtual meeting would allow members to participate but we would have to adjust the agenda.

Cons:

* We wouldn’t be together.
* Limited capacity for focusing on zoom when demands of the health department would be on-going.
* Significantly less time could be dedicated to the agenda due to virtual nature (max two hours at a time).
* CLHO would have a financial penalty for canceling the event (30-90 days) prior to the event. We would have to cover 70% of rooms that were held for the event probably $5,000-$10,000 depending on the hotel’s ability to re-rent the rooms held. The 70% we paid could be credited to a future event. *Update: Hotel has said there won’t be a financial penalty for canceling but they strongly request we reschedule.*

**4. Reschedule the Annual Retreat to February**

Pros:

* Move the retreat to a date when people may be able to attend in-person
* We might have more opportunity for people to attend in person (although we still have no crystal ball to predict the future).
* Hood River Best Western Inn may not have us pay a penalty upfront if we reschedule to a date certain (hotel is currently checking on this so nothing is confirmed yet).

Cons:

* This is five months away – COVID has shown that it is difficult to predict how the situation will change even one month in advance.
* COVID has taught us to be more flexible but people were really looking forward to being together in person.
* Winter travel may be challenging for public health administrators in some parts of Oregon.

My recommendation is that we reschedule to next February. I believe that to have a successful retreat we need to ensure that all public health administrators and OHA staff feel safe and able to actively participate. At this point in time I do not believe that is the case. I would recommend that we hold about 90 minutes on September 22nd to talk about some goal setting for the next year.