

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
 PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
 SPECIAL MEETING
 MARCH 9, 2015
 MINUTES

Approved

3/12/15

COMMISSIONERS

Jean G. Champommier, Ph.D., Chairperson*

Crystal D. Crawford, J.D., Vice-Chair*

Waleed W. Shindy M.D., M.P.H.**

Michelle Anne Bholat, M.D., M.P.H. *

Patrick Dowling, M.D., M.P.H.*

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, Interim Medical Director***

Evelina Villa, Interim Public Health Commission Staff*

Public Health Commission

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION ADVISOR

Cynthia Harding, Interim Director***

Carrie Brumfield, Chief of Staff***

Special Meeting held 3/9/15

9:00 AM

****Present **Excused ***Absent***

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>DISCUSSION/FINDINGS</u>	<u>RECOMMENDATION/ACTION/ FOLLOW-UP</u>
I. Roll Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll call was taken by Chair Champommier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants (in person) at 313 Figueroa location (host location): Jean Champommier, Evelina Villa, Angelo Bellomo, Maureen Quraishi. ○ Teleconference participants: Commissioner Dowling, Commissioner Crawford, Commissioner Bholat. 	Information only.
II. Receive input from DPH subject matter experts re: Jan. 13th Board motion to transfer the Environmental Toxicology Bureau from the Dept. Agriculture Commissioner to DPH.	<p>Provided by Angelo Bellomo, Director of Environmental Health and Maureen Quraishi, from the office of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea regarding the proposed transfer of the Environmental Toxicology lab from the Department of Agriculture Commissioner to DPH is not a new proposal; it has been discussed in the last several years. • The issue has come back again, connected with the proposed consolidation of the three Departments (DHS, DMH, & DPH) • The County ordered for a study of the proposed transfer to be conducted and the report was published in 2013. This report discussed the opportunities/drawbacks of such a transfer. • Some background on the Environmental Toxicology Lab (ETL): 	Copies of this report will be provided to the Commission.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The ETL has been operating since the 1970's; ○ The ETL was developed during a time when the Department of Agriculture Commissioner was involved in various testing pertaining to pesticide residue; ○ Currently, 90% of the work that the Agriculture Commission Lab conducts is for the Department of Public Works (DPW) and water quality analysis; ○ There are currently 21-25 employees with ETL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive attributions of having ETL transferred under DPH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It provides the County with the continuing capability to provide in-house lab support for the types of analysis done by the ETL. ● Drawbacks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Operationally, it would require an additional \$3 in net County Cost each year to support the laboratory; ○ Although more competitive pricing has been attempted to increase the pricing, it's very difficult to do that. The appeal of the in-house laboratory to DPW would diminish if the rates were increased; DPH would have a number of private labs (which is how much of the work gets done today) that have a need for these services, find it cost competitive to utilize the labs; ○ Additional costs incurred: refurbishment costs are estimated at \$1.5 million ○ Relocation costs are estimated at \$13 million to construct a new lab ● None of the Departments that have utilized the ETL would argue for retaining the laboratory (DPW-would be more convenient for them—pricing structure specifically) because they would prefer to get these services on the outside. ● Benefits of prior/current analysis will be included in the CEO's report to the Board as the proposed consolidation and the transfer of the ETL is considered. 	
<p>III. Opportunity for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Commissioner Dowling asked if the prudent course is to privatize the</i> 	

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the PHC to discuss the Board motion to consolidate the ETL Bureau from the Dept. of Agriculture Commissioner to DPH.

function rather than transfer, which would add to increased costs?

- Mr. Bellomo responded yes, net county cost would be an additional \$3 million per year. Looking at this through a business perspective, it would be best to receive these services from the outside, save the cost and outsource the work. The question remains: when there is a laboratory that has been established and has existed for decades, there are labor implications as well. Additionally, another lingering issue is that some would argue that since DPH has the laboratory capability, we should maintain it.

- ***Commissioner Dowling asked if there could there possibly be any scenarios where DPH would need the ETL due to the expertise and accuracy that outside vendors (private labs) may not be able to provide?***
 - Mr. Bellomo responded that no, one of the prior arguments of moving the ETL to DPH was because DPH already has a Public Health Lab (PHL), which conducts the types of analysis that Public Health Departments do. The standard type of work conducted in the ETL is considered to be more of a commodity rather than something that is specialized. Many labs in the State of CA are already conducting the same type of work that's conducted in the ETL, where there is a private industry need, which is why there remains strong competition.

- ***Commissioner Dowling asked if there were any scenario under Homeland Security where the ETL should exist?***
 - Mr. Bellomo responded that the argument could be made that the in-house capability is a benefit. However, for the types of analysis done in the PHL, any type of Homeland Security issue could be handled within the PHL, which is able to conduct detailed/specialized analysis for potential agents that might be used in an act of terrorism or other similar incident. Those really are not necessary on a common basis, so there's much less availability for specialized analysis in the

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industry outside of government laboratories.

- **Commissioner Bhlot concurred with Commissioner Dowling's points regarding: ETL in terms of additional costs to DPH and specialized analysis in-house with rapid response times. From the public's view point, what expertise do these outside groups (private labs) have? Also, in terms of branding and trust? What is the flip side for reasons for keeping the ETL?**
 - Mr. Bellomo responded stating that strong arguments could be made to support maintaining capabilities within the PHL because of the agents providing services for—there's much less availability. But, the chemical labs in CA, they are all subject to State certification from the California Department of Public Health. These analyses have been done by private labs for many years—the work is more of a commodity. Trust and reliability of using in-house laboratory issues are worthy of consideration and were considered in the prior consultant's report. Work done by the ETL is very good, but is not unique, absent from the trust issue. Laboratories in the State of CA have really developed due to various quality reforms. There are strong capabilities in terms of private lab work.

- **Commissioner Bhlot expressed concern about the Exide situation, where the State mishandled the situation by not having appropriate follow up. Would there be a benefit to have DPH have responsibility (given that there are adequate resources available) to have some oversight over these labs in the event where DPH would need to step in, similar to the Exide issue?**
 - Mr. Bellomo responded that there are definite positives to having a in-house laboratory. The various analyses have balanced the benefit with the cost. There is a benefit to having chemical analysis capability. Exide is a good example of where the State could not be solely relied on; DPH had to develop its own private view.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson Champommier asked if there is currently an ongoing study taking place? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Bellomo responded that the CEO is working to report back to the Board of Supervisors regarding the general issue of consolidation of the three Departments. Part of the report back includes this second piece—the ETL transfer. There are two separate tracks for the report back—one is the consolidation proposal-which is on a longer timeframe and the portion about the ETL transfer is on the original time frame. The CEO, with input from the member Departments, is preparing a report now that will go back to the Board of Supervisors with their analysis/feasibility/drawbacks/benefits of transferring the ETL to DPH. • Chairperson Champommier asked if the CEO will include DPH's input in the study? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Bellomo responded yes, the CEO's office has received some input from DPH, and will be getting more and then will come up with the report, and then there will probably be discussion at the Board. • Mr. Bellomo stated that DPH wanted the PHC to know about this issue because DPH is taking on a responsibility that will have a financial impact. • Mr. Bellomo also stated that DPH is driven by public health requirements but when the issue of transferring the ETL to DPH came up, DPH is obligated to be as balanced as possible. • Chairman Champommier thanked Mr. Bellomo and Ms. Quraishi for the information provided. 	
IV. Adjournment	<i>The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 A.M. by Chairperson Champommier</i>	