

***VITAL RECORDS IMPROVEMENT FUND
ADVISORY COMMITTEE***

To The New Hampshire Department of State

- MINUTES -

Thursday

August 29, 2019

-MINUTES-

Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee Meeting

August 29, 2019

Archives & Records Building
2nd Floor Conference Room
9 Ratification Way
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-2455

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Denise M. Gonyer, State Registrar
Brian Burford, State Archivist
Tricia Piecuch, Nashua City Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
Janice Bonenfant, Concord City Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
Nicole Bottai, Windham Town Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
Timothy Horrigan, NH House of Representatives, Public Member, SOS Appointment
Jennie V. Duval, MD, Medical Examiner Appointment
Peter Morin, Funeral Director Association Appointment
David Laflamme, Data User, DHHS Appointment
Bruce Riddle, Data User, DHHS Appointment

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED:

David Scanlan, Deputy Secretary of State, SOS Appointment
Todd Rainier, Hooksett Town Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment
Erin Piazza, Health Information Specialist, NHHA Appointment
Ashley Conley, Municipal Data User, DHHS Appointment
Denis Goulet, OIT CIO Appointment

GUESTS:

Stephen M. Wurtz, State Registrar Emeritus
Christopher Bentzler, SOS IT
Catherine Cheney, SOS IT
Nicholl Marshall, Vital Records

1. Call to Order and Introductions:

- Ms. Tricia Piecuch called the meeting to order at 09:32 with a quorum present.
- Ms. Piecuch introduced the new State Registrar, Ms. Denise Gonyer. Ms. Gonyer discussed her background. Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

2. Approval of minutes:

- Ms. Piecuch asked the Committee to review the minutes of the May 9, 2019, meeting. Mr. Brian Burford made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 30, 2018, seconded by Mr. Peter Morin. A vote was taken; with one abstention, the remaining members were in favor, and the motion passed.

3. Budget:

- A green sheet showing the budget was distributed. Mr. Nicholl Marshall explained that the law quoted on the green sheet should be RSA 5-C:15. The budget shows the Fund has a balance of \$3.8 million as of the end of July 2019. Transfers to the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) have steadily decreased over time.
- Ms. Piecuch asked if payments to CNSI for NHVRIN maintenance are on track; Ms. Catherine Cheney performed cost analysis and projections, and determined that it will be well up to 2025. Ms. Cheney further explained that the Fund is expected to have a lesser balance in 2025, if things remains as they are, due to the software upgrade. The Fund's monies are allocated and will be used.
- Ms. Piecuch asked if there are any vacant position within DVRA which are paid out of the Fund; Ms. Gonyer answered that she has an appointment to discuss this with Ms. Paula Penney next week.
- Mr. Burford made a motion that the budget be accepted; Dr. David Laflamme seconded. A vote was taken, and all were in favor.

4. IT Update:

- Mr. Christopher Bentzler said he is working on upgrading and replacing the computers in the towns' offices from Windows 7 to Windows 10. There are fifteen devices which are still to be replaced, and this should be done by

November when the end of Windows 7 support occurs. The machines of DVRA are also being replaced. There has been one significant NHVRIN deployment to include the signature of Ms. Gonyer, the new State Registrar. With the development of *NHVRINPlus*, both NHVRIN and *NHVRINPlus* are being tested in tandem. A new NHVRIN deployment will be coming soon.

- Ms. Piecuch asked if the new build will address the generational identifier problem on marriage licenses. Ms. Cheney said that the logic behind that has not changed, and it can be submitted for the vendor to change. Ms. Piecuch explained the problem, which is that if a person having a generational identifier wants to get married and take the spouse's last name, the generational identifier must be kept instead of having the option to be dropped. Mr. Bentzler explained that the issue will be addressed to the vendor. Ms. Janice Bonenfant said that she had thought the matter was already in the works. Mr. Bentzler answered that there was an interpretation matter in the law when that feature in the system was built. Ms. Cheney said she will follow up on it.
- Mr. Bentzler said DVRA received a new build of *NHVRINPlus* yesterday which DVRA staff are now testing. Any defects found are presented to CNSI, who continues to provide builds which correct any issues identified. Ms. Cheney added that there will be an additional testing level by trusted partners, which should be coming almost any time now. There will be a demonstration of *NHVRINPlus* at the annual clerks' conference. *NHVRINPlus* also includes a front-end security module, whose technology has already been implemented in the NeCOD app. The Assistant Deputy Medical Examiners (ADMEs) are using it. If a NeCOD user is unable to remember his/her password, they must call DVRA to have his/her password reset, and log into NHVRIN to set up a password. Now in NeCOD, if a NeCOD user forgets a password, a "forget password" can be hit, which interfaces with the new *NHVRINPlus* security. Mr. Bentzler said that DVRA is testing and ensuring three systems remain functionally together: NHVRIN, *NHVRINPlus*, and NeCOD. In the future, NHVRIN will remain as each module of *NHVRINPlus* is created. DVRA is careful not to disrupt the clerks' workflow, as they will be working in two systems for a while as each module in NHVRIN is replaced.
- Ms. Piecuch asked how DVRA plans to roll out *NHVRINPlus* because the death module affects the funeral directors and the clerks. Mr. Bentzler answered that the security module interface will make it so that everyone authenticates into *NHVRINPlus*. For example, a birth registrar will log into *NHVRINPlus* and then will click on the birth module, and the birth registrar will be directed to the birth module of NHVRIN to perform work. Funeral director will remain in *NHVRINPlus* once the migration occurs. Mr. Wurtz added that the last time such

a deployment happened, there were two applications running; the clerks had to go to one application for marriage and to the other application for the other modules. But the upcoming deployment of *NHVRINPlus* will be seamless; all users will go through the new front end of *NHVRINPlus* with its new security features, and the individual will be directed to wherever the individual needs to go without the additional step of logging out and logging back in.

- Ms. Piecuch strongly suggested that when *NHVRINPlus* goes live, the clerks get at least a month's notice because some clerks in remote areas may work only two days per week. Down time might last a whole day. Ms. Piecuch asked if *NHVRINPlus* can be rolled out in one part of the state first and another part of the state later; Ms. Cheney and Mr. Bentzler both responded in the negative. Ms. Gonyer asked if there is a manual process which can be implemented if the electronic registration system is down a day or two; Mr. Wurtz answered in the negative. Ms. Piecuch suggested it was still possible to issue certified copies by photocopying the documents on to safety paper; Mr. Wurtz clarified that New Hampshire has had no paper birth certificates since 2002.
- Ms. Cheney said the deployment may occur on Wednesday. Ms. Bonenfant recommended that the deployment not occur on the week before Halloween because many people want to obtain marriage licenses to get married on Halloween. Ms. Gonyer suggested that if a deployment date is selected soon, it can be announced at the clerks' conference in September.
- Ms. Nicole Bottai asked why the deployment could not occur after work hours or during the weekend; Ms. Cheney said that it could be discussed. Ms. Gonyer said that Saturday is not necessarily good for some town clerks because Saturday may be the one day of the week when some town clerks are open.
- Dr. Laflamme asked if the deployment would have any impact on the underlying data; Ms. Cheney answered in the negative. Mr. Bentzler added that DVRA's database administrator is diligently involved in the entire project.
- Dr. Bruce Riddle asked how DVRA is protecting itself against Ransomware; Mr. Bentzler responded that there are numerous security systems implemented throughout the Department of State within the last year. Furthermore, DoIT is constantly monitoring activity. Mr. Daniel Cloutier deals with many security issues. Mr. Wurtz added that if DVRA is affected, the entire state is affected because all departments in state government go through the same portals.
- Dr. Riddle asked if middle names are captured. Ms. Piecuch said that funeral directors are doing better in getting the full middle names, but they can only input what is given to them. Dr. Riddle added that about twenty-five percent of his

cases have no middle name, and many times Dr. Riddle's section is left with first name, last name, and date of birth for identification because Social Security numbers are used less by his section. More people in New Hampshire now have two-letter or three-letter last names, and they are difficult to match. Ms. Piecuch agrees with Dr. Riddle regarding the middle names because matching names between NHVRIN and ElectioNet is difficult as the names must be identical. Mr. Wurtz said this is a training issue; some town clerks require birth certificates in order to obtain a marriage license so those town clerks are inputting exactly the names on the birth certificates, including middle names, into a marriage record. Middle initials are inadequate, so if there is a way to get the middle name, DVRA wants the middle name. Ms. Piecuch said she sees more death certificates with "also known as" names. Mr. Timothy Horrigan said caretakers may not know many details of a decedent's background, so it may be a growing problem; Mr. Wurtz answered there is a difference between not knowing the details and not looking for the details. Ms. Piecuch has lately seen many unknowns in the parents' information.

5. Situational Surveillance:

- Dr. Laflamme said Situational Surveillance is going well and it provides very useful information. There has been discussion in putting questions similar to what is now in the Situational Surveillance feature permanently on the birth worksheets; this will require funding, although it is uncertain yet what the costs are. The previous grant to create this feature was \$45,000. Dr. Laflamme asked if that was a price tag or the amount available in the grant; Mr. Wurtz answered that the cost to implement the changes in both software and re-printing the worksheets came out slightly higher than the grant.
- Dr. Laflamme made a motion to seek approval of up to \$75,000 to add substance exposure/usage questions, similar to what are now in the Situational Surveillance feature, permanently on the birth worksheets to comply with federal requirements. Mr. Burford seconded. A vote was taken and all were in favor.

6. National Implementers Workgroup:

- Ms. Cheney said many of the ideas, implementations, and practices of the National Implementers Workgroup and the Community of Practice will overlap. New Hampshire is one of sixteen states in the National Implementers Workgroup, and many of these states are going to the same websites to share information and meeting weekly. Ms. Cheney and Mr. Wurtz traveled earlier this year to Ohio for the NAPHSIS conference. There has been much interest in NeCOD and NHVRIN*Plus*. NeCOD is based on Application Programming Interface (API)

language. With the Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) and the API interfaces, data exchanges are surgical and precise. Like with NeCOD, for which Dr. Jennie Duval can vouch, just the questions which need to be addressed in the field are present. Other jurisdictions have been given demonstrations of NHVRIN and NeCOD and have experimented with those applications in testing environments. Mr. Wurtz and Ms. Cheney will go to Atlanta again to meet with the Georgia Institute of Technology and to attend a convention called the “Connectathon”. Mr. Wurtz and Ms. Cheney have been conferencing weekly with those who will attend, some of whom are in the National Implementers Workgroup. Efforts have been made to FHIR-enable STEVE 2.0, which uses the Inter-Jurisdictional Exchange (IJE) protocol. At least four states will which attend the Connectathon are working to implement STEVE with FHIR-enablement. It is not intended for NeCOD to be any more than a surgical precise deliverance of data, but there is interest in picking up fields a medical examiner’s case management report and dynamically depositing them into a death record. Similarly, there is effort in picking up data entered by a physician into an Electronic Health Record (EHR) and depositing that data into a death record.

- Ms. Piecuch said these efforts will probably become nationwide, so it is better to start working on it now. Ms. Piecuch asked if the CDC could demand that states have the aforementioned features; Mr. Wurtz responded in the affirmative. Ms. Piecuch recognized that other states are proactively working with New Hampshire on these features.
- Mr. Wurtz added that New Hampshire is driving this effort, as New Hampshire has worked on HL7-standard FHIR-enabled applications for three years. Much of the input and research performed by New Hampshire has caused the CDC to work on those features. Now there are sixteen jurisdictions in a National Implementers Workgroup, each of which will have a different degree of complexity within their applications. During the annual meeting of NAPHSIS in Ohio, Mr. Wurtz and Ms. Cheney had an opportunity to meet with the vendors selling their products, but no one has in place or in development what New Hampshire has. Right now, New Hampshire and the CDC have silos of information. An epidemiologist like Dr. Laflamme can go into the New Hampshire silo and get the information he wants. But the communication between the silos is either clumsy or lacking. With the technology which New Hampshire started developing three years ago, New Hampshire plans to “silo-bust” that mentality and be interoperable with each other. New Hampshire will be able to share information with institutions such as the cancer registry in a more timely and equitable way.

- Ms. Bottai said she sees this workflow as an online process, and later it would be nice to have a local process pull into the local queue. Mr. Wurtz added that all this is not working harder, but working smarter, and the mission is to reduce redundancy.
- Ms. Piecuch said she is aware through the RFP process years ago that some vendors do not have all the vital events modules which New Hampshire has. Ms. Piecuch asked if DVRA will work with the various vendors, or will DVRA work with the jurisdictions; Ms. Cheney answered that DVRA's vendor, CNSI, recently posed that question. DVRA owns the source code of its applications at the insistence of Mr. Wurtz. If VitalChek wanted to use NeCOD, VitalChek could do so. Mr. Wurtz said DVRA created public APIs so allow others to utilize DVRA's applications.

7. Digital Preservation:

- Mr. Burford said the archive writer has been purchased with monies approved by this Committee. The Archives Division uses the archive writer to write five rolls of film, which is about twelve thousand images, per day. DVRA is creating standardized formatting and how the fields will be laid out so that images of data can be provided.
- Ms. Bottai asked if the archives writer will be used for the towns; Mr. Burford answered that because the Committee funded it, the Committee gets priority. But Mr. Burford wants to keep using the machine, so there will be other tasks for the archive writer. For example, Mr. Burford is working on a project regarding images of legislative material, a project which also keeps the Archives Division aware of how to use the device.

8. Mortality Surveillance Agent:

- Due to the absence of Mr. Christopher Wilder, Mr. Marshall presented on Mr. Wilder's behalf. Mr. Wilder continues to travel to the various health facilities across the state to explain the legal requirements of electronic death registration within thirty-six hours from time of death. Mr. Wilder requests from Mr. Marshall various data, such as who pronounces deaths, who certifies deaths, at which facilities do deaths occur, and the length of time between time of death and the filing date. Mr. Wilder also requests comparisons between who is listed as the certifier versus the User ID of the person who entered the certification information. When Mr. Wilder visits a facility, not only does he explain to pronouncers and certifiers how electronic death registration works, but he also

discusses with the facility's leadership about who within the facility is and is not filing deaths electronically.

- Mr. Wurtz added that Mr. Wilder is doing a fantastic job by these facility visits. Armed with the information about who is the heavy-hitters at a particular facility, it adds credibility to his discussion. During the facility visits that Mr. Wurtz and Ms. Cheney also attended, the facilities are shocked that DVRA knows who the heavy-hitters at a facility are. During some facility visits, Mr. Wilder had to clarify the law for the facility's management to pass to its staff. There has been so much discussion among the facilities that the New Hampshire Board of Medicine put in its journal a notice that its readers must comply with the law concerning electronic death registration.
- Ms. Piecuch noted that some funeral directors in her area have said that some certifiers did not realize how easy it is to certify deaths electronically, and they would have done so years ago had they known. Mr. Wurtz explained that it was not so easy years ago, but the new NeCOD app makes it easy. If death certifiers wish to use a desktop-based application like funeral directors do, NHVRIN*Plus* is being designed to make it easier than ever.
- Mr. Morin asked when the New Hampshire Board of Medicine published that notice in its journal; Dr. Duval answered that it was during the last week or two. Mr. Morin added that he had the opportunity to speak to the New Hampshire Board of Medicine at a meeting this month, and Mr. Morin asked for the Board's help in getting death certifiers to comply with the statute regarding electronic death registration. Mr. Morin added that the Board said that they would reach out to the death certifiers as well as to the New Hampshire Hospital Association to let death certifiers know what the law is. There was a letter of complaint by a funeral director against a physician several months ago which precipitated Mr. Morin's meeting with the New Hampshire Board of Medicine.
- Mr. Marshall added that there has been an increase in the number of physicians, PAs, and APRNs applying for NHVRIN access. Mr. Marshall also observes that DVRA is interacting increasingly with physicians, PAs, and APRNs, often about browser compatibility or resetting passwords. Ms. Gonyer added that there is a back-up in getting physicians, PAs, and APRNs access to NHVRIN, but DVRA is working to get caught up.
- Ms. Cheney said that in the upcoming data migration to NHVRIN*Plus*, death certifiers will belong to a facility. NHVRIN was designed so that a death certifier was his/her own facility.

- Mr. Bentzler said Mr. Marshall had mentioned browser compatibility and resetting passwords. Mr. Bentzler said that NHVRIN*Plus* is being designed to address those two issues. NHVRIN*Plus* can be used in other browsers like Firefox and Edge. Password resets are built into NHVRIN*Plus*.
- Mr. Wurtz wrote three more proposals to the CDC for additional funding for enhancements to the self-operating password reset. Another contract, which is presently ongoing, permits DVRA will work closely with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) and/or an off-the-shelf case management system. On a national level, there is a big push for the automation of case management tools. This is a matter of helping the staff of the OCME doing what they are supposed to do and reducing redundancy instead of pushing paper. Dr. Duval responded that would be a big help since the case management system of the OCME now is not so great. Ms. Piecuch added with the CDC knowing what DVRA has accomplished so far, the CDC knows CDC will get it done.

9. Community of Practice:

- Mr. Wurtz said the mission of the Community of Practice is to leverage New Hampshire's experience and technical skills and lend them to states which are not as savvy as DVRA or do not have the budget that DVRA has. DVRA is fortunate to have the Committee to be able to support many of DVRA's initiatives and very fortunate to receive additional funding from the CDC. New Hampshire would like to bring other states on board to see what they could add. With other states working with New Hampshire and sharing costs, New Hampshire could establish itself as a viable source for automation and dissemination of information with other states and the CDC.
- Ms. Cheney said DVRA owns the source code and intellectual property for its applications, which was the idea of Mr. Wurtz.
- Mr. Wurtz said that DVRA started the automation initiative in 1988 with the AMC/ABC/ADC for marriages, births, and deaths respectively; DVRA rolled out VRV 2000 in 1998. DVRA won the award for being the most innovative in the world in comprehensive vital records registration in 1998. As of 2019, no one else has what New Hampshire DVRA has. All jurisdictions have a birth module; all but four jurisdictions have a death module; no one else has marriage, adoptions, a financial package, or an inventory package. New Hampshire still has the most comprehensive vital records application in the world and still works hard to stay on top. NHVRIN users are not bashful in telling DVRA what they want. But these people are bringing not problems, but opportunities for DVRA to adapt, adjust, and go forward.

- Mr. Wurtz added that New Hampshire would not give the source code to another jurisdiction. Other jurisdictions would like to go out to bid so that they may own their source code, but owning a source code doubles or triples the cost of the application. DVRA was fortunate enough to see why DVRA wanted to own its source code. Owning the source code means one is in control of one's application, regardless of who the vendor is. Mr. Wurtz appreciates how the Committee has supported DVRA's initiatives, including allowing DVRA to own the source code and control DVRA's destiny.

10. New Business:

- Ms. Piecuch thanked Mr. Wurtz for all the time that he served, and that he will help the new registrar and DVRA. Mr. Wurtz acknowledged that he is not the registrar anymore, but his new role is director of special projects, which motivates him and helps keep him connected.
- Ms. Piecuch thanked Dr. Riddle for his years in service on the Committee. Ms. Piecuch said that Dr. Riddle will be missed but knows that his replacement will do just as good of a job.
- Ms. Piecuch said her last day as city clerk of Nashua will be September 17. Ms. Piecuch has taken as role as Assistant Secretary of State dealing with elections and will start that role on September 30. The president of the New Hampshire City/Town Clerks Association will select another city clerk to be on the Committee. Ms. Piecuch acknowledges that she has been a strong advocate for the clerks. Mr. Wurtz thanked Ms. Piecuch for being on the Committee for a long time and was comforted knowing that Ms. Piecuch was the chair of the Committee. Ms. Cheney also thanked Ms. Piecuch.
- Ms. Piecuch said the first order of business of the next meeting would be to elect a new chair of the Committee, unless the Committee wants to elect a new chair immediately. Mr. Burford nominated Dr. Laflamme to be the new chair of the Committee, and Ms. Bonenfant seconded. A vote was taken and all were in favor.

11. Next meeting & adjournment:

- Ms. Piecuch said the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday November 21.
- Mr. Burford moved to adjourn, and Ms. Gonyer seconded; a vote was taken and all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:19.