WHCC Tobacco Committee
Monday, November 21, 2005
8:00 – 9:00 a.m.
Holiday Inn Express - Casper, WY

Present: *Commissioner Carol Jenkins, Commissioner Lorraine Saulino-Klein, Janet Jares, Tobacco Control Coordinator, WDH, Julie Sapp, Governor's Office, Jan Drury, American Heart Association, and Michele Patarino.*

Commissioner Jenkins reviewed the agenda items: (1) Inviting Dr. Harper to join the committee, (2) Letters of support to the legislature, and (3) Next meeting agenda.

Commissioner Jenkins said that Dr. James Harper was on the disease prevention subcommittee of the Commission, and he serves on the board of UMC in Cheyenne. He works with the Department of Health, and is actively supporting the smoke-free ordinance in Cheyenne. Anne Ladd and Chris Muirhead are working on appointing him to the committee. Dr. Harper had a prior engagement today.

The Committee is drafting two letters. The first supports the tobacco tax increase to $1 per pack. Recent polling data said that 61% of conservative voters support the tax increase. The letter also supports Representative Warren's spit tobacco bill. The Committee is not supporting the bills per se, but supports the concept of raising taxes on tobacco as a public health intervention. We are also not commenting on how the tax money is spent—just that increasing the tax is appropriate for improving health.

The second letter is in support of funding for the tobacco control program. Janet Jares will present to the full Commission about the background of the tobacco control programs, and how she has made decisions about supporting various programs. She'll also be asked to comment on where she would invest additional funds. Commissioner Jenkins asked Ms. Jares if the tobacco control program has the necessary infrastructure to spend a full $15.2 million per biennium if the Commission's recommendation is accepted. Ms. Jares replied that the tobacco control program's level of spending this year is equivalent. While she does not have enough staff to manage the expanded funding, she can support this level of budget. Ms. Sapp placed a phone call to the Governor's office and reported that it appears that the new positions in the Substance Abuse/Tobacco Control budget have been approved.

Commissioner Jenkins will present the two draft letters to the Commission for approval.

Commissioner Jenkins asked that participants think about where they'd like the committee's work to lead for discussion next month, after the letters are finalized and sent. Assuming the Commission is extended (it currently sunsets in June), what could this Committee accomplish? Commissioner Jenkins believes that some long term strategic planning for the tobacco control program should be addressed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55.