



**Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust**

Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes

10:00 a.m., Tuesday, September 17, 2024

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Oklahoma Room

1801 N Lincoln Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73105

**1. Open Meeting Act Announcement and Call to Order**

Board Chair Marshall Snipes called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and announced that all requirements of the Open Meeting Act had been met.

Members of the Board present were Jack Allen, Bruce Benjamin, Jennifer Needham, Ken Rowe, Michelle Stephens, and Marshall Snipes. Runako Whittaker was absent.

TSET staff members present were Julie Bisbee, Kelli Brodersen, Trish Bryant, Thomas Larson, Tonia Lowrey, Jonas Mata, Jessica Davis, Sjonna Paulson, Kira Switzer, Lance Thomas, and Susan Yingling.

Other attendees present included Assistant Attorney General Sandra Balzer, General Counsel for the TSET Board of Directors; Laura Beebe, OUHSC; Zachary Massey and Lurdes Queimado, TSET Health Promotion Research Center; and Kathleen Thomas, Rescue Agency.

Chair Snipes announced that Item 2, Executive Director's Report, would be moved to the end of the agenda.

**3. Program Committee Report**

a. Bisbee welcomed everyone to the board retreat, then recognized Kira Switzer, Associate Director for Capacity Building, and Jessica Davis, Director of Engagement & Impact, to give an overview of the TSET Capacity Building Efforts and Next Steps. Switzer referred to her PowerPoint presentation and said that capacity building was a new area for TSET and that FY25 was a pilot year. Switzer explained her job as a capacity builder looked at four goals: raise awareness, learn from communities, find connections, and build readiness and capacity. She said capacity building efforts were informed through the use of an internal tool called the County Readiness Index. She said this was used to select priority counties. Davis distributed a copy of the County Readiness Matrix as a handout to the Board. After a short discussion, she said the next steps for TSET included building trust with partners by acknowledging sovereignty of 3 counties within tribal nations and by connecting with the Oklahoma State Department of Health, as well as building trust within communities by partnering with organizations to implement listening sessions, conduct interviews with key stakeholders, and determine partner readiness and needs. Switzer thanked the Board and concluded her presentation. No action was necessary.

b. Bisbee reminded the Board that they had approved the tool for measuring grantee performance. She said that tool had been used to determine the strength of a grantee's performance. Then she recognized Program Architect Jonas Mata to review how the performance criteria was used. Mata said the TSET score sheet had been used to evaluate grants and contracts ending their TSET funding cycle for the possibility of renewed funding. He said the sheet was also used as a basis to offer a continuation grant to existing grantees who had excelled over multiple years of funding. He said the



performance criteria was based on several areas: meeting financial and RFP requirements; staffing capacity, strength, and longevity; implementation results and strength of policies; program manager guidance touch; and a local agency's commitment to the grant program and serving populations with the greatest tobacco use and obesity rates. He said all of TSET Healthy Living Program grants were considered as candidates for the continuation grants. He said about 20 percent of the grants were recommended for consideration for a 3-year continuation grant starting in FY26 based on performance and meeting board approved criteria. After a short discussion, Allen moved to approve funding for performance-based continuation grants for community grant pilot in the amount of \$1.5 million annually for 3 years. Benjamin provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

***Aye: Allen, Benjamin, Needham, Rowe, Stephens, Snipes***

c. Bisbee recognized Program Architect Sjonna Paulson to discuss the next design principles for TSET's next generation of community-based grants. Paulson said the design principles were developed to simplify the management and governance of community-based grants without sacrificing the service quality and financial stewardship; establish consistent program outcomes and performance indicators framework; fund entities and partners with the capacity to implement one or more of the major best-practice strategies; and to mobilize local communities to amplify impact across Oklahoma. Paulson reviewed the next steps in the process which included bringing more recommendations to the November board meeting. There were no questions. Benjamin moved to approve next generation community grants design principles. Needham provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

***Aye: Allen, Benjamin, Needham, Rowe, Stephens, Snipes***

4. Bisbee recognized Dr. Laura Beebe from the Hudson College of Public Health at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center to present her evaluation reports for the Shape Your Future and Tobacco Stops With Me campaign efforts for FY24. Beebe gave an in-depth overview of the evaluation methods and outcomes. She said her team conducts a random sample of Oklahomans every year for the evaluation. She said the surveys are based on the objectives set by TSET's Strategic Communications team. She reviewed her summary recommendations for the Shape Your Future campaign and noted that the majority of benchmarks were met. She reported that Oklahomans have consistently reported that the Shape Your Future messages were informative, believable, and relevant. She recommended that, as the Shape Your Future campaign evolves, benchmarks may need to be modified to better reflect strategies and messages. Then she gave a highpoint overview of the Tobacco Stops With Me campaign evaluation for FY24. Beebe said the awareness of the Tobacco Stops With Me campaign was high and the support for tobacco-related policies were strong. She outlined the 8 objectives for the evaluation. She reminded the Board that the achievement of benchmarks was only one element of evaluation. She further stated that ad responses continued to be highly favorable for the Tobacco Stops With Me campaigns. She suggested that some benchmarks may have hit a threshold and recommended consideration of updating campaign objective to reflect the changing landscape of tobacco/nicotine use. She concluded her presentation and thanked the Board for their time. No action was necessary.

***Recess for lunch from 11:20 a.m. to 11:53 a.m.***

5. Bisbee recognized Kelli Brodersen, Director of Strategic Communications, to give an overview of the Strategic Communication FY25 Campaign. Brodersen explained the TSET Brand has expanded its Thought Leadership videos for FY25 and the next flight would air in October and feature Vice-Chair Michelle Stephens. She said TSET had started a new partnership with Griffin Media called "Health



Matters,” designed to help inform the public on mission-related topics on health. She updated the Board on the plans for the TSET 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event in 2025. Brodersen then reported that the TSET website was getting a makeover that would improve user experiences and help integrate the new Salesforce platform. She announced that TSET would begin utilizing Instagram and explained the increased FY25 budget for sponsorships would provide more opportunities and expand TSET's reach to organizations and communities around the state. She updated the Board on the new ads and campaigns for the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, Tobacco Stops With Me, Shape Your Future, and TSET Healthy Youth Initiative. She said the goal is to reach a wider audience. No action was needed.

6. Bisbee recognized Thomas Larson, Director of Public Information and Government Affairs to give a presentation over the annual TSET Brand Awareness Survey. Larson said the survey included 600 Oklahoma residents and was conducted by CMA Strategies between June 9 – July 9, 2024. Larson clarified that this survey was different from the survey Dr. Beebe had reported on earlier. Larson highlighted that TSET enjoyed a favorable view with the public, according to the survey. Most of the people aware of the existence of TSET associated it with tobacco cessation. The survey demonstrated strong support for a tax on vaping similar to the taxes on cigarettes. Larson said another area of support was prohibiting smoking in a vehicle with a child under the age of 16. He reported there was also support from those surveyed to make all public places smoke free and an increase in local authority to protect citizens from smoke. He concluded with an overview of the concerns with vape use and vape sales. Larson explained that vapes are only taxed at the standard sales tax rate. After some discussion, no action was necessary.

***Recess for short break from 12:42 p.m. to 12:48 p.m.***

7. **Panel Discussion: Vaping and Emerging Tobacco Products**

Larson introduced TSET Health Promotion Research Center researchers, Zachary Massey, Ph.D. and Lurdes Queimado, Ph.D. to the Board. The panelists gave a brief overview of their areas of research. Queimado stressed that TSET grants make a big impact in tobacco cessation research. She said her area of focus was how secondhand smoke may interfere with the effectiveness of chemotherapy for cancer patients. Another study she worked on focused on levels of DNA damage caused by tobacco and e-cigarettes. Massey said his area of focus was research to reduce the burden of tobacco-related chronic disease. He said he also studies the communications and advertisements of tobacco companies to see if consumers understand the claim that they could potentially experience health benefits if they switch to e-cigarettes if they switched completely.

Larson posed a question to the panelists regarding their insights on the harm of nicotine-only products vs. traditional tobacco products vs. electronic tobacco products. Queimado said the harm of tobacco is well-documented through multiple studies, but the difficulty in studying the harm from nicotine-only products and e-cigarettes is that the products evolve more quickly than researchers are able to study.

***Stephens left the meeting at 1:14 p.m.***

Queimado said that have been some studies that show e-cigarettes damage DNA, and it continues to be something being researched in search of a better measurement. Massey added that his research found that consumers of tobacco products will switch to e-cigarettes, but not completely. The trend is to switch back and forth between products, essentially using both, so the researchers aren't seeing much harm reduction. Queimado said her studies found that there was less DNA



damage with e-cigarettes, though neither product was safe.

***Rowe left the meeting at 1:25 p.m.***

Both panelists recommended warning labels be added to emerging nicotine products and e-cigarettes to educate would-be consumers on the dangers of using the products. Massey added that removing all of the advertising from the packaging and keeping only the warning label was a good strategy to make the products less appealing. He also suggested creating stronger restrictions against advertising nicotine on social media.

***Rowe returned to the meeting at 1:34 p.m.***

After a short discussion, no action was needed.

**8. Presentation on Quit the Hit**

Bisbee recognized Kathleen Thomas from the Rescue Agency to give a short presentation of the *Quit the Hit* program on Instagram. Kathleen Thomas gave a brief overview of the TSET Healthy Youth Initiative's Prevention and Cessation Programs. She reviewed the Tobacco Prevention Evaluation that showed the awareness both urban and rural teen survey participants had for the Behind the Haze and Down and Dirty campaigns respectively. Kathleen Thomas said Quit the Hit is hosted on Instagram via private group direct message and was designed to fill a gap in cessation efforts for young adults. She said it offers 5 weeks of quit support, daily cessation education content, group challenges for age-appropriate groups of 10-15 people, and an active facilitation by the group guide. She said one thing she had seen was the members helping each other with support. She also reported that NPR had featured Quit the Hit as an effective tool to help teens stop vaping. She concluded by announcing that Oklahoma would be one of the states piloting a 5-year grant-funded Quit the Hit toolkit creation that would help with training. There were no questions, and no action was needed.

***Stephens returned to the meeting at 2:08 p.m.***

**9. Public Information and Outreach Committee**

- a. Bisbee recognized Larson to give an overview of the three proposed policy resolutions for adoption. After some discussion, Chair Snipes asked for a motion to adopt the proposed resolutions. Allen moved to discussion and possible action to adopt policy resolutions.
  - i. Allen moved to adopt the resolution to improve access to healthy foods for Oklahomans. Benjamin provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.  
***Aye: Allen, Benjamin, Needham, Rowe, Stephens, Snipes***
  - ii. Stephens moved to adopt the resolution to increase the price of cigarettes in Oklahoma. Benjamin provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.  
***Aye: Allen, Benjamin, Needham, Rowe, Stephens, Snipes***
  - iii. Stephens moved to adopt the resolution in support of regulations on emerging tobacco products. Benjamin provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.  
***Aye: Allen, Benjamin, Needham, Rowe, Stephens, Snipes***



## 2. **Executive Director's Report**

- a. Bisbee recognized TSET Program Architect Jonás Mata, for his 20 years of service as a TSET employee and over 30 years of service to the State of Oklahoma. A short, commemorative video was shown in Mata's honor. No action was needed.
- b. Bisbee recognized Chief of Staff Lance Thomas, to provide the Board with an overview of the Strategic Plan and planned FY25 projects. He reminded the Board that TSET is a little over a year into the 3-year strategic plan. He said each division is responsible for specific initiatives of the plan. He said about one third of the initiatives are complete and another one third are in progress. He said about two thirds of the agency's goals are in progress. He reviewed the Strategic Plan Outcome Areas – the Public, Grantees, Ecosystem Partners, Brand, Operations, and Staff, and discussed the highlights of each area. He concluded his presentation by reviewing next steps for the 90-day and 180-day marks and saying staff will keep the Board apprised of the progress. No action was needed.
- c. Bisbee gave a brief overview regarding Preliminary Earnings Certification provided by the TSET Board of Investors in August. She said the preliminary certification showed estimated earnings of \$86.8 million for the fund performance in FY24. Bisbee stated the final certification would be available in November.

Bisbee then recognized Director of Finance Trish Bryant, to discuss TSET's financial position and trends. Bryant told the Board that the finance team is now fully staffed and is working on developing better reports and better partnerships with other state agencies. There was some discussion about the status of the 2-year reserve fund and potential areas of additional funding TSET could undertake in the future to fund additional efforts to improve health. No action was needed.

- d. Bisbee reminded the Board of the TSET Strategic Funding Matrix which determined percentages for certain areas of focus. The Board asked staff to bring back some ideas about how the matrix could be amended to include use of reserve. Bisbee said staff would have updates by the November meeting. After a short discussion, no action was needed.

## 10. **New Business**

There was no new business.

## 11. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

These minutes were approved by the Board of Directors.

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Marshall Snipes, Chair of the Board

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Susan Yingling, Board Secretary