

Honorable Mike Johnston
Mayor of Denver
1437 Bannock St.
Room 350
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Mayor Johnston:

I am writing, on behalf of the Board of Public Health and Environment, concerning your recommendation to City Council to appoint Karin McGowan as the Executive Director at the Denver Department of Public Health and Environment (DDPHE) and the process that led to that recommendation.

Based on a meeting with Jeff Dolan, from your office, our review of the Job Posting and Ms. McGowan's resume we concur that she is well-qualified to serve as Executive Director. We appreciate the work of the Cabinet search team to identify candidates with the education, skills and experience necessary to fulfill the duties of this position.

However, I want to share our concern about the fact that we, as the Board, were not asked for input at any time during the transition or selection process. It is our mayoral appointed Board that, by Denver Charter, is charged with determining the policies that direct the functions of the Department. Yet, beginning with the Transition Committee, there was no direct contact with the Board of Health. While we appreciate that board member Alisha Brown was a very capable member of the transition committee there was no effort for that committee to meet with the full Board of Health or even seek input concerning our view about how effectively DDPHE functions and the role of the Board of Health. The Vibrant Denver report suggests that very little input came from those who know the inner workings of the Department. We believe that makes many of the report's conclusions suspect.

With regard to the appointment of a Director, the City Charter (2.12.2) states that the Director of DDPHE is appointed by the Mayor "with the advice of the Board". We were disappointed that there was also no communication from the Mayor's office to the Board during the search process and prior to the announcement of Ms. McGowan's appointment. We believe we could have provided useful input as to the skills and other attributes we thought would be important for a new director.

Public health is foundational to the ability of a community to become a safe place to live, learn, work and play. It is our hope that DDPHE and the board are viewed as important partners in achieving that goal for the Denver community. The Department, the Board, the Mayor's office, other city agencies and the diverse communities of Denver must work together to address Denver's public health challenges successfully.

We would like to invite you to meet with the Board, in the near future, to discuss your priorities for improving the health and wellbeing of Denver residents along with the role you see for the Board of Health. We hope to be an asset to the Department and to the city and we believe that must begin with improved communications among us all. I hope you will consider our invitation to meet.

Sincerely,

Catherine Cooney
Chair, Board of Public Health and Environment