**GEAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**AND RECOVERY SERVICES**

**Jennifer Malainy 13244 Ravenna Road**

**Chairman of the Board Chardon, Ohio 44024**

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**Board Minutes March 16, 2022**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ann Bagley, Alberta Chokshi, Walter Claypool, James Lee Holden, Vanessa Jensen, Kathy Johnson, Carolee Lesyk, Jennifer Malainy, Linda Miller, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, Mary Ruth Shumway

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Martin Fay, Gregory O’Brien

**GUESTS INCLUDE:** Kim Carter, Belinda Potts, Christie Weber, Susan Parker (NAMI Geauga), Jack Sherman (NAMI Ohio), Vicki Clark, Mary Beth O’Neill, Ruth Ann Gingerich, Matthew Shups, Janice Katz (Ravenwood Health), Mary Wynne-Peaspanen, Stacy Noyes (Signature Health), Melanie Blasko, Claire Spada (Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers), Alex Duncan, Moses Eason.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jim Adams, Amie Martin-D’Arienzo, Jim Mausser, Teresa Slater

1. **CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Ms. Malainy called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM. She then stated that the meeting is being held in public for the purpose of conducting the Board’s business. Public comments will be allowed for a total of ten minutes at the end of the meeting.

Ms. Chokshi called the roll for attendance purposes and the following Board members were present at that time: Ann Bagley, Alberta Chokshi, Walter Claypool, James Lee Holden, Vanessa Jensen, Kathy Johnson, Carolee Lesyk, Jennifer Malainy, Linda Miller, and Mary Ruth Shumway. Dr. Oluic arrived at 6:06 PM. Mr. Petruziello arrived at 6:55 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those in attendance.

1. **APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 2, 2022**

**Ms. Miller moved to approve the Minutes as written. Mr. Holden seconded the motion.** **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-6; Nays-0; Abstentions-4. Motion approved.**

1. **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

Ms. Malainy said there are several Board members whose terms are ending on June 30th: Kathy Johnson, Michael Petruziello, Carolee Lesyk, Jimmy Lee Holden, and Mary Ruth Shumway. Ms. Slater will send the forms needed for reappointment.

Ms. Malainy said some Board members have commented to her that the meeting timeline for agency presentations does not include enough time for questions. She then asked about changing the schedule to allow more time for this purpose.

1. **CEO REPORT – WRITTEN REPORT**

Mr. Adams had nothing further to add to his written report. Dr. Jensen asked Ms. Malainy if she will be making a recommendation or proposal for how to incorporate more time for questions and answers during agency presentations. Ms. Malainy said she will review this with Mr. Adams and get back to the Board.

1. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
   1. **Agency Relations**

Ms. Miller reported that agency funding presentations for SFY2023 will begin on April 6th. She distributed the Board’s Service and Population Priorities Resolution, along with the meeting dates for agency presentations. Ms. Miller said all Board members are welcome to attend, not just those who are on the Agency Relations and Finance committees. She said the public is welcome to attend also. Dr. Jensen asked when the Resolution was created, if it is a permanent document or if it is reviewed periodically, and who defines the priority categories. Mr. Adams replied that the Board determines the priority populations and services. He said this version of the Resolution was passed in 2018. It was reviewed last year but not changed. Mr. Adams said it would be a good idea for the Board to review, discuss and vote on this Resolution again.

Mr. Claypool commented that Mr. Adams mentioned in his CEO Report that Ohio lawmakers have passed legislation allowing public entities to meet via Zoom again until June 30, 2022. He asked if there were any Board members on Zoom this evening. It was clarified that there were many people participating through Zoom, including Dr. Lesyk, a Board member, who is able to drive at this time.

**Mr. Claypool said he was planning on making a motion this evening that the Board meet in person aside from the state rule. After brief discussion, Mr. Claypool said he would withdraw his motion because he does not want to put Dr. Lesyk at a disadvantage. Ms. Malainy asked Mr. Claypool to confirm that he is withdrawing his motion. Mr. Claypool responded that is correct unless someone else wants to move forward with the motion. Ms. Malainy then seconded Mr. Claypool’s motion to meet in person. Dr. Jensen said according to Robert’s Rules, Mr. Claypool can withdraw his motion, restate it, or Ms. Malainy can make a motion. Mr. Claypool restated his motion and moved that the Board meet in person, rather than permit Zoom meetings, with the caveat that the public can be allowed to listen in, but Board members must meet in person. Ms. Malainy then seconded that motion.**

Discussion: Ms. Bagley said she is not able to attend one of the April meetings and one of the May meetings in person, and appreciated that she would be able to participate through Zoom. Dr. Lesyk said she recently had major surgery and has not been medically cleared to drive at this time.

**Dr. Jensen offered a friendly amendment that Board members who are able to, attend in person.** She has surgery scheduled and will not be able to drive for a certain period of time, but would like to be involved. She also feels that meeting in person is better, but that a Zoom option should be made available so that individuals with health issues, who are traveling, working, etc. can participate and have their voice heard. Dr. Jensen said it is up to Mr. Claypool whether or not to accept the friendly amendment.

Mr. Claypool responded that there are practical and pragmatic reasons behind his motion to hold meetings in person only. He was personally harmed when trying to participate in a Zoom meeting where he was not able to hear and comment. Mr. Claypool said those participating in a meeting through Zoom must be able to hear and comment, otherwise it is not an official meeting. He further stated that once someone is disadvantaged for this reason, it could create a problem for an organization. He said often times the public can’t hear or participate. Mr. Claypool said meeting in person also serves the public better and anyone participating remotely may be disadvantaged or discriminated against and could then create issues for the Board. Mr. Claypool said he was participating in a public meeting where he was trying to be heard and was not able to communicate his interest in holding a particular position. Mr. Claypool said he should have challenged the validity of the meeting. He feels that he was not chosen for the position because nobody could hear him. He said it is a different situation if someone has a physical condition that precludes them from attending in person and he accepted Dr. Jensen’s friendly amendment. Dr. Jensen responded that there are ways to make Zoom meetings more responsive, such as having someone dedicated to monitor the screen to see when someone puts a hand up to speak, for voting purposes, and to have public participation. She feels that the Board can figure out a process. Ms. Bagley said it is great that there are a number of community members here in person, but pointed out that there are also many community members participating using Zoom. Ms. Chokshi said the legislation that allows entities to meet virtually ends June 30th.

**Ms. Bagley seconded the friendly amendment made by Dr. Jensen. Mr. Claypool rescinded his original motion and moved that the Board have face to face public meetings, with the exception of a Board member who has a medical condition or other good reason that precludes in person attendance. The ability to attend meeting virtually via Zoom ends June 30, 2022. Ms. Malainy said someone will be appointed to monitor Zoom for speaking and voting purposes. Roll Call: Ayes-11; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Finance**

There was no Finance report.

* 1. **Planning and Policies**

Mr. Claypool reported that the committee met prior to the Board meeting. They briefly reviewed the Table of Contents for Board policies. There are some policies he would like to review further. The committee also discussed the creation of new policies around issues that may be affecting the mental health of children, including the Social Emotional Learning standard. He would like to review each issue brought up and hear the pros and cons.

Mr. Claypool reported that he is waiting for Mr. Fay to submit his evaluation survey questions. Mr. Claypool will then consolidate and send the list of questions to the Board and then to SurveyConnect to move forward with the evaluation process.

At the meeting, Mr. Claypool questioned whether the Board is complying with several Ohio Revised Code sections that pertain to the Board. It was reported that the Board is in compliance with the various sections he brought up, except for the information that needs to be sent to the Geauga County Probate Court.

* 1. **Housing**

Dr. Oluic said he and other members of the housing committee will be meeting with Vicki Clark from Ravenwood Health later this month, will be viewing some of the residential facilities Ravenwood manages, and will then bring information back to the Board for discussion. Mr. Adams said he has received responses to a housing survey he sent to the agencies and will give the Board a compilation of those responses. The information gathered includes where the residences are located, what services are provided, and how many people are served.

Ms. Shumway asked what facilities the Board owns. Mr. Adams responded that the Board owns the Transitional Living Center and the Geauga Independent Apartments. Ms. Shumway asked if the management of those facilities go out for competitive bids from other mental health agencies. Mr. Adams said that can certainly be done. Ms. Shumway commented that the Board may then receive bids from different agencies proposing different services. Mr. Adams said there are no restrictions that preclude other agencies from bidding on any services. The Request for Proposal is given to anyone who asks for it, was available on the Board’s website, and notice was published in the newspapers. Ms. Shumway asked if agencies which are out of the county, such as Bellefaire, know that those services can be bid on and are not just contracted out to local agencies. Mr. Adams said that is certainly possible, but there is no way of knowing what agencies are out there who may want to bid on those services. There has not been much success in the past with bringing in outside agencies due to distance and staffing issues. Dr. Jensen asked if Ms. Shumway is talking about having some other agency manage the facilities. Ms. Shumway replied yes by having an open government process and having those services go out for bid.

1. **BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS**
   1. **Resolution 22-03-1 SAMHSA Block Grant Covid Mitigation Funds**

Mr. Adams said this allocation is from a funding source he has not seen before, nor has he seen a four-year allocation before. The state and federal governments had Covid money available that was given to OhioMHAS, who then made allocations to boards. Mr. Adams said the funds have already been pushed out to boards. These funds can be used through 2025. Agencies would need to ask to use these funds for a particular reason or purpose and then get reimbursed. It has been difficult to get testing kits and other PPE items, which would probably be the biggest expenses for residential facilities. If the Board decides to pass this Resolution, he can report out how the funds were used on an annual basis or as the requests come in.

Mr. Claypool said he will be voting no on this Resolution on principle. This type of funding is bankrupting our country and he voted against accepting Covid funds as a township trustee. These programs tend to have strings attached to them, along with burdensome reporting requirements. Mr. Adams said the report form is very simple, and includes the agency, the amount of funds, and what the funds were used for. That is also very unusual. The wording used in the Resolution came from the state allocation verbiage.

**Dr. Jensen moved to accept the allocation and approve the Resolution. Dr. Oluic seconded the motion.** Discussion: Ms. Bagley asked if the funds will go back to the state if the Board doesn’t approve the Resolution. Mr. Adams said that is correct. Mr. Mausser said the Board would need to pass a Resolution to return the funds. Dr. Oluic said the Board doesn’t know what is going to happen down the road. He feels that Covid will be back in the media, especially during the mid-term election process. Dr. Oluic further said that China is experiencing a horrendous outbreak and it may be foolish to return $21,000.00 that can be used over the next four years. Ms. Miller called the question. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-8; Nays-3; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-03-2 Reimbursement to Geauga Safety Center**

Mr. Adams said this allocation is to reimburse the Safety Center for psychotropic medication given to inmates. This reimbursement process is done twice a year.

**Ms. Miller moved to approve the Resolution. Dr. Oluic seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-11; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Financial Reports**

Mr. Mausser said the Board received financial reports for January and February. He reported that 55% of the Board’s administrative budget has been expended. There were no expenditures from the Community Education Budget. Expenditures shown on the County Calendar Year Budget Performance Report through February 28, 2022 were slightly over $1.25 Million. The Auditor’s Fund Unencumbered Balance as of February 28, 2022 was just over $4.1 Million. He reported that the Cash Balances by Source of Funds are where he would expect them to be at this time of the year. The Board will receive a levy payment next month. Dr. Oluic asked if cash equity is reported. Mr. Mausser replied he considers that to be the number shown as the Unencumbered Balance.

Mr. Mausser said the Board also received the following for review: Voucher Recap Schedule #667 in the amount of $968,546.94 for January and Voucher Recap Schedule #668 in the amount of $285,935.95 for February.

Dr. Jensen asked if the Board invests unencumbered funds. Mr. Adams responded that the Board cannot. The Auditor’s Office is the Board’s fiscal agent and only they can invest funds. The Board is allowed to receive interest on the funds set aside in its capital account. That interest is reported in Fund 4022 under Revenue on the Financial Reports. Mr. Adams said the Auditor receives interest realized on any Board funds and also charges the Board to manage its money.

Mr. Claypool asked about the reimbursement to Ms. Slater for a Zoom account. He suggested that Ms. Slater reach out to Zoom to get a corporate account which could then be paid by purchase order. Mr. Claypool said there are security issues with Zoom. The county offices use WebEx for that reason. Ms. Slater said she would look into that. She said the Board does have a WebEx account. Mr. Adams said the Board is not allowed to have a credit card.

1. **OLD BUSINESS**

Ms. Miller commented on the insurance review information. She asked if the Board has full replacement cost coverage. She feels the Board should have that on everything that is insured. Ms. Slater is fairly sure that is the case but will check. Ms. Miller than asked if the properties are ever reappraised. Ms. Slater responded that can be done as many times as we want for a cost. Dr. Jensen said the overview contains recommendations for some of the Board’s insurance policies, including an updated appraisal to make sure that the buildings are insured at full replacement cost. She feels a cost update of the buildings should be done and asked who would be in charge of that. Mr. Adams said the feedback from our insurance agent was sent to the Prosecutor’s Office for review, who then recommended that an updated appraisal be conducted as suggested. It has been a few years since an update was done and it should probably be done again, especially due to the rising cost of construction. Dr. Jensen asked that this matter be referred to the Planning and Policies committee to review the Board’s insurance coverages, and if warranted, set up some type of procedure regarding those policies, including the reappraisal of properties.

1. **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Claypool introduced his guest – Mr. Morris Eason. Mr. Eason has an organization in Chesterland that provides counseling for kids in trouble. Mr. Claypool recommended that Mr. Eason look into the Board’s Request for Proposal process for funding. Mr. Eason said he knows Ms. Shumway very well. He works with at risk kids, who seem to trust him because of what he has gone through in the past. He works with each kid individually depending on the situation. He is a single dad and Ms. Shumway helped him raise his daughter. He goes into homes, prisons, and neighborhoods to see what is really going on with the kids. Ms. Miller thanked him for the work that he does. Mr. Eason thanked the Board for making a difference which allows him to do what he does. He is an ordained minister. His organization is called Round One Ministry and is registered as a 501(C)(3) non-profit entity. Mr. Adams said programs need to be certified by OhioMHAS in order to receive funding from the Board. Staff could assist in working through that process. Ms. Shumway said it would probably be better to have an agency take this organization under its wing to work with children and parents. Mr. Eason said his vision is to go far beyond this area and have several different locations. Many kids open up to him because he has been where they are at. He thanked the Board again for the work they are doing in the community.

Ms. Shumway asked for clarification that the Covid Mitigation Funds won’t be spent on anything right now. She asked if Mr. Adams would disburse the funds when there is a need or if he will come to the Board first. Mr. Adams responded that it can be done either way. He expects that testing will be the biggest need. He can bring it to the Board first, but it is a quicker turnaround if it is done internally and then he can report what has been done to the Board if that is ok.

Dr. Jensen said the Board has talked about Zoom, WebEx, security and other technology. When she was first thinking about becoming a Board member, it was nearly impossible to even find who the current Board members are on our website. In light of all this, she asked if the Board should add a technology/communication committee, and if the staff can manage what is being done, including updating of the website. She said Minutes of meetings are public documents and someone shouldn’t have to call the office to get them. Minutes could be put on the Board’s website, along with upcoming meeting agendas. She feels the website needs a lot of work. Ms. Shumway asked if the staff or the county controls the Board’s website. Ms. Slater replied that it is the Board’s site and not connected with the county. She said that the meeting agendas for this evening are on the website and Minutes are now available. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo stepped into that role when the last staff member left. Ms. Slater said Board members can send a bio that can be put on the website. Ms. Malainy said this matter can be on the next Board meeting agenda.

1. **DISCUSSION ITEMS**
   1. **Staff Calendars**

Ms. Malainy asked if everyone has reviewed the calendars that were submitted and if Board members want this to continue. Dr. Lesyk said it should not because it is a waste of staff time, who have many other things to do that preexisted this practice. She doesn’t think the primary duty of Mr. Adams and Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo is to apprise the Board of what is or is not on their calendars. Dr. Lesyk went on to say that the staff has always been very responsible. She feels maintaining monthly calendars is a nuisance and that it is unnecessary.

Ms. Malainy asked if Mr. Adams keeps a monthly calendar and if so how many years has he done that. Mr. Adams replied that he has done that for 35 years. Ms. Malainy then responded that it would be no extra work for staff except to provide a copy. Dr. Jensen said this practice suggests that we don’t trust our staff, that they need to be micromanaged, it sends a negative message, and is a waste of time. Dr. Jensen said it blows her away that this staff manages the amount of money and activities they do, and respond to the constant emails sent by Board members.

Mr. Petruziello asked how many people are still working from home. He said that is not shown on the calendar, but there are a lot of blank days. He asked if those days meant that someone is working from home. Mr. Adams responded not necessarily. He may be doing other things, such as reports and other routine matters. Mr. Petruziello again asked if there are staff still working from home. Mr. Adams replied yes there are.

Mr. Claypool said he sees things differently than Dr. Jensen. He feels looking at staff calendars is providing awareness and is an appropriate, proper, and responsible thing for the Board to know where the staff is spending their time. He is looking at some trends right now, but is not ready to comment yet. The Board gets to sees how Mr. Mausser and Ms. Slater are spending their time. When looking at the reports, there are some questions that come to mind as to where the staff is spending a lot of time, but the community priorities may be different. Mr. Claypool said the Board can’t determine that unless they see where staff is focusing their attention. He said micromanaging is appropriate for the Board to do because they have a duty to the community to make sure it is delivering on certain commitments. Mr. Claypool said the Board is not micromanaging because nothing has been adjusted. Ms. Johnson said she would never micromanage staff, but it is nice to see what organizations the staff is interacting with. She said there was an issue a few months ago with the Suicide Prevention Coalition that was brought to light. Ms. Johnson then said that the calendars probably represent only about 20% of staff time. If it is not too difficult, she would like the practice to continue.

Mr. Claypool then spoke about the HUB organization and that it was something new which just came up. Mr. Claypool said he wasn’t aware of this group, and he is not sure if other Board members were ever aware of it. He then went to the Ohio Revised Code to do some research and look at the activities the HUB is to be involved with. Mr. Claypool then said it is helpful to see where staff is spending time and that the Board may need to have a conversation at some point to refocus its priorities.

Dr. Jensen said her comment wasn’t against looking at the calendars. The issue is that the calendars are only a small representation of what is being done. She said if the Board wants to look at the allocation of staff time, there are ways to do that, such as tracking time of what exactly is being done for a week or more. Dr. Jensen said something like that might be more useful and would also show what organizations the staff works with. That is a different concept from seeing how much time is spent doing specific tasks. There is a lot of information about what is being done that isn’t shown on calendars, and she is not sure that reviewing calendars alone gets to that issue. Mr. Claypool said he understands time management and that all time can be documented and then evaluated. He feels this is helpful as long as it is not too much work. It should be relatively easy to do and would show a monthly snapshot of activities the Board can then review and digest, and then start asking questions about this at the next meeting.

Mr. Petruziello said when the Board started HUB, he thought several groups were supposed to be brought together and form one group. Mr. Petruziello said he did not know there would be all of these subgroups. He thought HUB was supposed to consolidate programs but it seems that it has been expanded further without the Board knowing about it. Mr. Adams replied that HUB was actually supposed to expand the opiate outreach to the community by centralizing services. Mr. Petruziello said he understands HUB to be the central group, but from that, we now have four more committees/boards involved. Mr. Adams replied they are not boards. Four subcommittees were created and each has a specific focus and participates with the HUB as a whole. Mr. Adams feels the group has been very effective. He was not a fan of the legislation when he first saw it. He said HUB has done some marvelous things and he provides updates on what is going on in his CEO reports.

Ms. Chokshi said if the Board wants a snapshot of what Mr. Adams does, maybe that can be done once a year, with a minute by minute, day by day of what was done for one or two weeks. It is not something that would need to be done continuously. It is only a technique to find out what is being done for that specific period of time. Ms. Johnson said she appreciated what has been done. She said having to track work in 15-minute increments is too invasive and she would not subject the staff to that unless there was good reason to do so.

Mr. Claypool asked Ms. Slater to provide him with the HUB reports. He does not remember seeing any and would like to evaluate the effectiveness of what is being done. Ms. Miller said she would send some information to Mr. Claypool because she chairs that committee. Mr. Claypool then asked when was the last time there was a HUB report to this Board. Ms. Miller said the group took a hiatus during Covid because most of what they do is out in the community. Mr. Claypool said he read the Ohio Revised Code section about HUB. He said the group is supposed to work under the auspices of the mental health board, and that this Board should be hearing from them on a regular basis to ensure they are doing the right things. It seems as if they are off doing their own thing instead of being under the guidance of and responsible to the Board. He then again asked Ms. Slater to provide any HUB reports that are available. Mr. Claypool commented that Mr. Adams said the HUB is very effective and he would like to see that. Ms. Johnson said she would like to have a HUB overview.

Ms. Malainy asked Mr. Adams and Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo to submit their calendars again next month so the Board can take a look at them and reassess how they would like to proceed.

* 1. **Art in the Park**

Ms. Shumway said she brought this program up at the last Board meeting and she wanted to clarify a few things. It was her idea to start the program, but she has nothing to do with Art in the Park anymore. Ms. Shumway said that Ms. Daugherty of Family Pride was going to include the program in her request for proposal, but was told by Mr. Adams not to. Ms. Shumway asked if Mr. Adams is filtering the RFPs before they come to the Board. She then asked if any of the agencies would be able to pick up Mr. Eason’s program and add it to their funding request, or Art in the Park, Equine Growth, or any other out of the box program.

* 1. **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Discussion**

Dr. Jensen referenced an email she sent which stated that the SEL curriculum is required or mandated by the Ohio Board of Education. Ms. Johnson said she contacted the state Board of Education about the curriculum. She was sent documentation of their strategic plan for education that uses SEL, but it is a standard, not a law or mandate. Mr. Claypool said he has contacted Karen Lackey at the Educational Service Center about looking into this. There are a number of parents who are very concerned about what is being promoted in that standard. He said schools are not required to implement that standard. Some schools choose to and some do not. The impact this curriculum has on mental health in children may be significant and he feels that the Board should look into this further. Dr. Jensen responded that as a Board, they need to focus on the mission of the Board. She understands there are mental health issues in schools, but if parents have any concerns about curriculum, it is her recommendation that they go to the school board. She feels that is not the purview of this Board as she understands it, and these discussions take time away from matters that do need to be addressed by this Board. Mr. Claypool responded that mental health is the Board’s purview, and if social emotional learning is creating depression, thoughts of suicide, and mental health issues in children, the Board should look into it. Dr. Jensen replied that she would like to see the data showing that curriculum is causing suicide. Mr. Claypool said there are teachers who are not trained counselors, social workers or mental health professionals, implementing programs that are socially adjusting kids at a young age and affecting their mental health.

Dr. Oluic asked what Mr. Claypool proposes that the Board do. Mr. Claypool replied that he is already doing some homework and reaching out to the state. Dr. Oluic then asked what would the Board actually do. Mr. Claypool said as an example, if the Board gathers data which supports that social emotional learning is harming children, the Board should take some type of action - go to the school board, write them a letter, or sue them. Some of the things he has seen could cross the line into child endangerment. The findings could also be taken to the Probate Court. Mr. Petruziello said he knows a lot of students through his grandchildren. He said the Board needs to talk to kids about some of the programs that are being brought into the schools. They are laughable to the students, but are causing great harm. The students are there to be educated, but they are being taught things that should come from parents. Mr. Petruziello feels some of the suicide prevention programs being taught at West Geauga are outrageous and shouldn’t be there. He further feels that what is being taught in schools is creating a lot of mental health problems. Mr. Claypool said he is not making that claim right now, but he is trying to do due diligence. He feels that adults making the choice for kids to wear masks in school created problems and did great harm, and we will see the ramifications for many years. Mr. Claypool said as the mental health board, we should have a conversation and question questionable behavior.

Ms. Shumway said the Board is funding some programs in the schools like Taco Tuesday, and asked Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo if the Board is funding any other programs. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo replied that the Board is not funding Taco Tuesday. Ms. Shumway then asked what the money the Board received for educational services was used for. Mr. Adams asked if Ms. Shumway was referring to the K-12 money and Ms. Shumway replied that is correct. Mr. Adams then said the K-12 funds were awarded before Covid happened. Each school district had a different plan for how that money was to be used and the funds have been gone for quite some time.

Mr. Petruziello said he attended the suicide walk at Berkshire Schools and talked to some of the students. He heard the same things that he heard from West Geauga students. The students think some of the programs are ok, but they are there to learn – read, write, geography, science – so they can have a career, not hear about other people’s problems. Mr. Petruziello would like to know what prevention programs are being done in Geauga schools. He urged everyone to go to the schools and talk with some of the students at lunch time. He said you will be amazed at what you hear.

Ms. Malainy asked how the Board should follow through and why wouldn’t it be fair to look at some of these issues a little more. Dr. Lesyk said the Board has a mandate of a whole series of programs they are responsible for. She feels until we execute those responsibilities, it would be a disservice to those populations to look at a different population and focus on programs the Board has no responsibility for. Ms. Malainy said kids are probably the Board’s first responsibility. Ms. Johnson and Mr. Claypool strongly agreed. Dr. Lesyk responded that the Board has established a set of priorities that need to be addressed. She feels taking the Board’s time to address the schools are out of the Board’s range, and the Board would then be neglecting its own responsibilities that should be addressed first. Ms. Malainy said the fourth highest priority shown on the Resolution that was distributed earlier is Geauga County adults and children who are at risk of developing mental health issues. Dr. Jensen commented that anecdotal stories are not data. If the Board is going to make recommendations and decisions, then they should move away from individual cases and stories and talk about what the findings are. Mr. Claypool responded that he will bring data to the next meeting.

Ms. Johnson said Geauga county residents are the Board’s business and that is what they are here for, whether it is 2, 5 or 1,000 individuals. She is anxious to hear anyone who has a story and be here for the people of Geauga. Mr. Petruziello referenced the Resolution distributed earlier, and that priorities change over time depending on the circumstances. He said the priorities list should be re-evaluated.

* 1. **Question, Persuade, Refer Program (QPR): Erica Zaffiro – West Geauga Parent**

Ms. Zaffiro said she has been a Geauga resident for 14 years. She has a bachelor’s degree in psychology, a master’s degree in community counseling and is a professional clinical counselor, but her most important qualification is being a parent. She wanted to share her experience with West Geauga Schools and the negative impact some programs have on children’s mental health.

Ms. Zaffiro said she is very disturbed that the QPR program is being used in schools to train minors how to assess their peers for suicidality. She said training children to assess their peers is very dangerous. The only thing a child should be trained to do is tell an adult. Another troubling aspect of the program teaches how to persuade someone to stay alive. Ms. Zaffiro emphatically stated that is not the job of a child. A third troubling feature of the program includes a slide which says if a person refuses to listen, the child may need to get an adult involved. This would leave it up to a child’s discretion whether or not to tell an adult and that is dangerous. There are supposed to be safety procedures in place, but parents are not given the proper right to consent.

Ms. Zaffiro said another issue is that mental health programs are being brought into schools. The Youth Led Prevention program is coordinated by the Educational Services Center. Her daughter was told she had to take a survey, which asked questions about drug abuse, depression, and other mental health related matters. Ms. Zaffiro said the survey constitutes a mental health assessment, but parents were not informed or given the opportunity to provide permission. She destroyed her daughter’s survey because the school did not have her permission. There must be ethical standards in place to ensure the safety of children and to respect the rights of parents.

Ms. Zaffiro said her daughter was offered the opportunity to participate in the Choices and Challenges program. Ms. Zaffiro opted her child out of the program and is very glad she did. There were questions on the survey that asked about rape, along with other disturbing questions. After much push back by parents, the class was subsequently cancelled.

Ms. Zaffiro said there has been a common theme with all this - the lack of transparency with parents, not having proper informed consent, and the risks not being told to parents. These programs expose children to adult situations and adult responsibilities, which shows poor judgment and raises ethical questions. There is a culture here of saying yes and not questioning anything, that if a mental health professional is involved, then it must be ok. Ms. Zaffiro said it is everyone’s job to look at these issues and not just rubber stamp programs. She is asking for the Board’s help regarding accountability. She said agencies need to be made accountable for their actions, allow parents to review all material, and give parents the opportunity to provide informed consent about whether or not a program is appropriate for their child. It is the parent’s right and job to make those decisions, not the schools or agencies.

Dr. Jensen thanked Ms. Zaffiro for being a responsible and attentive mother. She wishes all parents were as involved. Dr. Jensen said she is not familiar with QPR, but it sounds relatively awful and the suicide prevention program seems reasonably close to awful. These stories and concerns should be expressed to the schools. Dr. Jensen said a lot of school boards and teachers don’t know what is coming in the room. She is distressed to hear this. Dr. Jensen said Ms. Zaffiro is right that this situation is awful and the school board needs to take responsibility. Ms. Zaffiro said the schools are trusting the agencies to provide appropriate material and nobody is looking at it.

Ms. Johnson commented that she went online and viewed what Ms. Zaffiro said at the West Geauga school board meeting. Ms. Johnson thanked her for being that parent, for letting the Board know, and that she would like to help. The agencies and ESC were probably well intentioned, but there is some crossover point where we are doing good and where we are doing harm. Ms. Johnson said we have to find that crossover point and we have to stand in the gap. She is committed to doing that and asked Ms. Zaffiro to come back and talk to the Board again because what she has to say is very valuable.

Mr. Claypool said the SEL standards are a common theme among programs and some people think it is well intentioned. Schools have moved away from teaching basic math, English, etc. They should go back to that and stay away from the parental aspect of raising children. Mr. Claypool said teachers do not have the right to teach a child how to react and what an emotional response should be.

Ms. Zaffiro said she has reviewed all of the SEL material and it is integrated into ELA and incorporated throughout the school curriculum. She said there is a fine line to crossing over into what the schools’ responsibility is and what is the responsibility and job of the parents. Schools want to teach kids how to act towards other kids, but are crossing a line when teaching how a child should react, regardless of what values they do or do not agree with. Ms. Zaffiro said this year in ELA class, an article was presented which taught that all children should be looked at on a wide gender spectrum. This is something families should be discussing. There is a limit and there is a line that should not be crossed.

Mr. Claypool said he has reviewed the SEL standards and how those standards can be applied in schools. There is a certain set of values and beliefs creeping into other areas of school that infringe upon parental rights. He asked if Ms. Zaffiro is seeing the same thing. Ms. Zaffiro said she is seeing a trend for peers to evaluate other peers. She said there should also be limits to what teachers can and should do. There is pressure for kids to be adults. Mr. Petruziello asked what the ESC is and what business do they have in mental health matters. He said this Board has an obligation to at least have them cease and desist. Mr. Claypool said the ESC provides an educational framework for high intensity school kids. Mr. Petruziello asked why these programs are being done for the whole school. Dr. Jensen responded that the ESC is supposed to be a resource for the schools. Mr. Petruziello said mental health issues of this nature should not be taught in school to kids who are just trying to become educated. Ms. Shumway suggested inviting someone from the ESC to talk about what is going on in schools. Ms. Malainy said Ms. Zaffiro has raised some huge valid concerns and that it is the Board’s duty to listen and act. Ms. Bagley said it is her understanding that Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers has been involved and that the Board should hear from them as well.

Ms. Slater gave an update on the training video Ms. Shumway offered to present to the Board. The training has been approved by the state and would be sufficient to meet the annual training requirement for Board members. The Board discussed what the best venue would be to view the video. Ms. Shumway said the Resiliency training has a question and answer period afterwards and it would probably benefit those who don’t have the experience to see it in person. The consensus was for Board members to be able to view the video individually when it is most convenient.

1. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Malainy asked if there were any other public comments. Being none, she thanked Mr. Eason and Ms. Zaffiro for speaking to the Board this evening.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

Dr. Oluic moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Claypool seconded the motion. The meeting was then adjourned at 7:50 PM.

**Respectfully submitted by:**

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**Ms. Teresa Slater**

**Secretary/Receptionist**

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**Ms. Jennifer Malainy**

**Chairman of the Board**

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**Ms. Alberta Chokshi**

**Secretary of the Board**