

**GEAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH  
AND RECOVERY SERVICES**

**Steven Oluic**  
Chairman of the Board

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**Board Minutes**

**March 15, 2023**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ann Bagley, Alberta Chokshi, Walter Claypool, Martin Fay, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Carolee Lesyk, Ryan Mekota, Linda Miller, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Gregory O'Brien, Mary Ruth Shumway

**GUESTS:** Kim Carter (NAMI Geauga), Gail Roussey (Gauga League of Women Voters), Vicki Clark (Ravenwood Health), Andrea Gutka (WomenSafe), Michelle Bertman (Catholic Charities), Mary Wynne-Peaspanen (Signature Health), Tia Lawrence (Torchlight), Todd Albright (Chardon Board of Education), Jim MacNeal (Troy Township Central Committee GOP A), Erica Zaffiro (Gauga County Resident), Joe DeBoth (GOP Central Committee Member Auburn Township A), Gerry Morgan (Gauga County Administrator), Jonathan Broadbent (Central Committee and Protect Ohio Children)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Christine Lakomiak, Jim Mausser, Teresa Slater

**I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Dr. Oluic called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Ms. Chokshi called the roll for attendance purposes and the following Board members were present: Ann Bagley, Alberta Chokshi, Walter Claypool, Martin Fay, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Carolee Lesyk, Ryan Mekota, Linda Miller, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

**II. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 8 AND 15, 2023**

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Minutes as written. Dr. Lesyk seconded the motion.  
**Voice Vote: Ayes-11; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

**III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Dr. Oluic referenced a recent OhioMHAS newsletter that includes a report about the crisis system in Ohio. This newsletter provides a good overview of what is happening in the state. He recommended that Board members sign up to receive this newsletter.

Dr. Oluic reminded everyone of the Board's mission and that all members are volunteers appointed by the County Commissioners or the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The Board is the duly appointed local oversight, funding, and planning authority for mental health and substance abuse services. The Board's purpose is to assess community needs and plan, organize and manage public resources so that essential services are provided to the community. He then listed the seven ideals the Board should adhere to when carrying out its mission:

1. The most effective services are recipient driven and recovery-oriented services that place the person above the organization.
2. Since community needs change, establishing service and funding priorities is an ongoing process.
3. Resources shall be applied toward services that are measurably effective.
4. The Board advocates for the community it serves and demands accountability.
5. Prevention, education and treatment recovery-oriented services are complementary, not mutually exclusive.
6. Effective services are accessible services for the community served.
7. A community worth living in looks after its own, in all its diversity.

Dr. Oluic said the Board serves all members of the community, which is made up of many different people, through its partner agencies. Public comments will be allowed at the end of the meeting and should only include issues happening in the community that are germane to the Board.

#### **IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Lakomiak introduced herself and said this is her third day at the Board. She has had many meetings, trainings, and conversations. She is familiar with the services the Board is required to provide under Ohio Revised Code Section 340. Every county is different and boards can plan for what is specifically needed in their own county. She is looking forward to meeting with agencies and learning more about the programs they provide. She was pleased to receive a welcome note from OhioMHAS Director Lori Criss. Ms. Lakomiak is looking forward to working with and supporting the Board. She has scheduled a group meeting with agency directors next week and will also be scheduling individual meetings with each agency.

#### **V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### **a. Agency Relations**

Ms. Johnson reported that the committee met prior to the Board to discuss agency allocations for SFY2024. The committee will be recommending the adoption of Resolution 23-03-3 later in the meeting. She then reported that the Geauga Faith Coalition met at the Board offices on March 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss a family-oriented event they will be holding June 3<sup>rd</sup> on the square in Burton.

**b. Finance**

Mr. Petruziello reported he has been working with staff regarding the 2024 calendar year budget that will be submitted to the Budget Commission for review.

**c. Planning and Policies**

Mr. Claypool said the committee has discussed reviewing the Board's Policy Manual and receiving input from Director Lakomiak. Ms. Slater sent out the policies for the committee to review. The committee can now move forward in a productive way.

**d. Capital Planning**

There was no update.

**e. Opiate HUB**

Ms. Miller reported that the Education, Training and Community Outreach subcommittee has been meeting on a regular basis. The committee has designated September 17<sup>th</sup> through September 23<sup>rd</sup> as the week to recognize first responders in 2023. Last year, 746 Geauga first responders were recognized. This did not include hospitals and agencies, but were mostly police and fire departments.

**VI. BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS**

**a. Resolution 23-03-1 Allocation of 2023 State Opioid and Stimulant Response Funds**

Mr. Mausser explained that SOS 3.0 did not allocate a full year of funding. In order to make agencies financially whole, the state initiated SORs 2.0 No Cost Extension funding based on what the agencies received last year.

Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. Discussion: Mr. Claypool asked if there were any changes to the strings attached to receiving these federal grants. Mr. Mausser said the requirements are the same as when the funding first started, except that in SOS 3.0, indirect costs could not be more than 5%. In the past, that figure was 10%. The requirements are outlined in the Resolution. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-11; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

**b. Resolution 23-03-2 Reimbursement to Geauga Safety Center**

Dr. Oluic explained that this allocation provides reimbursement for psychotropic medications that are prescribed to inmates. Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Bagley seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-11; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

**c. Resolution 23-03-3 Funding Allocations for Board Contract and Grant Agencies for SFY2024**

Ms. Johnson reported that she and Ms. Miller have met with staff several times to review the process and procedures for requests for proposals as it pertains to agency allocations. Ms. Lakomiak graciously agreed to attend all of these meetings even before she was on staff. Discussion included delaying the RFP process for two weeks, three months, six months or a year. After further discussion about many issues happening in the county and in light of having a new Director, the Agency Relations committee is proposing to extend the existing contracts into SFY2024 at the same amounts. Separate agency resolutions will be submitted for review and approval at next month's Board meeting.

The committee also discussed additional financial needs agencies may have, as outlined in the presentation made by Vicki Clark. Dr. Oluic said this will give staff more time and not have to rush through the agency review process. Agencies can always come to the Board with funding requests if they can demonstrate the need.

Ms. Lakomiak said the request for proposal is typically posted in February with completed requests due back in March. She would need more time to write the service specifications and outcomes requirements to really understand what the Board is purchasing. She, along with Ms. Johnson and Ms. Miller, will be meeting with agency directors individually to review what services are provided and what is needed.

Mr. Claypool asked what the timing requirement is and whether there is a legal fiscal requirement for deadlines. Mr. Mausser responded that the current agency contracts expire on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The committee is recommending new contracts for SFY2024 at the same levels as SFY2023. Mr. Claypool feels the Board has enough time to go through a review process. He further feels the Board is waiving its due diligence and not meeting its obligations as fiduciaries and its responsibility to the taxpayers.

Ms. Chokshi said the Board extended agency contracts and allocations two years ago as a result of Covid. Mr. Petruziello said Ms. Lakomiak will be reviewing each program and what the outcomes should be. This will help the Board to better determine what should be changed and where funding should go. Mr. Claypool said he is uncomfortable putting this off for a year. Mr. Mausser responded that the Board can issue a 120 notice about specific programs that may need to be modified or terminated.

Mr. Petruziello said the Board has never set up expectations and guidelines about the programs it funds. Ms. Lakomiak will be writing specifications for each program. Dr. Oluic responded that will also make outcomes more uniform. He feels the Board has never not carried out its fiduciary duty or lost services and programs provided for the community. The Board has been discussing the increasing needs in the community and a further assessment of our partner agencies will help to meet those needs. Staff is gathering information and asking questions so the Board can continue to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities.

Ms. Miller moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Bagley seconded the motion. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-9; NAYS-2; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

#### **d. Financial Reports**

Mr. Mausser reported that 47.5% of the Board's operational budget has been expended through February 28, 2023. The operational budget will be under for the fiscal year due to staffing changes, which affect the top five allocation line items. There were no expenses from the Community Education Budget. Calendar Year Expenditures for 2023 were \$1,079,679.56 through February. The Auditor's Unencumbered Balance was just over \$2.4 Million. Cash Balances by Source of Funds are all in order. He is anticipating payments of federal funds that will offset the negative amounts. Voucher Recap 680 in the amount of \$490,158.99 itemizes expenses for February 2023.

Mr. Claypool asked if there will be enough funds to cover utilities for the full year. Mr. Mausser replied that he may need to move some funds around. If any line item becomes negative, it can be supplemented with funds from the salary line item. Mr. Claypool asked what utility costs have increased the most. Mr. Mausser replied natural gas. He is anticipating that we will be over on utilities for the apartments.

#### **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

Dr. Oluic said for the short term, there will not be any staffing changes. Moving forward, Ms. Lakomiak will assess what is needed before making any staffing recommendations to the Board. Ms. Lakomiak said some of the work that Ms. Slater and Mr. Mausser perform is done by multiple positions at other boards. She would like to be very thorough about how to incorporate new staff. Mr. Claypool responded it does pose a risk to have "all of our eggs in one basket". Dr. Oluic commended Mr. Mausser, Ms. Slater and Interim Director Vidmar in that there was no drop in the provision of services. The Board can now move forward positively.

#### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no New Business discussed.

#### **IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Dr. Oluic said the Board will now take public comments about issues that are germane to the Board and what it does.

Heather Cooper: She introduced herself as a central committee member and a volunteer who helps seniors. She mentioned several Board members and then thanked those who helped her get a person with challenges moved into housing. She expressed concern about how Geauga County is being impacted regarding psychological issues of young people in our schools – including fentanyl and the sexualization of kids. She then asked what percentage of Board funds come from the federal government. Mr. Mausser responded about 31%.

Dr. Oluic responded since Covid struck and due to what the Board is mandated to provide, there has been an increase in needs to the community in general, not just youth. Ms. Lakomiak said the Board provides funding for a full continuum of care - including prevention and education – through its contract agencies. Dr. Oluic added that there has not been any lapse in service by the agencies.

Jonathan Broadbent: He is a Central Committee member in Newbury. He thanked the Board for all it does for mental health in the county. He keeps track of the activities of the Board as they relate to his activities in relation to Protect Ohio Children. He agrees with some of the comments about fentanyl and depression and the need for help in schools. One element that struck a nerve is boards and board activities. It seems to be a trend relative to boards that there is a knee jerk reaction to touchy subjects. He feels that failure to question a third-party provider is an indication that a board member falls on one side or another on an issue and that doesn't sit well with him. Boards should address every vendor, provider, allocation, etc. in light of the constituents they look after.

Joe DeBoth: He is a Central Committee member. What brought him to this meeting is a conversation he overheard in his kitchen where his son told another young person that “fentanyl is cool”. He then had to explain the dangers of fentanyl. Regarding the conversation around RFPs, he worked for Deloitte Consulting and would be happy to provide guidance, validation, etc. to the Board.

Todd Albright: He is a Chardon School Board member, but is not representing the Board. He is in the process of trying to gather as much data as he can to measure how effective a program is, such as the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program. He asked the Board to share any data it can - without violating privacy laws – about depression, suicide, and mental health issues, especially as it pertains to young people.

Ms. Lakomiak responded that the SOS program is provided in Lake County schools. She can get some of their data. She is not sure if any agencies provide the SOS training in Geauga schools. The teachers and staff in Lake have really appreciated those trainings. Mr. Albright reiterated that he has no data to say which program is more effective, which also goes hand in hand with fiduciary responsibility.

Dr. Oluic said the Board should leverage the successes of our partner boards in other counties. He commented that sometimes the data collected varies by agency and that issue is in the process of being addressed by the Board and staff. Mr. Claypool said any information received by the Board is public information. The Board does receive various reports throughout the year from the agencies. Dr. Oluic said OhioMHAS has lots of information and data from boards and agencies on their website.

Ms. Lakomiak thanked everyone for the turnout. It shows that the community is invested in what the Board does and that success is in our favor.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Petruziello moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Lesyk seconded the motion. The meeting was then adjourned at 6:55 PM.

**Respectfully submitted by:**

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**Ms. Teresa Slater  
Secretary/Receptionist**

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**Dr. Steven Oluic  
Chairman of the Board**

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**Ms. Alberta Chokshi  
Secretary of the Board**