

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

**Steven Oluic**  
**Chairman of the Board**

**13244 Ravenna Road**  
**Chardon, Ohio 44024**

**Christine Lakomiak**  
**Executive Director**

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**Board Minutes**

**April 19, 2023**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ann Bagley, Alberta Chokshi, Walter Claypool, Reba Dykes, Martin Fay, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Ryan Mekota, Linda Miller, Gregory O'Brien, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, Mary Ruth Shumway

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Carolee Lesyk

**GUESTS:** Kim Carter (NAMI Geauga), Kathy Franz (Gauga League of Women Voters), Vicki Clark (Ravenwood Health), Andrea Gutka (WomenSafe), Michelle Bertman (Catholic Charities), Melanie Blasko (Lake-Gauga Recovery Centers), Stacy Noyes (Signature Health), Erin Burchard (guest of Mary Ruth Shumway), Jessica Boalt (Community Member), Angi Daugherty (Family Pride)

**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, Reba Dykes, Martin Fay, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Ryan Mekota, Linda Miller, Gregory O'Brien, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, and Mary Ruth Shumway. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

**II. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM MARCH 15, 2023**

Mr. Claypool moved to approve the Minutes as written. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-12; Nays-0; Abstentions-1. Motion approved.**

**III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Dr. Oluic welcomed new Board member Reba Dykes. He reported that Director Lakomiak has accomplished quite a lot and will report on some of what she has been doing.

**IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Lakomiak reported in the last five weeks, there has been a lot of interaction with staff, Board members, agencies, and other entities to help achieve the Board's mandate to monitor, evaluate and plan local mental health and recovery services that are responsive to the needs of Geauga county. This is not achieved alone but in partnership with other

systems of care. She thanked Gerry Morgan and the Commissioners for their support. Ms. Lakomiak said Ms. Dykes has many years of experience with nonprofit mental health agencies and is an expert in housing. She then thanked Ms. Miller for providing orientation to new Board members.

**Stepping Up Initiative:** The purpose of Stepping Up is to reduce the number of individuals in jails that have a mental illness. The County Commissioners have passed a resolution to bring the Initiative to Geauga County. An initial meeting with Justice Stratton and her team was held on March 31<sup>st</sup>. It was attended by Board staff, three Board members, Ms. Carter of NAMI Geauga, and other community representatives. Ms. Johnson said she is very excited about Stepping Up coming to Geauga county. The meeting was very positive, enthusiastic and motivating.

A year ago, Sheriff Hildenbrand met with the Board and talked about this issue in the Geauga Safety Center. Ms. Johnson was impacted by what the Sheriff said. She then reiterated some of the statistics that he shared. Sheriff Hildenbrand said his biggest challenge is inmates with mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Inmates with a mental illness or who have committed a violent crime are seen by Ravenwood Health before they are put in with the general population. Several agencies work together to provide services at the Safety Center. The Stepping Up Initiative would leverage the knowledge and resources of Justice Stratton and her team to come up with a plan of what services they can offer Geauga relative to treatment and support services, including a housing component. Hopefully this would break the cycle of a person committing a crime, going to jail, being released back into the community, and repeating that process.

Dr. Oluic said the cost savings alone could be phenomenal. Thom Craig from Peg's Foundation talked about the opportunity for funding. Judge Stratton was very inspirational. Ms. Lakomiak said Board members will be invited to an upcoming Zoom meeting, which will include the courts, juvenile justice, agencies, law enforcement and other Geauga entities. The first meeting will focus on how Stepping Up could be helpful to the community and the different tools that are available and what they recommend. Geauga as a team will decide what that will look like moving forward and what is applicable to Geauga.

**Legislative Day in Columbus:** She and Kim Carter from NAMI Geauga attended on behalf of mental health boards, local NAMI organizations, and suicide prevention coalitions.

**Crisis Intervention Training:** Several agencies and other local systems provided training to first responders. It was well received and she thanked the agencies who spent a week putting that training together.

**Metzenbaum Facilities:** Don Rice, Director of the Geauga Department of Developmental Disabilities, reached out to her about giving two of their homes to the Board for use as some type of residential facility. He will be meeting with his Board of Directors. This is informational at this time.

**Forensic Monitoring:** She has been in contact with the state hospital and is ready to write the specifications of service. This will need to be reviewed by Planning and Policies once drafted.

**Budget Commission:** The hearing was held on Monday and everything was approved. This was a monumental task that took an enormous amount of energy. Ms. Lakomiak thanked Mr. Petruziello for his guidance and Jim Mausser for all his work on the budget.

**Agency Relations:** Ms. Johnson will talk about this more during her committee report. The individual meetings with agencies will be completed this week.

**Agency Contracts:** Agencies will be required to submit much of the same documentation as in the past. The list of what is needed will be sent out with the contracts. Moving forward, there will be service specifications written for each program, including what outcomes will be required.

**Alcohol Awareness Month:** Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers and Ravenwood Health are holding various prevention activities in the community.

**Committees:** Ms. Lakomiak would like to set a schedule of meetings in advance for the upcoming fiscal year. If a meeting is not needed, it can be cancelled, but this would be very helpful for planning purposes.

**Staff Vacations:** She may reach out to Board members to come in and fill the gaps if needed.

**Job Description:** She would like to have a committee meeting to review the job description for the fourth staff position.

**Ravenwood Health:** Ms. Lakomiak congratulated Ravenwood because they were chosen to showcase their IBHT program to a behavioral health agency from Alaska. Ravenwood is well respected around the country for their IBHT program and their Amish collaboration, which is similar to the indigenous population in Alaska.

**Crisis Response Team:** This is a team of professionals who go into the community when something tragic occurs. Ms. Lakomiak thanked the Board for funding this program. She listed the professionals who are involved and then thanked everyone, including those who coordinate and work behind the scene. She is thankful for their dedication and professionalism.

## **V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **a. Agency Relations**

Ms. Johnson reported that she, Ms. Lakomiak, and Ms. Miller have been meeting with agency directors. They have been extremely beneficial. She is learning a lot and is getting to know people and programs. The Faith Coalition will be holding a family-based event on Burton Square on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. One of the purposes is to make people aware of what is available in our county. It was suggested that the Board have a table with agency information at the event.

**b. Finance**

Mr. Petruziello reported the committee met prior to the Board meeting and reviewed a five- year budget forecast prepared by Mr. Mausser. Ms. Slater will send that document to all Board members.

**c. Planning and Policies**

There was no report.

**d. Capital Planning**

Ms. Shumway said her goal is to have the committee meet every other month at a minimum. She has spoken with several agencies about what is needed. She knows of two buildings that are not on the market yet, but may suit the Board's purposes. Her concept is that the Board could help an agency purchase the building, but the Board has no intention to operate the facility. Dr. Oluic said the Board would put out a bid proposal to run the facility and provide programs. Ms. Shumway asked Ms. Clark for an update on the Geauga Youth Center. Ms. Clark said that County Administrator Gerry Morgan has the grant application to send in. The Commissioners need to pass a resolution to that end. The hope is that groundbreaking would begin in the fall.

**e. Opiate HUB**

Ms. Miller said there was a meeting last week to begin planning for first responders appreciation week in September. One of the things done in the past was provide a bag of goodies that first responders might appreciate. The number one requested item is beef jerky. Last year, 750 bags were distributed. Dr. Oluic asked if there is a way to donate toward this event. Ms. Lakomiak reported she has contacted the state to see if they will again be awarding Boards \$1,500.00 to help with the cost of recognizing first responders. Mr. Mausser said the Board does have a line items for donations. Ms. Lakomiak said many entities provided donations last year. Some Board members helped deliver the bags.

**VI. BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS**

Dr. Oluic reported that at last month's meeting, the Board approved giving agencies the same allocations in SFY2024 as they received in SFY2023. He suggested one motion and vote to pass the resolutions all at once. Ms. Johnson moved to approve the following: **Resolution 23-04-1 Ravenwood Health Allocation for SFY2024; Resolution 23-04-2 Signature Health Grant Award for SFY2024; Resolution 23-04-3 Geauga County Sheriff Grant Award for SFY2024; Resolution 23-04-4 Torchlight Youth Mentoring Alliance Allocation for SFY2024; Resolution 23-04-5 Catholic Charities Allocation for SFY2024; Resolution 23-04-6 Family Pride of Northeast Ohio Allocation for SFY2024; Resolution 23-04-7 Lake Geauga Recovery Centers Allocation for SFY2024; Resolution 23-04-8 NAMI Geauga Allocation for SFY2024; and Resolution 23-04-9 WomenSafe Allocation for SFY2024.** Ms. Bagley seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Claypool is willing to vote yes and approve these allocations, but he has questions for some of the agencies. Mr. Claypool requested information to be sent to the full board regarding Ravenwood Health hotline calls and transitional housing, Signature Health – curriculum for their program in the schools, and the DARE Program information that was previously submitted. Ms. Shumway commented that if the Sheriff no longer needs DARE funding from the Board, the money would come back to the Board. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-13; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

Ms. Lakomiak will forward Board members whatever information Ms. Clark sends, along with the curriculum from Signature Health, and the DARE information from their previous grant request. She said agencies are providing outcomes and submitting reports to the Board and she will make sure all Board members receive that information. Mr. O'Brien asked Director Lakomiak what she is going to do with agency reports. She responded that she will review what information is being provided and then determine – through committees - what additional or different information the Board would like to see. Mr. O'Brien then asked Ms. Lakomiak what she intends to do if any red flags or concerning information come up. Ms. Lakomiak replied that she and staff will review the reports and discuss them with the agency. She will also have quarterly meetings with agencies to review fiscal, outcome, and clinical information, and will report any significant findings to the Board. Mr. Petruziello asked how Director Lakomiak will verify the data collected. Ms. Lakomiak can discuss ways to audit information. In her last position, she did chart reviews and spot checks to make sure services were being provided and that standards were met. She can also check to make sure everyone receiving services are Geauga residents through proof of residency.

Mr. Claypool said he recently had a conversation with Director Lakomiak and was impressed with her responses. Dr. Oluic said she will provide continuity and regularity and help the agencies regarding Board expectations.

Mr. Claypool said one of the ORC 340 requirements for Boards is to provide a report to the county commissioners on the state on mental health. Ms. Lakomiak said staff has been working on the annual report that will be given to the Geauga Commissioners and OhioMHAS. There are just a few revisions that need to be made before distributing the report.

Ms. Bagley asked if it is a state or federal rule that requires requests proposals be done on an annual basis. If there is no set time frame, she suggested awarding allocations on a two- or three-year basis. Dr. Oluic responded that the Board did briefly discuss making allocations for a two-year period. The Board can look at this further for the next fiscal year.

#### **a. Client Rights and Grievance Procedure Policy**

Ms. Lakomiak asked if the Board would like to go line by line on the suggested changes or table this and have the draft reviewed by Planning and Policies first. The Board is required to have a client rights officer and she felt it was urgent enough to bring this

straight to the Board. She has let OhioMHAS know that she will be the new client rights officer. When she reviewed the current Board policy, she found it was outdated. Everything in yellow was added. The strikeouts show what should be removed. The proposed policy was sent to the Prosecutor's Office for review. Most of the language used is from the Ohio Administrative Code, which also specifically outlines how the policy should be posted in the Board and agency lobbies and that all of the rights must be written out. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the revised Client Rights and Grievance Procedure Policy. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-13; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

### **b. Financial Reports**

Mr. Mausser reported the following:

- 52.4% of the administrative budget was expended through the end of March.
- There was one expense from the Community Education Budget for Constant Contact - the email toolkit used by staff.
- The County's Calendar Year budget expenses through March were just under \$1.6 million.
- The unencumbered reserve amount at the end of March was just over \$2.4 million.
- Cash Balances by Source of Funds spreadsheet shows several negative balances. He received fourth quarter federal and state payments today from OhioMHAS so those negatives will either be zeroed out or positive.
- Voucher Recap #681 shows March expenses in the amount of \$475,270.43.

Dr. Oluic said appearing before the budget commission can be a very arduous process. He thanked Mr. Mausser and Ms. Lakomiak for their hard work. Mr. Mausser commented that since the Board rolled back partial collection on one of the levies and the appropriation of funds for capital improvements, the carryover amount will drop, but we are on the right track.

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

Ms. Miller distributed the service and populations priorities resolution. Mr. Petruziello said the Board is supposed to be helping people get better and he would expect results to go down, but he is seeing services go up. He suggested that some of the agency programs may not be working. He is not seeing people moving out of the system. Ms. Chokshi responded you can provide stabilization, treatment and support. Mr. Petruziello is looking for goals and metrics for programs provided by the agencies. Mr. Claypool said there must be a root cause or the statistics are wrong if the number of people seeking mental health treatment is increasing by 30%.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Claypool talked about a volunteer opportunity at a camp run by the Cole Eye Institute for people who are sight challenged. Staffing that program is an issue and the West Geauga Rotary Club has been talking with the Cole Eye Institute about opening that facility again to serve the community. He encouraged Board members to get involved as

a volunteer. The people served have many challenges, including mental health issues to overcome. The camp is well-funded through the Cleveland Foundation and other funders. It takes 22 people to staff the facility.

Ms. Shumway introduced Erin Burchard, a student at Chagrin Falls High School. She participated in the Rotary speech contest and spoke about her experience with an eating disorder and the difficulty she had with getting help and treatment due to her insurance company's reluctance to pay. She shared her journey with us. Everyone was touched by her bravery in speaking publicly about this and all congratulated her and wished her continued wellness.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Blasko said Lake-Geauga Recovery Center's annual golf outing is June 26<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Gutka said WomenSafe's golf outing is also scheduled for June 26<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Gutka went on to say that she helped manage an eating disorder program in the past and it is horrible that people are forced to have conversations about whether or not they are able to afford medical treatment. She went on to say that is why Board support is so critical for those who can't afford it.

Ms. Carter referenced attending a legislative day along with Ms. Lakomiak. NAMI Ohio put out a call to action today for everyone to contact their state representative as it pertains to House Bill 33. This bill pertains to mental health funding, which has been severely cut from the original amount proposed by Governor DeWine. Ms. Lakomiak will send this information to the Board.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Holden moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Bagley seconded the motion. The meeting was then adjourned at 7:32 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**