**GEAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**AND RECOVERY SERVICES**

**Steven Oluic 13244 Ravenna Road**

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

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**Interim Executive Director Fax: (440) 285-9617**

**Board Minutes September 21, 2022**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Alberta Chokshi, Walter Claypool, Kathy Johnson, Carolee Lesyk, Ryan Mekota, Linda Miller, Gregory O’Brien, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ann Bagley, Martin Fay, James Lee Holden, Jennifer Malainy, Mary Ruth Shumway

**GUESTS:** Michelle Bertman (Catholic Charities), Tia Lawrence (Torchlight), Kathy Fanz (Geauga League of Women Voters), Susan Parker and Kim Carter (NAMI Geauga), Andrea Gutka (WomenSafe), Vicki Clark (Ravenwood Health), Melanie Blasko and Charles Tong (Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers), Mary Wynne-Peaspanen (Signature Health)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Leila Vidmar, Amie Martin-D’Arienzo, James Mausser, Teresa Slater

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

Dr. Oluic called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Ms. Chokshi then called the roll for attendance purposes and the following Board members were present: Alberta Chokshi, Walter Claypool, Kathy Johnson, Carolee Lesyk, Ryan Mekota, Linda Miller, Gregory O’Brien, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello.

1. **BOARD MEMBER APPOINTMENT – RYAN MEKOTA, PSY.D.**

Dr. Oluic welcomed Dr. Mekota to the Board. He was appointed by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services for a term beginning August 18, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023. The Oath of Office was then delivered to Dr. Mekota by Ms. Slater. Dr. Mekota introduced himself. He was born and raised in Geauga - first in Burton then Newbury. He attended Notre Dame Cathedral Latin high school. He received his undergraduate education in Psychology from John Carroll University and his doctorate in Clinical Psychology in Chicago. He then moved to New York to finish his training. He came back to Geauga to raise a family. He has been working as a clinical forensic neuropsychologist for the last eight years and recently started his own practice. He is friends with Mary Ruth Shumway and they talked about the best way for him to be involved in the community and he is grateful for this opportunity. His specialty is in assessment psychology. He received additional training in functional brain anatomy and where specific responses are housed in the brain. He acts as a consultant and conducts evaluations to assess brain function and how it relates to mental health and substance use, along with assessments done for matters such as legal competency, individuals who have been in a car accident, and custody issues.

1. **APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM JULY 20, 2022**

Ms. Miller moved to approve the Minutes as written. Dr. Lesyk seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

1. **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

Dr. Oluic said a lot of activity has been going on over the last eight weeks even though there was no meeting in August. This includes getting the levy on the ballot in November and multiple efforts regarding housing. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo has spent a lot of time on grants and funding. He thanked Ms. Vidmar for agreeing to serve as the Interim Executive Director. Dr. Oluic commented that everyone in the mental health community needs to work together. Despite the turmoil over the last several months, the Board hasn’t dropped anything in regard to services and funding, and has met and overcome all challenges as a group.

1. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Ms. Vidmar said she is honored and humbled to be here. One of the ways she has been getting up to speed about the Board is by reviewing past Minutes. She took those notes and created a matrix that includes repeating patterns, topics that keep coming up, and issues that have not been resolved. The two biggest are housing and a stepdown facility for the jail where mentally ill individuals can be housed to complete their sentences or placed once their sentence is completed. Housing is a big issue and the Board and agencies need to work together to provide the best programs for their clients.

Ms. Vidmar is now fielding the evening emergency phone calls. She attended the OhioMHAS Directors meeting which was very helpful. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo introduced her to Director Lori Criss and many other Board directors. Ms. Vidmar attended a 988 presentation. OhioMHAS is working very hard to implement this transition.

The demand for behavioral health services has increased 353% from 2013-2019, which has been very challenging since the work force only increased 174%. She reported that on average, there is an 11-year delay between when symptoms appear and treatment begins. Approximately 21% of people live with a mental health and/or substance use disorder. There has been a big increase in the need for services to teens and children.

Ms. Vidmar provided an update about Stepping Up, a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illness who are incarcerated. The Commissioners signed a resolution in support of this program to be done in Geauga. Ms. Vidmar spoke with the National Institute of Mental Health and George Mason University to make sure there would be no conflict with any current study about the Stepping Up Initiative. She also spoke with Thom Craig, Director of the Stepping Up Initiative. Both Lake and Cuyahoga counties have integrated the program. Ms. Vidmar and Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo will be attending Butler County’s initial meeting to help understand the program better and to see how it works in conjunction with the courts and the jail. Mr. Claypool asked what the Board’s involvement would be. He said people in jail can’t just be released. He has a lot of questions and feels the Board needs more information so they can discuss the program further before making any decisions. Ms. Vidmar said she will forward information to the Board as she receives it. She will also get input from Lake and Cuyahoga. Justice Stratton is a champion of Stepping Up and reached out to Ms. Vidmar about Geauga participating in the program.

Ms. Vidmar talked about the Board’s .5 mil levy that is on the November ballot. She reported that 1 in 6 teens feel the world is more stressful than when their parents were the same age, at least 8.4 million people in the United States provide care to someone with a mental or emotional health issue, depression and anxiety disorders cost the global society more than $1 trillion in lost productivity yearly, and suicide is the second leading cause of death among people ages 10-34. In light of these statistics, the Board could use that money very wisely. She asked for anyone who would like to be part of the levy committee to let she or Ms. Slater know by Monday. There are two candidate/issue events coming up that will be attended by a representative from the Board.

Mr. Petruziello referenced the meeting Ms. Vidmar attended where it was stated there was a 353% increase in mental health services from 2013 to 2019. He asked if there was any discussion of what should be changed or done to reduce those numbers. He asked if there are programs being done that are not working and what should be done instead. He then asked if OhioMHAS talked about the reasons for such a big increase and what they intend to offer to offset that increase. It is a burden to have so many issues in our county. He said there must be some root cause. Dr. Oluic responded on the flip side, more people are being diagnosed and receiving help.

1. **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo referenced her written report that was sent in the Board packet and asked if there were any questions.

SORs: Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo said the next round of SOR funds will provide for the continuation of current programming and potentially the opportunity to institute new programs. There has been no release date yet for SOR 3.0. She will update the Board as she receives more information.

House Bill 523: Mr. Claypool asked Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo to talk further about House Bill 523, which will have a direct impact on Boards. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo said this bill provides for the modernization of Ohio Revised Code 340, which outlines the responsibilities of the Board. She worked on this bill and some of the suggested changes include: Allowing boards to participate more in the certification process and be advised as things happen in the board area; it modernizes the contracting process and removes the 120-notice requirement; changes the appeal process to a 30-day notice; and gives boards more flexibility in who, what and how they fund. Boards will also get access to portions of Medicaid so they can plan a full system of care. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo has spoken with a number of state representatives and senators, and had a follow up conversation with Judge Grendell. She feels there are many good changes that give more power to boards and the local government.

Faith-Based Initiative: Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo said Ohio Revised Code 107.12 established the Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives. Most ADAMHS Boards in Ohio have created faith-based outreach initiatives, including this Board. The group is currently working on a mission statement. Once this has been established, providers will be included to help create a system of care that supports the faith-based community to make sure their voice is heard and that any needs are adequately met. As an example, the Amish community felt cut off due to the restrictions of the pandemic. She is working in tandem with several government offices, over 200 churches, and many social service organizations. The educational sessions have been well attended. She is working on more sessions and will keep the Board updated. Dr. Oluic commented that a lot of people would go to the church first for help. Mr. Claypool said faith-based groups are often the most effective way to deal with some challenges. Hopefully this initiative will help reduce the increased need for mental health services. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo is also coordinating with the churches and the Veterans Administration for more involvement with veterans and hopefully reduce the number of suicides by veterans.

1. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
   1. **Records Commission**

Ms. Chokshi reported the Records Commission met on August 15, 2022 and included herself, Attorney Wieland, Ms. Slater and Mr. Mausser. Most of the discussion was about emails and texts - what is or is not relevant, along with the two-year retention date - as reflected in A17 of the Records Retention Schedule. Attorney Wieland did not feel that any changes to the Records Retention Schedule were necessary at that time. The Records Commission meets annually and the next meeting date is August 21, 2023. Mr. Claypool talked about the vulnerability Board members may have when using personal emails. He suggested revising that section to differentiate between personal/business related emails and accounts. Ms. Slater will contact Attorney Wieland about records retention and liability as it relates to email. Dr. Oluic said Board members can get a geauga.org email address to use.

* 1. **Agency Relations**

Ms. Johnson reported that she has not yet held a meeting, but is honored to be chair of this committee. She has been active in doing research about local initiatives, and out in the community learning what is happening by attending events, workshops, and presentations. She said there are many good things taking place in Geauga.

* 1. **Finance**

Mr. Petruziello said he would like to schedule a meeting within the next two weeks.

* 1. **Planning and Policies**

Mr. Claypool would like to review several Board policies. He will send out some tentative dates to meet and go from there. Ms. Slater suggested the Table of Contents can be sent to committee members to review.

* 1. **Opiate HUB**

Ms. Miller reported that the Community Training and Outreach committee has been working hard in recognizing first responders during the Week of Appreciation. Banners have been placed at police stations, town halls, and fire stations. A “Thank You” message is being displayed on the Chardon Square sign. 620 bags of goodies have been delivered to first responders. Ms. Miller said the Board received a grant from the Ohio Association which cannot be used for food. She asked if the Board would approve using funds from the Community Education Budget for this purpose. The cost was approximately $1,600.00. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve payment of this expenditure from the Board’s Community Education Budget. Ms. Chokshi seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

Ms. Miller reminded the Board that the Opiate HUB committee is presenting a Self-Care for Responders training on October 13th at St. Mary’s Banquet Center.

* 1. **Housing**

Mr. Petruziello reported that the Housing committee met prior to the Board meeting and discussed the following topics: The cost of building/renovating facilities; what type of housing facilities are needed; staffing patterns depending on the type of facility. It was suggested that a meeting be scheduled with all the community stakeholders who have housing needs to figure out what the overall housing needs are. Dr. Oluic said there has been discussion about making Housing a standing committee instead of ad hoc. He had some good discussions today with some of the stakeholders and we are making strides in housing. Mr. Petruziello said the youth group home project will be moving forward and the primary entities involved will be the Commissioners, Job and Family Services and Ravenwood Health. Dr. Oluic said it is his understanding that the current thought is to build a new Geauga Youth Center on the same property it is located on now. The Board’s involvement in this project will be limited.

1. **BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS**
   1. **Resolution 22-09-1 Capital Projects Reserve Fund**

This Resolution authorizes the Board to set money aside for capital projects, as allowed under Ohio Revised Code. If the funds are not utilized within ten years, the funds will be returned to their original source. The initial transfer will be $1.5 Million. Subsequent transfers may be made, not to exceed a total of $3 Million. The funds can be used to acquire, construct, and/or improve capital assets. Mr. Mausser said if the Board receives grants for any project, those funds would be used first. Mr. Claypool moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-2 Ohio Department of Development Grant Application**

These funds are used for operating expenses at the Geauga Independent Apartments. Ms. Miller moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-3 Permanent Supportive Housing Grant Award**

These funds are used to pay for operating expenses, support services, and administrative expenses at the apartments. This allocation also represents a portion of the 25% match requirement for the HUD grant. There was discussion about not applying for HUD funds in the future. Mr. Mausser said this grant will probably continue to be needed, especially if the Board builds another facility. It was suggested that this be a future topic for the Housing committee. Ms. Miller called the question. Ms. Miller then moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-4 Specialized Docket Allocation to Geauga County Court of Common Pleas**

This allocation is used to help fund the Geauga County Drug Court. They received an award this year as one of the top ten drug courts in the country. Mr. Claypool asked what matrix was used for the Drug Court to win this award. He has not seen any outcomes from this program. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo responded that the outcomes she is seeing are very good. Mr. Claypool would like to see that data also, including what the cost is per individual. He then asked if there is any alternative program that can achieve the same goal. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo said information about this program is included in her written report. She will send the requested additional information to the Board. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-5 Reimbursement to Geauga Safety Center**

Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo reported that the list of psychotropic drugs used mostly include mood stabilizers and anti-psychotics. The Safety Center sends this list to OhioMHAS, who sends it to the Ohio Board of Pharmacy for approval, and then the jail receives a partial reimbursement. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Dr. Lesyk seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**  Mr. Claypool asked if there is a program that follows inmates who still need medication when they get out of jail. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo responded that Geauga does have some programs and grants for that purpose. Inmates do have the right to refuse services if they are no longer on probation.

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-6 Northeast Ohio Collaborative Grant Funding Allocation**

This allocation can be used to fund a jail treatment professional, who can then track someone once they are released. This grant gives the Board access to $2,055,650.54 in the form of 12 withdrawal management beds for adults and 4 crisis stabilization beds for children in facilities outside of Geauga. Two of the crisis beds at the Transitional Living Center are available for use by the other counties in the Collaborative. Cuyahoga County serves as the fiscal agent. Mr. Petruziello commented that this program helps identify some of the housing needs in Geauga. Mr. Claypool responded this shows that money doesn’t always solve a problem. Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo said these funds help someone today by providing crisis services. Alcohol withdrawal requires a high-level medical facility and these funds are basically used to provide emergency services when there is a medical need. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-7 SAMHSA Emergency Covid-19 Crisis Funds Allocation Date Extension**

Ms. Martin-D’Arienzo said the state has determined that any person alive has been affected by Covid in some way, but that these funds are not being used for any direct Covid-related services. The money can be used as outlined in the Resolution, but primarily help to provide risk assessments on individuals identified by Judge Stupica, and for any treatment needs of human trafficking victims. This Resolution does not change the allocation amount, but just extends the date that the funds must be used by. Approximately 75% of the funds have already been expended. Ms. Miller moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Chokshi seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-8 Ravenwood Health Capital Plan Funding for the Geauga Youth Center**

The Board originally applied for this capital grant through OhioMHAS. This Resolution is necessary to show the Board’s continued support for the Geauga Youth Center project. The primary entities involved are Ravenwood Health, Commissioners and Job and Family Services. The current facility is owned by the Commissioners. Discussion has revolved around doing an extensive renovation on the current building or building a new facility on the same property. The other partners have pledged approximately $9 Million for this purpose. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Dr. Lesyk seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **Resolution 22-09-9 Recovery Housing Allocation to Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers for SFY2023**

These funds can be used for the following purposes by Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers at their Geauga Recovery House: peer to peer support, medication assisted treatment, self-help groups, faith-based support and recovery support services. Mr. Claypool moved to approve the Resolution. Dr. Lesyk seconded the motion. **Voice Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.**

* 1. **County Single Audit Portion for Geauga MHRS**

Mr. Mausser reported that the Board is included in the Single Audit performed on behalf of Geauga County. One of the Culture of Quality review items is to make the Board aware of this audit and any findings. The relevant portions that include the Board, along with the Management Letter, were sent in the Board meeting packet. The link for the entire audit is shown on the front page. The Board received no findings, although we were reviewed very strictly because we received about $1.2 Million of Federal money from the SORs grant.

* 1. **Financial Reports**

Mr. Mausser reported that 18.1% of the administrative budget has been expended through August 31, 2022. It is slightly over projection because there were three pay periods in July and the bonuses given to staff. There was an expenditure from the Community Education Budget to provide food for the faith-based initiative meeting. Expenditures shown on the County Calendar Year Budget through August total just under $4.9 Million. The Unencumbered Balance was $3,550,281.28, which is down some due to the rollback of levy funds in the amount of $400,000.00. The $1.5 Million allocation to the Capital Projects Reserve Fund will come from the Unencumbered Balance funds. Dr. Oluic said part of the discussion with the Commissioners and the Budget Commission was that the Board has too much money. This amount is in line with similar Boards. Also, a portion of those funds will be used for housing projects. Mr. Mausser said the whole process of establishing a reserve fund will take some time because there are several steps involved. The first step will be to send the Resolution that was passed to the Auditor’s Office. He reported that all of the fund sources are in order. The levy fund is in the negative, but when he makes the final cutoff for the fiscal year, unexpended funds will be rolled back into the proper accounts and there will no longer be any negative balances.

* 1. **Voucher Recap**

The following Voucher Recaps for July and August were sent to the Board for informational purposes: Voucher #673 for July 2022 in the amount of $839,233.65 and Voucher #674 in the amount of $812,983.96.

1. **DISCUSSION ITEMS**
   1. **November Levy**

Dr. Oluic said the Board cannot assume that the levy will automatically pass because it is a renewal. He has discussed this matter with staff and a levy group will be put together for this purpose. The emphasis will be that 100% of this levy is used for mental health services. The following activities were discussed: yard signs, big signs in strategic places, newspaper advertising, having partner agencies send letters to the editor, various speaking engagements, emails to people, distributing flyers through many avenues, and delivering postcards to target areas. Ms. Miller asked Dr. Oluic to craft an email that can be sent out. Dr. Oluic send the staff will put something together with the help of the Board’s partner agencies.

* 1. **Public Comments**

Dr. Oluic asked agency representatives to introduce themselves to Dr. Mekota. Ms. Bertman from Catholic Charities asked the Board and staff to create social media posts for the agencies to use. Dr. Oluic said it is imperative that we send a unified voice to the community about mental health and substance abuse services to get the levy passed.

* 1. **Executive Session Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22(G)(1) to Consider the Employment of a Public Employee or Official**

Ms. Johnson moved that the Board go into Executive Session to consider the employment of a public employee or official. Mr. Claypool seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote: Ayes-9; Nays-0; Abstentions-0. Motion approved.** The Board then went into Executive Session at 7:25 PM. The Board came out of Executive Session and was back in Regular Session at 7:38 PM.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 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**