

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

Dr. Steven Oluic
Chairman of the Board

13244 Ravenna Road
Chardon, Ohio 44024

Christine Lakomiak
Executive Director

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Board Minutes

November 19, 2025

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Reba Dykes, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Douglas Lundblad, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, Mary Ruth Shumway, Patricia Varanese

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Christine Lakomiak, Jim Mausser, Michelle Maneage, Teresa Slater

GUESTS: Kerri Luckner (Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers), Kathy Franz (Geauga League of Women Voters), Paul Bolino (Ravenwood Health/Community Counseling Center), Brittain Paul (Ravenwood Health), Newell Howard (GCTP), Michelle Bertman (Catholic Charities), Andrea Gutka (WomenSafe), Suzette Miller (Generations Behavioral Health), Dianne Kellogg, Barb Contorno, Renee Melzon (Red Tulip), Kaley Richard (Chagrin Valley Times/Geauga Times), Linda Miller, Lee Miller (Geauga residents), Mary Wynne-Peaspanen (Signature Health), Angi Daugherty (Family Pride), Brandon Lichtinger (Geauga Maple Leaf)

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

Chairman Oluic called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Mr. Holden called the roll for attendance, and the following Board members were present: Reba Dykes, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Douglas Lundblad, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, Mary Ruth Shumway, and Patricia Varanese. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 15, 2025, AND OCTOBER 29, 2025

Mr. Holden moved to waive the reading of the Minutes and approve them as presented. Ms. Shumway seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **VOICE VOTE: AYES-8; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dr. Oluic welcomed everyone and reported the following:

- Several Board members and staff recently did a walkthrough of the TLC, prior to an inspection by the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health. It is an amazing facility and should be completed on schedule by the end of February.
- After concerns were raised by citizens and other public entities, and much discussion was had, the Commissioners voted not to institute the piggyback property tax levies as allowed by Ohio Bill 96. Dr. Oluic said this action protects the Board's budget in relation to taxpayer voted levy funds. In lieu of this, the Board will be able to continue and enhance many of the accomplishments achieved over the past few years, and show that the money entrusted to the Board by taxpayers is well spent.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Lakomiak provided the following updates:

- On Nov 13th, a representative from the VA facilitated a training for the Suicide Prevention Coalition on access to lethal means when people are experiencing a crisis. It was very well received. CALM training, which stands for Counseling on Access to Lethal Means, is a suicide prevention program designed to teach healthcare providers, mental health professionals, and community workers how to reduce access to methods of suicide. The training focuses on identifying risk, safe storage and access reduction, communication skills, and collaboration. The goal is to save lives by reducing the likelihood of impulsive suicide attempts through practical and compassionate interventions. The plan is to develop the program in Geauga to add additional safeguards for the community, while respecting those in crisis.
- Director Lakomiak was a key note speaker at a recent Farm Bureau meeting. *Ohio's Got Your Back* is a website that includes resources specifically geared for the agricultural and farming community. During the presentation, Director Lakomiak outlined various ways farmers are resilient, citing skills used by behavioral health professionals. These included: nature bathing (walking in the woods and fields, checking fences); embracing the calm of the land to reduce stress; problem-solving (cognitive flexibility); mental resilience; behavior activation (engagement when something is challenging); and community gatherings that help stave off loneliness.
- Jason Joyce is the new Chief Executive Officer of the Cuyahoga County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board.
- Ohio Dept. of Behavioral Health published an RFP for an adult mobile crisis pilot program. Boards and agencies can apply; six programs will be chosen. Proposals must include all counties in the catchment area. Signature Health, Coleman Health Services, and the Cuyahoga Board plan to submit a proposal for our catchment area. Geauga will partner with Cuyahoga and Lorain County to apply a board-driven response. The goal is to ensure that communities have access to 24-hour crisis care. Both board and agency associations are submitting a written letter to ODBH requesting an extension of the due date, which is November 24, 2025.

- The new living spaces, basements, furniture, etc. at the TLC are absolutely incredible. ODBH is scheduled to inspect the premises Nov. 25th; consumers should then be moving into the new west wing. When the expansion is finished, there will be a celebration, and tours of the new facility will be provided.
- There were no suicides or overdoses in October, 2025.
- The Case Western Reserve University SUD Center of Excellence will be holding four trainings/presentations in 2026. Additional information will be posted on the board website. CEUs will be available for agency personnel.
- Michelle Maneage, along with the Medical Director and Forensic Monitor from Ravenwood Health, attended the 2025 Forensic Mental Health Conference. A majority of the conference focused on jail-based competency restoration. Geauga is exploring this and the possibility of moving to a different model other than the state hospital.
- Last month, the Board discussed placing 988 signs at county and township parks. Michelle Maneage created several versions to choose from. Director Lakomiak attended a Munson township meeting, where the trustees expressed their desire to place signs in the township and voted unanimously to partner with the board, and also offered to pay for and install them. John Oros, of Geauga Parks, has chosen the sign he would like installed at all of the Geauga Metroparks. He has offered to have his staff install them. Director Lakomiak will reach out to the other townships to see if they are interested. A local business is making the signs. There are a variety of design and size options to choose from.
- The Board is partnering with the Auditor's Office to distribute dog waste bag dispensers that are branded with 988; they will be distributed to individuals purchasing dog licenses.
- Vicki Clark, CEO at Ravenwood Health, is retiring in February 2026. Melanie Blasko, CEO of Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers, is retiring in March.

V. PAUL BOLINO, PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTER, FUTURE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF RAVENWOOD HEALTH OF GEAUGA AND ASHTABULA

Mr. Bolino was introduced. He briefly presented on the merger of the Community Counseling Center and Ravenwood Health. He indicated that the merger comes as a result of a lengthy due diligence process and collaboration that was very organic. It is technically an acquisition, but a merger at heart. All employees will fall under Ravenwood Health's tax identification for business purposes. The home office will be in Chardon. He believes the merger is good for both organizations and northeast Ohio as a whole. The new entity will also be more competitive regarding employment and service delivery, serving approximately 8,500 clients. He is looking forward to meeting everyone and getting to know the area better. He understands the value of the Board's investment in Ravenwood Health and the importance of being a good steward of those funds. He is excited to be a part of this and is committed to working with regional providers.

VI. BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Resolution 25-11-1 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Behavioral Health Disaster Preparedness Projects Grant Award

This grant was awarded for the purpose of working with local school systems to incorporate the behavioral health system into current emergency preparedness plans. Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion.

Discussion:

- Mr. Petruziello expressed concern that Chardon Schools may be able to access some of these grant funds to start a new program. He stated they already receive about \$100,000 a year for mental health supports.
- Director Lakomiak will reach out to each school system and hopes each will be willing to update their current disaster plans as they relate to behavioral health. Board staff would act as a consultant for this purpose and enhance what is currently in place.
- The county's regional disaster plan has also been revised to incorporate a behavioral health response component.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-8; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.

B. Resolution 25-11-2 Funding Transfer for Capital Projects Reserve Fund

Director Lakomiak explained that the Board has not been reimbursed yet for some of the TLC expansion expenses. The original agreement with the state needs to be revised, which came to light when the first reimbursement was submitted. The Prosecutor's Office has approved the new contract. Transferring funds to this account will balance accounts before the end of the year. The state has guaranteed that the Board will receive these funds, but not until 2026. Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion.

Discussion:

- Mr. Mausser explained in order to pay Millstone he needs to have enough money to carry over into the next year. Otherwise, he would have to unappropriate funds and then reappropriate them.
- Director Lakomiak indicated the paperwork needed to be re-signed because of the department's name change, a new director being appointed, and the latest project manager discovering things that weren't done correctly.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-8; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.

C. Financial Reports

Mr. Mausser reported on the following for October 2025:

- 31.8% of the Board's SFY2026 administrative budget has been expended.
- Geauga County calendar year expenses through October were just over \$6.9 million.
- The Auditor's Fund Balance at the end of October was just over \$2.83 million.
- Voucher Recap #712 for October: \$1,275,399.29.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update on Digital Sign

The proposal submitted by Millstone was chosen. Sam's Landscaping submitted a quote of \$1,150.00 to clear some trees and brush to make the sign more visible.

B. Update on Administrative Building Roof

Millstone submitted a proposal for \$2,000.00 for materials and labor to install heat strips.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Use of Levy Dollars to Fund Smaller Agencies Discussion – Mary Ruth Shumway

Ms. Shumway works for CASA and gave a brief description of several programs the Board may be interested in funding:

- She noted seeing a huge rise in custody cases because people are not getting married. CASA, and the Juvenile Court, are sharing the cost for an in-home parenting program. She feels most of these cases have a mental health component that could be addressed safely in the home.
- The draft horse project in Geauga is the only equine program that will accept sexually abused children.
- Life Leadership is a program for older teenage boys, which is currently only accessible through juvenile court at of cost of approximately \$9,000 this year.
- Art for the Heart is a program for 3 to 7-year-old children where art kits are sent to their homes. Ms. Shumway would like to do this on a bi-weekly basis. Ms. Maneage asked for a list of supplies needed, and she will see if there are any grants available for this purpose.
- Passcode to Parenting program provides a safe and judgment-free space for children and families in Northeast Ohio to repair, rebuild, and reconnect their relationships and move forward together.

Director Lakomiak said these are all good programs, but the Board can only directly fund programs certified by the state. Both the Passcode to Parenting program and the equine draft horse program can be accessed through Family First Council. Director Lakomiak suggested that Ms. Shumway contact Tim Kehres regarding using some of those pooled funds and offered to help facilitate the request. She also suggested that Ms. Shumway contact the Commissioners for financial support, since they can fund programs that are not certified.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Holden moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:53 PM.

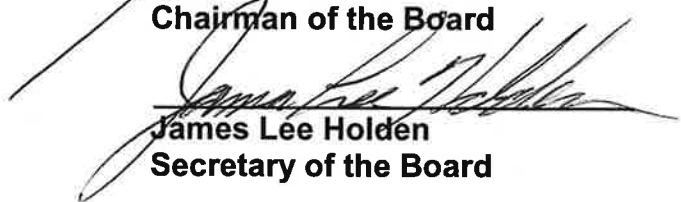
Respectfully submitted by:



Teresa Slater
Administrative/Office Manager



Steven Oluic
Chairman of the Board



James Lee Holden
Secretary of the Board