

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

Dr. Steven Oluic
Chairman of the Board

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Board Minutes

April 15, 2026

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Alusheff, Reba Dykes, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, Patricia Varanese

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Douglas Lundblad, Mary Ruth Shumway

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

GUESTS: Michelle Bertman (Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers), Kathy Franz, Janice Katz (Geauga League of Women Voters), Paul Bolino (Ravenwood Health), Lynn Berner (Catholic Charities), Andrea Gutka (WomenSafe), Mary Wynne-Peaspanen (Signature Health), Angela North (NAMI Geauga County), Angi Daugherty (Family Pride)

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: Chris Alusheff, Reba Dykes, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, Patricia Varanese. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. APPOINTMENT OF CHRIS ALUSHEFF BY THE GEAUGA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Alusheff was appointed to the Board by the Geauga County Commissioners, to fill an unexpired term beginning March 17, 2026, through June 30, 2026. Ms. Slater, Notary Public, delivered the Oath of Office to Mr. Alusheff.

III. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Mr. Holden moved to waive the reading of the minutes and approve them as presented. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. There was no discussion.

VOICE VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.

IV. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dr. Oluic welcomed everyone. He reported the expansion of the Transitional Living Center is nearing completion. A ribbon cutting and open house is set for May 1, 2026, from 1:00 to 3:00.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Lakomiak provided the following updates:

Director Lakomiak met with Mr. Alusheff initially to review the Board's mission, vision, and other pertinent information. Following his appointment by the County Commissioners, a second meeting was held in order to complete board member orientation. It was noted that the orientation process had been revised and updated since the last board member appointments and in connection with the Culture of Quality certification.

Upcoming Meetings:

May: Agency Requests for Information have been received for review. Director Lakomiak previously advised that, due to uncertainty surrounding funding for SFY2027, it would be best not to add new providers at this time. Meetings will be held individually with each agency and funding recommendations for SFY2027 will be presented at the May meeting, following the same process used last year. Board members were encouraged to reach out with any questions.

June: The Board's annual meeting will be held this month. In past years, specific programs have been highlighted. Director Lakomiak asked board members to share any suggestions regarding topics or programs they would like included.

July: No board meeting is scheduled.

Building Updates:

Funds previously allocated for the generator, heat strips for ice prevention, roof repairs, and bathroom improvements have been utilized and all related issues resolved. The building was also refreshed with new paint throughout, and cracks and wall damage were repaired.

Credit Card Update:

Legislation enacted last year through the Ohio Revised Code permits boards to obtain credit cards provided a formal policy is in place. Securing a credit card in the Board's name proved to be challenging and required several months as multiple banks and credit unions declined the request.

Board Members and Insurance:

During the February insurance review, questions arose regarding whether board members are bonded by the County. Pursuant to the Ohio Revised Code, boards are required to maintain Directors and Officers insurance. In addition, all board members are bonded under Geauga County's CORSA policy.

Budget Commission:

Director Lakomiak and Danette Richards attended a Budget Commission meeting April 6, 2026. The Commission approved the Board's budget as submitted. Discussion included capital reserve funds. Staff subsequently met with Adrian Gorton from the Commissioners' Office for guidance and will be soliciting bids for a five- to ten-year assessment plan for the Board's three properties in order to help establish priorities for use of the capital reserve fund.

Digital Sign:

Staff met with the sign designer and developed an improved design. An estimate for delivery has been requested, and the installation area has been cleared and prepared.

Transitional Living Center:

The ribbon cutting and open house are scheduled for May 1. Director Lakomiak noted that nearly three years have passed since the grant was secured and the project moved through design and construction. She thanked Board members for their integral role in the project and recognized the expansion as a significant shared accomplishment.

Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers:

Director Lakomiak welcomed Michelle Bertman in her new role as President and CEO.

Impact Report:

The FY2025 Annual Impact Report was distributed several weeks prior; hard copies are available. Dr. Oluic commented that the report effectively highlights the work of the Board, staff, and contracted agencies and reflects the breadth of services available to Geauga County residents.

988 in the Parks Campaign:

Director Lakomiak has been attending township meetings to discuss 988 and promote placement of *Hope Has a Number* signs in public spaces. Community response has been incredibly positive, with strong interest and participation. To date, 119 signs have been placed throughout the County, including 71 large and 47 small signs. Local leaders and community members have taken active ownership of the initiative. At a recent Russell Township meeting, the chief of the Russell Police Department expressed strong support. Director Lakomiak was also invited to serve as a panelist at a state recognition conference on May 8; Michelle Maneage will present in her place due to scheduling conflicts.

Suicide and Accidental Deaths:

No suicides or accidental deaths were reported in March. One death in April is currently under fatality review. Director Lakomiak emphasized the importance of coordination among suicide prevention efforts and partnerships involving 988 and 911.

Police and Mobile Crisis Teams:

In March, there were 11 welfare checks involving severe suicide threats. Individuals were transported for treatment and none of the incidents resulted in suicide. Director Lakomiak highlighted the strong coordination among the Sheriff's Office, crisis teams, first responders, and other partners, as well as the value of tracking this data.

Opioid Settlement Awards:

Grant awards were approved as follows: Red Tulip – \$25,000; Fairmount Center for the Arts – \$22,000; and Chardon Municipal Court – \$30,000.

Recovery Housing Grant:

A grant of \$139,636 was received from the Ohio Department of Development. The funds will be used to provide rental subsidies for six recovery houses in Geauga County operated by

Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers, Ravenwood Health, and Red Tulip. This allocation will free up levy dollars for other potential uses.

Non-Medicaid Medical Necessity Audits:

A caseload of 1,474 was reviewed, including 100 chart reviews and 300 individual claims. The total payback amount was zero. Additional positives and recommendations were presented.

Behavioral Health and First Responders:

The Sheriff's Office is submitting a grant that includes the Board. Staff continue to work on 988/911 interoperability initiatives. The first of its kind, a job fair for behavioral health and first responders, is scheduled for June 18.

Postcard Campaign:

Director Lakomiak delivered a keynote presentation at the Farm Bureau annual meeting and we had representation in a joint Ashtabula-Geauga panel discussion on mental health resources for the agricultural community. The board and Farm Bureau will collaborate on a postcard campaign in May for Mental Health Awareness Month, with an emphasis on outreach to all populations in Geauga County.

Geauga POD Square Game:

A tabletop exercise was held on February 19, 2026. Staff explained various setup components and represented the behavioral health crisis function. Geauga Public Health incorporated behavioral health into the exercise, which was well-received and provided valuable insights into emergency response coordination.

CIT Training:

An additional ten first responders were trained at the last session.

SAFEline:

Beginning July 1, local funding from the board will no longer support CopeLine. The line will remain operational for domestic violence calls, and after-hours Job and Family Services calls through a partnership with Ravenwood Health. The phone numbers will remain unchanged, and the service will be renamed SAFEline. The line will also be coordinated with 988. Andrea Gutka of WomenSafe expressed her appreciation for the partnership and Ravenwood Health's continued hosting of the service. Education efforts will focus on clarifying the new purpose while reinforcing continuity of contact information. Director Lakomiak noted that each 988 entity receives \$100,000, with potential for additional funding if call volume increases.

GeaugaLives.org:

The Suicide Prevention Coalition website will launch soon. Michelle Maneage reported that the site was developed as a comprehensive, collaborative resource aligned with priorities identified in 2025. The website emphasizes connection, education, help, and access to resources. It will be updated regularly and is specific to Geauga County. Director Lakomiak added that multiple domains are being reviewed, including review by an individual with lived experience to ensure accuracy. In response to a question from Mr. Petruziello, Michelle confirmed that analytics will be available.

Suicide Prevention Coalition Grant:

The coalition received a \$1,000 grant. A magnet developed through the grant was displayed and will be distributed at an event in November.

VI. BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS**A. Resolution 26-04-1 Reimbursement to Geauga Safety Center 2nd Half SFY2026**

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Discussion: These are pass through funds received from the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health for reimbursement of psychiatric medications given to inmates at the Geauga Safety Center.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.

B. Resolution 26-04-2 WomenSafe Additional Allocation Request for SFY2026

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Discussion: During the RFP process for SFY2026 it was discussed that the agency may need additional money for counseling due to an increase in utilization. WomenSafe is close to drawing down all of their counseling allocation and has requested additional funds for this purpose.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.

C. Resolution 26-04-3 Recovery Housing Program Grant Award

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. Discussion: The grant funds will be distributed to Ravenwood Health, Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers, and Red Tulip Project. Mr. Alusheff asked whether these entities are the only certified recovery housing programs in Geauga. Director Lakomiak responded that they are as far as she is aware, but will verify that information. Ohio Recovery Housing is tasked with informing boards of which certified entities are in the county. The funds could be used only by certified recovery housing providers.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.

D. Cybersecurity Policy

Director Lakomiak said all entities, including political subdivisions, must have a formal Cybersecurity Policy in place. Staff worked with GriffinTek and the Board Association to ensure it includes everything needed. It was then approved by Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Wieland. Ms. Johnson moved to approve the Policy. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.

E. Acknowledgment of Geauga County Single Audit for Calendar Year 2023

Mr. Mausser reported that the completed Single Audit for Geauga County was released by the State Auditor in February. The pages that refer to the Board were included for review. He also provided the link for the entire Geauga County Audit. One of the Culture of Quality requirements is to advise the Board that the audit has been completed and whether there are any findings that require a plan of correction. Mr. Petruziello asked if the state or county caused the delay. Mr.

Mausser said audits are generally completed within nine months of the end of the calendar year. Director Lakomiak added that the information was given to the state and is not a local issue. She then stated there are several audits and reviews performed locally that provide checks and balances.

F. Financial Reports

Mr. Mausser reported on the following for February and March 2026:

- 69.2% of the Board's SFY2026 administrative budget has been expended through March.
- Geauga County calendar year expenses through March were just over \$1.7 million.
- The Auditor's Fund Balance at the end of March was just over \$2.27 million.
- Voucher Recap #716 for February: \$446,516.60.
- Voucher Recap #717 for March: \$496,584.13.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business discussed.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business discussed.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kathy Franz asked if Mr. Alusheff is replacing someone as a Board member. Director Lakomiak replied he is filling a vacancy. Ms. Shumway and Mr. Lundblad are still on the Board.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Holden moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 PM.