

NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING & SUPPORT SERVICES
107 FISHER POND ROAD
ST. ALBANS VT 05478

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 7, 2026

Present: Angela Poirier, Jason Minor, Dan Thompson, Ken Gagne, Jim McMillian, Lisa Whittemore, Rob Hirss, Casey Toof

Excused: Anjanette Watson, Elaine Carpenter

Staff: Todd Bauman, Ryan Davis, Danielle Roberts, Emily Richards, Belinda Bessette, Matt Habedank, Samantha Thomas, Kim McClellan, Stacey Remillard, April Glover

Public: Shireen Hart

Minutes received and meeting called to order by Angela Poirier at 5:31pm.

Motion was made to approve the December minutes as presented with the one revision by Jim McMillian. Second by Jason Minor. All in Favor

Annual Board Training

- Training proved by Shireen Hart. Slides from the presentation are included in the annual board manual

Executive Director Report

- Reviewed the board manual and provided them to all board members who were present and created a plan for those that were not.
- The board approved the purchase of a building, and we are doing our due diligence to make sure the property is what we need. There are two parts to the property, and the front is what we need for the current DS client and the back portion we will be working on to make it what we need. The tentative closing day is January 30, 2026.
- 2025 Outcomes report came out today. There is a copy of it in the board manual and there will be a link to it on our website in the weekly wrap.
- Todd wanted to give an update on the CFO position. Ryan is the interim and doing a great job. We are recruiting for a permanent position. We are taking it slow to make sure that we have the right person in the position. We are hoping to start the interview process at the end of the month, Angela and Dan will be part of the interviews.
- We received feedback on the attestation we submitted to the state for CCBHC. There are 187 criteria's that we need to be compliant to be approved as a CCBHC. The state says that we are compliant with 80% of them, partially compliant with 18% of them and only 2 items that we are compliant with at all. But as of today, we are compliant with those two things. We have hired an internal candidate to be a Veterans service coordinator, and we have offered the LADC position to someone and they have accepted. This will give us what we need for our substance use programming. This means we are in a great spot for the July 1st deadline.

Financial Report

- Financials are closed as of November. Due to holidays and wanting to get this report to the board we were not able to attribute some school contracts so we will apply them to December financials. With this in consideration we should be \$278,000 higher than we are in revenue.
- We are currently down for the year, but we are on track with our budget. As we have talked about before we are working on our CCBHC numbers and putting a lot of focus on our staff salaries.
- The financial reports that Ryan sent were reordered a bit. He felt it would flow better as this way watches our audited financials. He also added the current ratio as a data point. When Bill from KBS talked about it at the December meeting when we reviewed the audit it felt like a good number for the board to be aware of.
- We reviewed the days in cash, and we are standing at about 67 days.
- KBS has sent the final draft of the audit, and it has been submitted to the state. Once we have final approval the 990 will be worked on and brought to the board for a vote of approval.
- FY25 ended with a gain of 1.5% which is right where we would like to be.
- The question was asked – How many positions are being added for CCBHC? We are adding 42 positions, but our budget always includes all positions so the 42 we are adding do not include vacant positions.

Executive Committee Report

- Everything we just talked about was reviewed during the executive committee meeting. We reviewed all the items
- We will be going back to the start time of 5:30. We want to make sure that the directors have time to report out.

Nursing Update

- The nursing position that we had opened has been filled, the tuition/load repayment was what really helped win her over. And things are going well.
- We are working on the current needs and upcoming planning with CCBHC. The psych team has brought in 2 new nurse practitioners and are looking forward to starting to provide substance use services. One specializes in substance use and the other in kids. This will help Dr. Strockoff in the planning for the changes that are coming down the line with CCBHC by taking some of the work off his plate.
- Jason wanted to make sure that we are telling our story as well as staff's stories when it comes to the money around tuition and loan forgiveness. He suggested that we make a one pager that we can share. Stacey created one that was available at the legislative breakfast, so we do have something we can share.

Community Mental Health Report

- Belinda wanted to call your attention to the client story she shared in her board report. It was about a client who graduated from the crossroads program and was so excited and proud they even sent us the certificate. They were a client that was affected by the changes to our CRT program. Our teams worked with the state to get them approved for intensive adult services, which per the change they would not have been. They are doing really well and it is wonderful to see.
- Belinda wanted to give Holly Branon a shout out, she has been working very hard to rebuild our partnership with Department of Children and Families and doing a great job. They were in a meeting the other day with the Department of Mental health and asked why all their funds went to other agencies when NCSS can do the work, and we want it to go to them.

Early Education & School Based Services Report

- Soar had their Agency of Education site review and did a great job, the staff are doing really good things.
- We have our longevity awards this Friday. We give speeches about staff that have been there for 20 plus years. Matt had to give five, Heather Young, Nikki Noel and Deb Breault have all been with us for 20 years. Bill Lulak and Laurie Hayford-Saborowski have been here for 25 years. Matt just wanted to let the board know how thankful he is for the longevity we have within the agency.
- Every year we do our stocking event. This is when staff who with kids and families who need help with gifts during the holiday gives the information to Whitney Bates and she creates little stockings with the age and need/want of the kiddos; this year we had 220 stockings. This is most we have ever done; we had an outpatient therapist reach out and ask if one of her clients would be included. The whole agency comes together to help with the stockings. But Whitney organizes and manages it and does an amazing job!

Developmental Services Report

- There have been massive changes in the developmental services world. We have been navigating payment reform and conflict free case management. It has been bumpy and we have had our challenges. This week we came together with teams across the agency, finance, data and billing and it was a great meeting because we sat there and said, well we are in a good place! It has been a team effort but we are feeling good about where we are among all the changes.
- Our residential teams pulled together a holiday party at the Able House for all residential clients and staff who wanted join. The space was perfect for the celebration. The staff chipped in and provided the food, there was a ham, mac and cheese and so many other things. The best part of the event was seeing clients who had been struggling but with all the new programs we have been developing are thriving now.

Community Relations Report

- Vermont Care Partners is doing their article series with the DA system. Our article is coming out in the Vermont Digger on January 13th. The article focuses on the Parent Child Center.
- We have a great partnership with the Hope Happens Here students at BFA and we have a staff member who is going to go on site and provide yoga classes during exam week. We are also making t-shirts for them to give out at sporting events again this year, they will be 988 focused and will use some of the funds that Afterglow donates to us to purchase them.
- Mental Health Advocacy Day is January 29th in Montpelier. Everyone is welcome, if you are interested and want more details reach out to Dani.
- We have started planning some big events, the rotary home show, the Autism walk and the community volunteer event at city hall in St. Albans to name a few.

Human Resources Report

- The Longevity Awards luncheon is this coming Friday. There are 45 staff receiving awards. As Matt said, those celebrating 20 plus years get a speech from their program director. Angela will be doing the presentation for Todd. One thing we did differently this year was allowing folks who have been with us for 20 plus year to invite a guest with them.
- We have received \$695,000 from the state to use for student loans and tuition reimbursement; we have spent almost all of it. Not all DA's are spending their money so we have been to back and show a proposal of how we can spend more, Stacey just not notice that we were given \$500,000 more. Jason said he talked about this advocacy for staff during the site visit he was part of for CCBHC. Belinda also said that this helped the, hire the LADC.

Quality and Risk Management Report

- We have submitted all our required information to the engineer and architect regarding Soar. They have 45 days to review and provide us the information we need so we can cost out the demo and build of a new building. We are also hoping that they will tell us we can build at the same location and have the kids stay in the current building while we build a new one, if this is the plan we choose to move forward.
- At Soar's agency of education site visit we had to have the fire inspector on site, there are few things that need to be fixed, but mostly minor. There are things that will come up but we are holding off on those items until we know how we are moving forward with the PCB problem.

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Other Business

- Angela wanted to recognize Todd for being the agency for 20 years and thank him for his years of service.

Motion made to adjourn by Ken Gagne. Seconded by Lisa Whittemore. All in Favor.

Meeting adjourn at 7:25 pm

Minutes recorded by: Emily Richards