

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 4, 2026

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**Present:** Angela Poirier, Jason Minor, Lisa Whittemore, Rob Hirss, Elaine Carpenter, Ken Gagne

**Excused:** Anjanette Watson, Jim McMillian, Dan Thompson, Casey Toof

**Staff:** Todd Bauman, Ryan Davis, Danielle Roberts, Emily Richards, Belinda Bessette, Matt Habedank, Kim McClellan, April Glover, Christie Moffett

**Public:** Rob Montgomery and Ryan (employee of Fuss & O'Neill)

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**Minutes received and meeting called to order by Angela Poirier at 5:33pm.**

### **Presentation**

- PCB Update

**Motion was made to approve the February minutes as presented by Rob Hirss. Second by Ken Gagne. All in Favor**

### **Executive Director Report**

**Motion was made to go into executive session by Ken Gagne. Seconded Jason Minor. All in favor.** All public members and staff left except for Emily Richards and Todd Bauman

**Motion was made to come out of executive session by Elaine Carpenter. Seconded Rob Hirss. All in Favor.**

**Motion was made to approve the salary of the CFO position as discussed in executive session by Jason minor. Seconded Rob Hirss. All in Favor**

- The question was asked – What made Ryan the best choice? Ryan is familiar with Mental Health and Developmental Services financial structures. He is also an expert in the operational elements of our agency’s finances. He has a very strong resume, knows our systems and our people. He is the best choice for this position, even the auditors said that they often would say a new CFO is a risk to an agency, but they do not think that for us.
- Recently, an agency approached us to explore the possibility of merging. Our mission statements closely align and the services we both provide seem to compliment each other. We have reviewed their financial information and met with their Team. In our meeting, we were struck by the dedication and commitment of their staff. The expressed great pride in their work and the important role they play in strengthening the community. Initial analysis indicates that a merger/acquisition may benefit both agencies. We will keep the board apprised as we make progress.

### **Financial Report**

- Ryan shared a current financial packet, that updated the preliminary packet that was sent with the full board packet. We are currently at a \$1.33M loss, which is to be expected this time of year, and consistent with our FY26 approved budget. We showed a \$211K gain in January. Our loss stands because we have been proactive with increasing salaries and wages. We are standing in a good position with about 57.3 days in cash.
- We have been communicating with Guidehouse the consultant the state is using for CCBHC cost reporting. They asked us a few questions, and we have submitted the answers and comments. We are waiting on them for our next steps.

### **Executive Committee Report**

- Everything we talked about in the executive committee has been talked about here.

### **Community Mental Health Report**

- Belinda wanted to talk about the Home and Community Based grant that we used to help foster a stronger relationship with the Abenaki community. Part of CCBHC requirements is having a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with all our partners. Belinda was meeting with Chief Gagne and Fellicia Cota (owner of Creative heART Counseling), there is hesitation to ask for the MOU because some people tend to think that makes things so formal. Fellicia said yes without hesitation and Chief Gagne said what about us, should we have one too? We are also working with her to start providing some training for our staff.
- Working on CCBHC items and Belinda wanted to thank all the cross-divisional work that is happening and Kim's teams for all the tracking and monitoring they do.
- One last thing, we wanted to give a big shout to Holly Branon and Heather Getty for the work they are doing with the JOBS program. We almost lost this program, but with the work they have put in we have built it back up and it is now thriving. The question was asked – Is this different than the DS employment services? It is but we work together on the community partnerships we have that help with work placements.

### **Early Education & School Based Services Report**

- The Parent Child Center (PCC) has been working really hard to provide groups for families. They just started a new one called Holding Hearts which is a support group for pregnancy and infancy loss, it will be facilitated by Amanda Snyder and Lindsay Dunlavey. It is a six-week session that meets for one hour a week. It is a great example of what the PCC does.
- We have been asked to be the fiscal agent for the Attune to Food program in Chittenden County. This helps with kiddos who have a hard time eating different foods, so this program has in person sessions as well as helps the families buy the food, they need to

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continue the work at home. It also helps with gas cards so families can get to the in-person sessions.

- The question was asked – Why are we supporting a kid from another school district, it was part of the school-based update in the board packet? We have a contract with that school. They reached out and asked if we could help with a kiddo, we had a staff member who was not happy with her placements, so we made some changes and now the staff and the kiddo are doing really well.
- The Question was asked – Can we get an update from the Chittenden EI (early intervention) team going forward? Yes, Matt will work with the team to get something from them.

### **Developmental Services**

- Samantha wanted to share a story with us that she was informed about a few minutes ago. Act 248 is a legal status for someone who has committed a violent crime but can not be held accountable. They are put in the care of DAIL. There are so many regulations that come along with this. When Samantha took over her role she was told that the best thing for this one client was that they should stay where they are, it is best for them and the agency. A little while ago Samantha was informed that the program the client was at could no longer house them. We have space at our 7 North location, this client required 2:1 staffing and had a lot of complications, but our staff stayed with them. We just got notice that this client has been discharged from Act 248. This is testament to this client, their team and the great work our staff do. This is very exciting.

### **Quality and Risk Management Report**

- We will be entering into a contract with a partner DA, to provide support to their Developmental Services Division. We will be doing some monitoring, training and chart reviews. Kim and Samantha will be working with 3 other staff on this contract. It will be for two years.
- HIPPA security assessment needs to happen. We are signing a contract with an outside agency to come in and do this assessment. It will take about 12 weeks and once it is done Kim will share the results.
- We have updated our Disaster Plan. It is a requirement of the provider agreement and CCBHC. It is things like how we support tech if our systems go down or working with the community in times of need. Kim and Belinda worked together on the update and then brought it to the Health & Safety committee for review. We have submitted it to the state, and will send it to you all, with share with our community, standing committee, local law enforcement and our community partnership meeting email list.
- The question was asked – What is ELEOS? It is our medical record AI systems. We had a staff who was skeptical of AI come to our agency leadership meeting and talk about how awesome it was. She felt it helped her take better notes which in turn helped provide better care. We did bring it to our adult standing committee before launching as we do with anything that can affect clients.

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### **Nursing Update**

- Genoa, our pharmacy partner, is recruiting a pharmacist. Genoa will be the ones to do the hiring, but they were surprised at the amount of time it is taking to find someone, so they increased the salary and have added a \$10,000 sign on bonus. They have started paying rent on the space. They are also helping us with prescriptions in their Morrisville office. They have been great partners so far.

### **Community Relations Report**

- We are going into our active season.
- We will have a table at the home Show at Collins Perley which is new this year. Danielle feels it will be a great chance to introduce ourselves and talk about what we do.
- There is the volunteer fair April 16<sup>th</sup> which is also at Collins Perley
- We were given a great donation from the folks at Georgia Market.
- We are planning for the golf tournament which is June 19<sup>th</sup>.
- The autism walk is May 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Other Business**

- Elaine asked if we would be talking about the succession plan that was included in the board packet, but we talked about and voted on it last month so it was sent just so the board had a copy.

**Motion made to adjourn by Elaine Carpenter. Seconded by Ken Gange. All in Favor.**

### **Meeting adjourn at 7:38 pm**

Minutes recorded by: Emily Richards