



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

January 22, 2021

Board of Directors:

Michael Lepera, Board Chair; Amy Black, Vice Chair; Victoria Thurston, Secretary, Armando Fana, Josefa Benjamin, Joseph Rogers, Meghan Russell, Melida Akiti, Rebecca Brock, Ronald Ford, Sigrid McCawley

Unable to Attend:

N/A

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Julie DeMar, Rae Bullard, Susan Eby, Deena Ponto, Nicole Slade, Sheryl Williams, Tamaru Phillips, Andrea Cunningham, Allyson Gaiser, Julie Janello, Dawn Vitale Warfle, Maryse Jean Pierre, Marie K. Joseph, Kimberly Lehmann, Gabriela Smith, Hillary Kofsky, Katherine Vella, Kristen Pittman, Maggie Jovanovich, Shawna Machado, *DCF:* Teresa Janeczek, Elisa Cramer, Other: Traci Schweitzer

CALL TO ORDER – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Michael Lepera, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

WELCOME – NEW BOARD MEMBER – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Michael Lepera welcomed Meghan Russell, ChildNet's newest Board member.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Victoria Thurston, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The November 20, 2020 meeting minutes were reviewed. *A motion was moved to approve the minutes. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.*

ITEM FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Resolution #210 – Signature Authorization for Contract Year 2021 – This resolution provides Larry Rein, CEO and President, and Donna Eprifania, CFO, signing authority for the contract year. This resolution is signed on a yearly basis.

A motion was moved to approve Board Resolution #210. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.

CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Rae Bullard, CHRO

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
 - November 2020 (Bwd) – Marie K. Joseph, Child Advocate Unit C2 and Maryse Jean Pierre, Lead Child Advocate Unit C2.
 - December 2020 (Bwd) – Kimberly Lehmann, Community Relations Coordinator
 - 4th Quarter 2020 (Palm Beach) – 1) Gabriela Smith, Intake & Placement Advocate and 2) Katherine Vella, Director of Case Management and Kristen Pittman, Dependency Case Manager Unit 104



DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Community Relations – Andrea Cunningham, Director of Community Relations provided a brief overview of the Community Relations department which consists of Ms. Cunningham and two Community Relations Coordinators, Kimberly Lehmann (Broward) and Cassidy Edwards (Palm Beach). The Community Relations Department works strategically to increase ChildNet’s overall visibility in the communities that we serve through:
 - Monthly newsletters to over 5,000 subscribers full of stories of foster parents, volunteers and donors along with children that are available for adoption.
 - Creating strategic social media plans that draw people’s attention and interest.
 - Mr. Rein writes weekly on timely news topics and we submit the SF 100 Submissions to the Sun-Sentinel, and
 - Press Releases.

This not only provides an opportunity for ChildNet to share all our accomplishments, it also raises awareness and increases funding opportunities. Many of our annual holiday donations that we received this year was a direct result of having a presence on social media. We work with local faith-based organizations, schools, companies and individuals and invite them to partner with ChildNet on a variety of initiatives throughout the year. This can include our holiday toy drive, Easter Basket Drive and Thanksgiving drive and/or they can make a philanthropic gift. A big part of our department’s responsibility is fundraising. We achieve this through three main strategies: 1) asking for corporate gifts, 2) seeking individual donations, and 3) applying for grants.

FINANCE REPORT – Donna Eprifania, CFO

- Budget Cuts – Larry Rein reported that the legislature is currently in committee meetings and Session will start in another 5 to 6 weeks. So far, there has not been any indication from the legislature of the intention to cut child welfare. However, DCF, with the Governor’s approval, has prepared for a potential 3% cut. If ChildNet does have a 3% cut, there will be no reduction to our workforce, no reduction to our reimbursement of contractors and no reduction to our services.
- CBCIH Investment – Donna Eprifania reported that ChildNet has done its due diligence. Ms. Eprifania met with the Finance Committee and discussed ChildNet becoming a single shareholder with CBCIH (Community Based Care Integrated Health). Previously, ChildNet opted to not participate. However, after due diligence, the benefit is worth the one-time, limited exposure opportunity. The one (1) share is a one-time \$47,900 investment out of unrestricted funds. As of 12-30-20, ChildNet has a little over \$1 million in contingency funds. There is no risk to ChildNet to purchase this share.

A motion was moved to approve purchasing one (1) Class C share in CBCIH. A vote was taken. Voted Yes – Amy Black, Armando Fana, Josefa Benjamin, Joe Rogers, Meghan Russell, Melida Akiti, Michael Lepera, Rebecca Brock, Ronald Ford, Sigrid McCawley and Victoria Thurston. Voted No – N/A. The motion was passed unanimously.

- Audit – The audit for FY 2019-2020 will be presented at the February 2021 Board meeting.

COVID-19 UPDATE – Larry Rein, CEO and President

- Larry Rein reported that there is nothing significant to report. There are no changes to the child welfare policy and practices. We continue to meet statewide bi-weekly. We continue to have supervised visitations with interns and the visitation program prioritizing families with younger children. The rate of infection remains the same. There is no capacity or workforce challenge to serve our children.



COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Advisory Board Committee – Armando Fana, Committee Chair**

The Advisory Board Committee meets on 01-28-21. Larry Rein reported that the case management transition is continuing to move in a positive direction. We currently have 72 case-carrying case managers with the goal of having 82 case-carrying case managers. Removals are at the lowest level in Palm Beach in 10 years. The census has lowered, and the hope is that it continues to drive down numbers.

- **Fundraising Committee – Andrea Cunningham, Director of Community Relations**

Andrea Cunningham reported the following.

- Toy Drive – ChildNet had a successful holiday toy drive with every child and youth in our care receiving three (3) gifts each.
- Year End Campaign – We launched our year-end campaign from October-December 2020 and raised \$14,395. About half of the gifts came from individuals and half came from corporate giving.
- Circle of Supporters – Andrea Cunningham, Director of Community Relations, reported that in November we had 4 members and now we are at 8 members, with a total of \$10,500 donated to this fund. The Circle of Supporters is membership-based and supports everything teen-related including camps, conferences, school trips, and other pro-social activities. The membership is \$83.33 per month or \$1,000 per year.
- Grants – ChildNet was awarded a \$5,000 grant through the Community Foundation of Broward and the Kiwanis Club for laptops for our youth. Ten of those laptops have already been distributed to our youth.

- **Governance Committee – Amy Black, Committee Chair**

- **Families First Preservation Services Act (FFPSA)** – Larry Rein reported that the FFPSA was passed by Congress two years ago and that Florida's implementation of the federal legislation is scheduled to begin October 1, 2021. This Act changes how the federal government will fund residential group care. They will only reimburse states if group care meets very strict requirements. The State of Florida recognizes that not all children will fit into the categories defined by the federal legislation. The challenge is not that CBC lead agencies will not be able to place children in those settings and reimburse providers for those placements, but in the State eventually being unable to draw down the federal match dollars for those placements. This ultimately may lead to substantial shortfalls for the State that the legislature will have to make up with additional state general revenue. The fear is that the legislature may not make up the difference and thus there will be substantial reductions in the state's future funding of child welfare statewide. ChildNet has been meeting with providers both individually and in groups to fully explain this situation, allay their fears about their future reimbursement, and discuss with them ways they might adjust their business and programs to meet and take advantage of the federal legislation.

- **Quarterly Strategic Plan Update** –

- Goal 1 – Create a 1% total budget contingency fund through a combination of fundraising and revenue maximization. At the end of the 2nd quarter of this fiscal year, we are at .78% of the goal amount of \$1,327,967.
- Goal 2 – Safely decrease the use of residential group care by 30%. Number of children in residential group care - Annual Mean at the end of the 2nd quarter for Broward at a 33% decrease from FY 18-19 and for Palm Beach at a 28% decrease from FY 18-19. The Monthly Mean at the end of the 2nd quarter for Broward is a 13% decrease from 06-19 and for Palm Beach is a 25% decrease from 06-19.



- Goal 3 – Create a fully implemented new corporate structure with management company and two unique organizations with individual boards by May 2020. We had further discussions with the DCF Deputy Secretary for Administration about consolidating the two CBC lead agency contracts and are awaiting response from the DCF General Counsel and Secretary.
- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported that we are in the process of replacing the non-voting provider community position that was previously filled by Jillian Smath, SOS Children’s Villages. A Board Candidate application will be provided to 4Kids of South Florida. In addition, a Board Candidate Application will be provided to Karen Harrington who was referred by Melida Akiti.
- **Program Quality Committee – Joe Rogers, Committee Chair**
 - Julie DeMar reported that the Committee reviewed the Service Quality Outcomes for Quarter 2.

NEW BUSINESS

- There was no new business to report.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- ChildNet’s Anti-Racism Workgroup Update – Sheryl Williams reported that the workgroup met in December 2020 and discussed upcoming goals and action planning. The focus is on education and training within the agency to empower staff. Upcoming trainings will be scheduled in February and March 2021. Trainings will also be provided to providers. A sub-committee was formed to work with foster parents. The workgroup is creating a workbook with resources on how to care for brown and black children. Met with Rae Bullard, ChildNet CHRO to discuss Black History Month and Juneteenth.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Michael Lepera

- Michael Lepera noted that with a new president, the country is facing some challenges regarding racial equity, the economy and COVID. Mr. Lepera encourages everyone to focus on families and colleagues and to focus on ChildNet’s cause on children and families.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Mr. Rein introduced Rae Bullard, ChildNet’s new Chief Human Resources Officer.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

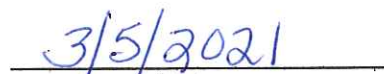
- The next Board meeting is scheduled on Friday, February 26, 2021 via Zoom.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- Having no further business, a motion was *moved* to adjourn the meeting. *A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.* The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.



Dr. Victoria Thurston
Board Secretary



Date

(Corporate Seal)