



# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

## May 20, 2022

### Board of Directors:

Michael Lepera, Board Chair; Amy Black, Vice Chair; Victoria Thurston, Secretary, Joseph Rogers, Treasurer, Chelsea Bellew, David Prather, Josefa Benjamin, Meghan Russell, Melida Akiti, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Paul Adams, Rebecca Brock, Ronald Ford, Tom Lukasik

### Unable to Attend:

Melida Akiti

### Other Attendees:

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Andrea Cunningham, Deena Ponto, Sheryl Williams, Tamaru Phillips, Julie Janello, Briana Calzada, Tara Williams, Joe Mbwambo, *DCF:* Elisa Cramer, Teresa Janeczek, Dawn Liberta

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### CALL TO ORDER – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

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

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The April 22, 2022, meeting minutes were reviewed. *A motion* was moved and seconded to approve the minutes. *A vote was taken.* The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted.*

### CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Tara Williams, HR Manager

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employee:
  - April 2022 – Briana Calzada – Client Relations Coordinator

### DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Management Information Systems (MIS) – Joe Mbwambo, IT Officer, provided a brief summary of the MIS Department. The MIS Department provides service (training, troubleshooting) through technology and they improve staff's work experience. They analyze data from helpdesk tickets, orientations, and interdepartmental meetings. The MIS team is divided into the "Helpdesk Team" and the "Infrastructure Team." The Helpdesk Team consists of 4 Support Specialists and a MIS Coordinator who provides user support, tracks inventory and equipment, and assists with problem escalation. The Infrastructure Team consists of a Junior System Administrator and a System Engineer. Their responsibilities include networking, telecom, offboarding, printers, migration of OneDrive, server administration, backup and disaster recovery, identity management, and security. The Department goals are to have a stable infrastructure, increase collaboration (internal and ex- external), and foster new innovations. Donna Eprifania, CFO, commended Mr. Mbwambo who has brought sophistication, customer service and innovation to ChildNet. We now have a much more secure platform to where we are confident in working within it and everyone's information is safe.



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

- **Board Candidate – Lois Marino** - Larry Rein and Michael Lepera met with Ms. Marino, Executive Director of BBX Foundation. Ms. Marino is very energetic and could help with pushing ChildNet's brand and image, in addition to helping with fundraising and bringing in more resources. They both feel that Ms. Marino would be a great asset to the Board.

*A motion was moved and seconded to approve Lois Marino as the newest member of the Board of Directors. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.*

## FINANCE REPORT – Joe Rogers, Board Treasurer and Donna Eprifania, CFO

- Donna Eprifania noted that Form 990 was approved by the Board and ChildNet's taxes were filed timely. Next Wednesday will be a 2-hour Budget Retreat to review the proposed budget for FY 22-23. The Governor has not yet signed the legislative budget. We still have not yet received any amendments from DCF for the next year. However, we are going to move forward and budget with the additional resource we anticipate for Palm Beach County in the amount of approximately \$2.7 million. On top of the \$2.7 million, we are also anticipating additional resources to bring up the reimbursement for Level 1 or foster parents that are relatives and non-relatives taking child specific placements. DCF has assured us that the resource they gave us to do some of the new activities for some of the Senate bills that were passed this last year will be recurring funding. We have ensured that as we move forward, we are looking at workforce as a very large priority.

## COVID-19 UPDATE – Larry Rein, CEO and President

- **COVID-19 Update** – Larry Rein reported that there had been a slight increase in positive cases among staff, children, and caregivers. We are completing the movement of office space in Broward and should be done by the end of the month. There is now a heightened presence at both office locations.

## COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Advisory Board Committee – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Committee Chair**

Col. Benjamin reported the quarterly census was reviewed. While the total number of children in Palm Beach is the lowest it has been in years in the use of residential group care and the lowest in terms of children in out-of-home care, and the number of total dependent children is the lowest it has been in years, we were, however, lower eight to nine years ago and we are trying to get back there. There is still a struggle with relative placement. As of the last report, removals were at 444 versus reunifications at 434. The Back of the Bill funding to cover a \$400,000 shortfall will be used to expand partnerships with organizations like Friends of Foster Children.

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

Andrea Cunningham reported on the following:

- **Palm Beach Independent Living (IL) Graduation** – is scheduled for June 2, 2022 at 11:00 a.m. at Embassy Suites in West Palm Beach. There are 45 young adults graduating with degrees ranging from high school to bachelor's degree.
- **Broward Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Graduation** – is scheduled for June 23, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at Calvary Chapel, 2401 W. Cypress Creek Rd., Fort Lauderdale. We will be celebrating those graduating from 8<sup>th</sup> grade up through post-secondary degrees.



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

- **Discussion of Recommended Slate of Board Officers for FY 2022-2023** – Discussion held on the following recommended slate for FY 2022-2023: Board Chair, Amy Black, Board Vice Chair, Victoria Thurston, Board Treasurer, Meghan Russell, Board Secretary, Rebecca Brock, and Member at Large, Josefa Benjamin. No further recommendations were provided so this slate will be presented at the June Annual Board meeting for approval.
- **Annual Board Survey** – Discussion was held on survey question #2, “My familiarity with the organization’s investment management and asset development is”. Donna Eprifania reported that ChildNet made the decision to be part of the CBCIH collaborative with all the other lead agencies, where they are contracted with the health plan and ChildNet has the opportunity to receive a quality bonus based on the performance of the State for children receiving medical, dental and well-being types of services. This entity has been established and the way they have established themselves was by selling shares in three different levels. ChildNet chose to be part of the investment opportunity by purchasing one (1) share for \$45,000. ChildNet has already realized 50% of that back in our quality allocations. ChildNet is participating in investments, but we do not have an investment portfolio. Mr. Rein noted that we now have an investment and now that we do have a nice discretionary fund that we built up with intent, this might give us the option for additional sorts of investments going forward. It was decided to leave this question in the survey. In addition, it was requested that ChildNet’s investment(s) be brought up at additional board meetings to keep the board informed. Julie Janello will provide a Survey Monkey link for the full Board to complete the survey, and a Survey presentation will be presented at the Annual meeting in June.
- **Membership Recruitment** – An application will be sent to Tom McManus, CEO of Lily Funds.

- **Legal/Human Resources Committee - Committee Chair**

The Committee met at the beginning of May but nothing new to report.

- **Program Quality Committee – Joe Rogers, Committee Chair**

The Committee did not meet this month.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- There was no new business.

## **CONTINUING BUSINESS**

- **ChildNet’s Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Sheryl Williams, Program Officer of Case Management and Adoptions, reported that they had a sub-group meeting giving attention to kids in out-of-home care. We want to focus on those children and those that are the most difficult to place in foster homes. We want to see if there is anything we, as an agency, can do with placing these kids in our foster homes and figure out what do our foster home agencies recruit or look for in trying to find foster homes for our most difficult and challenging kids. These youth are teenagers between the ages of 12-17, and our black and brown males and females that we tend to place in our group homes where they continue to struggle and continue to pick up DJJ charges. Our goal is to look at how to best serve these kids and equipping our foster families to better serve them to have more foster homes to these children.

## **BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Michael Lepera**

- Mr. Lepera stated that ChildNet will be well cared for with the upcoming Board Officers. He encouraged the Board to continue getting more engaged. Each Board member has a certain expertise or passion that will benefit our children. The Board Mixer was a good event in which the Board members and staff





were able to meet in person and become better acquainted. Mr. Lepera feels meeting in person helps the board evolve and become a deeper board in engagement. Mr. Lepera also reinforced every Board member to continue getting ChildNet's brand out to ensure everyone knows who ChildNet is. When the opportunity comes up, remember ChildNet and bring it out to the community.

#### CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Workforce - Mr. Rein reported that ChildNet's biggest challenge currently is the workforce, its stability and adequacy in terms of numbers. In dependency case management, we are running vacancy rates of 25 to 35% which, unbelievably, is better than a lot of our colleagues in the state. We have tried all sorts of things to be creative in terms of addressing the case management workforce challenge including sign-on incentives, retention incentives, recruitment efforts, and job fairs. What could really make a difference is the increased child welfare appropriation statewide for the next fiscal year of \$150 million. Broward will not receive any additional monies. However, Palm Beach will receive \$2.75 million in increased core funding. All the lead agencies advocated during the legislative session to have the starting salaries for dependency case managers be increased to \$45,000. We all are talking about following through with that now that some monies will be available.
- Teenagers – There is an overall issue of needing to better serve teenagers in our community. We are continuing to do research and come up with some answers as to why in the first nine months of this fiscal year, 36 teenagers in Broward County entered foster care because of their behaviors that their caregiver or parent could not manage and no longer wanted to care for them as the challenges were so tremendous. This issue is not about children already in care but about children before they come into care so that they do not have to come into foster care. Going forward, we are going to integrate and focus some of our efforts on the key issues such as this and also better serving teens that are in care. This will include improving the quality of local services for teens and families, expanding residential options for teens, and providing better supports for relatives so that they can care for teens.
- Strategic Plan – After July 1, 2022, ChildNet will focus on a new strategic plan. Everything needs to coalesce with all the pieces in the organization working together towards the same end.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

#### NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next meeting is the Annual Meeting and is scheduled for Friday, June 24, 2022 in person and via Zoom.

#### ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, a *motion* was moved to adjourn the meeting. A *vote was taken*. The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted*. The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 a.m.

  
Dr. Victoria Thurston  
Board Secretary

  
Date

(Corporate Seal)