



ANNUAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

June 25, 2021 (Rev. 08-25-21)

Board of Directors:

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

Unable to Attend:

Ronald Ford, Sigrid McCawley, Tom Lukasik

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Deena Ponto, Sheryl Williams, Andrea Cunningham, Julie Janello, Shakeyia Brown, Andrew Wallick, Katherine Vella, Kenia Allen, Falon Gillespie, Larenilee Fernandez, *DCF:* Jeffrey Ferraro, Teresa Janeczek

CALL TO ORDER – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Michael Lepera, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The May 21, 2021, 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*.

WELCOME – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Michael Lepera welcomed new Board Director Nancy Gregoire, a prominent attorney in Broward County.

CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Rae Bullard, CHRO

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employee:
 - May 2021 – Larenilee Fernandez, Dependency Case Manager, Unit 109.

BOARD SERVICE – Jason Tracey, CLO

- Approval of Resolutions #219 - #222 – Election of Officers – The following names were brought to the Board for vote for Officer Positions for a one (1) year term, ending June 2022:
 - *Chair* – Michael Lepera
 - *Vice Chair* – Amy Black
 - *Treasurer* – Joe Rogers
 - *Secretary* – Dr. Victoria Thurston

A *motion* was moved and seconded to approve Resolutions #219-#222 for re-appointment of one (1) year, ending June 2022. A *vote was taken*. The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted*.

- Approval of Resolution #223 – Election of Directors – two-year reappointment – The following slate of Directors are up for reappointment of a two (2) year term ending June 2023:
 - Armando Fana
 - Josefa Benjamin



- Meghan Russell
- Nancy Gregoire
- Rebecca Brock
- Dr. Ronald Ford

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Resolution #223 for re-appointment of two (2) years, ending June 2023. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

- Approval of Resolution #224 – Election of Directors – less than two-year reappointment – The following Directors are up for reappointment of less than two (2) years. The reappointments are noted as follows:
 - Melida Akiti – 1 year and 5 months – ending November 2022
 - Thomas Lukasik – 1 year and 10 months – ending April 2023

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Resolution #224 for re-appointment of less than two (2) years as noted above. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

ADDITIONAL ITEM FOR APPROVAL – Jason Tracey, CLO

- Approval of Resolution #225 – Compliance with License Requirements, Regulations and Decrees – Discussion was held by Jason Tracey that this annual compliance check is to ensure that all ChildNet licenses are in place.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Resolution #225. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

FINANCIAL REPORT AND INSURANCE UPDATE – Joe Rogers, Board Treasurer and Donna Eprifania, CFO

- Financial Update - Joe Rogers reported that they held both a Budget Workshop and the Finance Committee meeting to finalize the draft budget for FY 21-22 which will be presented to the full board at the August 2021 Board meeting.
- Insurance Update – Donna Eprifania reported that ChildNet experienced increases predominately around the general and excess liability coverage. All coverages remained the same with the exception of cyber coverage, where we increased the coverage from \$1 million to \$2 million. We are experiencing an approximate \$475,000 increase in our eight lines of coverage we need to carry, which is inclusive of auto, property, excess, general, cyber, crime, directors and officers, and worker's compensation.

Larry Rein reported that DCF wants to be indemnified by all community-based care lead agencies and all of our subcontractors. The Department wants this to be included in our subcontractor contracts. As DCF does not contract directly with our subcontractors, the legality of including that indemnification is being questioned. The legislature has given the Department a lot more responsibilities within the child welfare system, such as convening multi-disciplinary staffings before placement moves, so the Department is going to be increasingly involved in the child welfare business, so it does not make sense for them to not accept some responsibility. The members of the FCC and our legal staff are getting together to propose alternate language. We have also gotten letters from insurance carriers explaining to the Department that this will cause a gigantic challenge and we are in the process of setting up a negotiation as group with the Department.

- May 2021 Financials - Donna Eprifania reported that both Broward and Palm Beach are in a very healthy posture. In Broward, we have approximately a \$4 million surplus year-to-date and in Palm Beach, we have approximately a \$1 million surplus year-to-date. The reason both counties are in such a positive position is because we are taking everything at face value. While it may say we have a \$1 million surplus in Palm Beach, we still need to go through the final reconciliation with all funds at the Department.

At the Budget Workshop we decided to do an initial budget. Some of the things included in the FY 21-22 initial review are the cost-of-living increases for our workforce and the 2.9% increase in health insurance coverage that ChildNet decided to absorb. Other things included within the budget is the preparation of the Families



First Preservation Services Act (FFPSA) and trying to build up the evidence-based capacity in our communities as there will be a shift as/of October 1, 2021 to a more prevention environment as opposed to the current environment in the utilization of group facilities.

Larry Rein reported the initial success with the Oak Street project for the 4 most challenging young men in Palm Beach County. We are now having initial success with a similar project in Broward County. We also started a 4-bed home for the most challenging young women in Broward County. We are moving slowly but we think this is the best way to serve these teenagers. It is stabilizing their placements and improving their educational performance. We are opening one home at a time as these homes are costly. This type of home is an option that we need to consider and find ways to fund. These homes do not necessarily fit into FFPSA or into the federal draw down of IV-E dollars. We are investing in evidence-based prevention practices to ensure we continue to focus on keeping families together and reunifying them as timely as possible. The Children's Services Council, for about 18 years, has been funding several evidence-based practices with several local service providers. So now, we are entering into contracts with several providers who have experience with evidence-based practices.

ANNUAL UPDATE – Jason Tracey, CLO

- Discussion of Sunshine Law – Jason Tracey noted that no changes have been made since last year. Mr. Tracey noted that per Sunshine Law, meetings must be open to the public and minutes are to be taken. No use of computers to conduct private discussions regarding board business. Julie Janello will send a link/video to the Board from the Inspector General that discusses Sunshine Law.
- Board Survey Presentation – Jason Tracey provided a brief overview of the board survey results. Discussion was held on the following items that need improvement: 1) new corporate structure – this should be completed this year, 2) funding sources, 3) working relationship (staff and Board), and 4) local/national trends and development. It was noted that numbers 2-4 had a singular response that resulted in those 3 items to show “need improvement”. The engagement section results show tremendous improvement from last fiscal year.

Question was raised here, and at a previous board meeting, if all board meetings should be held in person. Mr. Tracey reported that he researched this and that it is okay to meet remotely. ChildNet is a private corporation and we have been designated by DCF. Therefore, we do not fall under the same umbrella as other governmental entities fall under. Mr. Rein noted that during this last legislative session, there was a bill that talked specifically about quasi-governmental entities. It was determined by the legislators and a variety of other people that lead agencies and managing entities were not quasi-governmental under that Statute.

- Board/Committee Meeting Calendar, Board Roster/Contact List and Committee Structure and Membership – These documents were updated and provided to the Board. Mr. Tracey noted that there will not be Board or Committee meetings in the months of July and December, unless otherwise requested by the Board Chair.
- Annual Acknowledgement Form – Annually, each Board member is to complete the Acknowledgement Form to note any conflicts of interest. Julie Janello will email the form to full Board for completion.

ANNUAL UPDATE – Julie DeMar, CPO

- Management of Operational Procedures (MOP) Presentation – Julie DeMar gave a brief overview of the MOP, which is the mechanism of reviewing policies and procedures, both internally and externally, in both counties. External reviewers include the Department of Children and Families' Quality Assurance Department, their Licensing Department, and their Contract Oversight Unit, the Florida Certification Board and the Community Based Care Integrated Health (CBCIH). As a result of the reviews, both internally and externally, there are times when there are actions identified to improve compliance with the policies and procedures. Ms. DeMar noted that the MOP is reviewed at the monthly Program Quality Committee meetings.



COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

Armando Fana noted the committee discussed the difficulty in recruiting new staff, i.e., case managers. For a limited time in Palm Beach County, bonus and retention incentives have been put into place. Larry Rein reported that a couple of scorecard measures that had been a real struggle to reach for a long time or due to the pandemic, has now reached the green. Mr. Rein noted that both Dr. Tamaru Phillips, Director of Intake & Placement-PB and Kenia Allen, Director of Children's Wellbeing, discussed how we are now meeting those measures after having struggled historically in the past.

- **Adolescent Services AdHoc Committee – Melida Akiti, Committee Chair**

Melida Akiti noted that this committee was created to ensure children, ages 13-17, receive all services in which they are entitled and to see which services they are and are not accessing. Shakeyia Brown, Director of Service Coordination, noted that currently they are working with the top 22 youth in Broward and Palm Beach, and meeting with them to gain insight on any gaps in services. They meet with each youth individually on a quarterly basis to gain feedback from them. Michael Lepera, Board Chair has several colleagues he would like to bring in to speak to our youth to give them some correlation on what is attainable for them. Mr. Lepera would like to sponsor bringing in these colleagues to speak with our youth. Larry Rein noted that he has met with Captain Peterson from BSO and with Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS). Mr. Rein noted that BB/BS has a national program in Broward where law enforcement mentors' youth. Mr. Rein thinks the better way is for BSO and BB/BS to have that relationship that we can use deputies and other administrative staff to filter into this specific mentoring program at BB/BS. Mr. Rein reported that we have entered into discussions with the new leadership at BB/BS and together we are going to design a mentoring program specifically for ChildNet.

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

Andrea Cunningham reported on the following.

- Virtual Auction – ChildNet just completed our first virtual auction. We had a lot of great items, and we are still collecting payment on some of them, so a final amount raised as not yet been totaled. Unfortunately, it did not go as well as had hoped which is attributed to factors like travel restrictions and the auction software platform was cumbersome which deterred many people from completing their registration.
- Palm Beach IL Graduation - is scheduled for July 7, 2021, at 2:00pm via Zoom.
- Broward IL Graduation - is scheduled for July 22, 2021, at 6:00pm via Zoom.
- Save the Date - Palm Beach Care for Kids Luncheon - is scheduled for March 8, 2022, at Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton. We are finalizing the sponsorship packets.
- Impact Campaign for Circle of Supporters' members – we are rolling out an impact campaign for the month of July for the Circle of Supporters members. Ms. Cunningham is asking our members if they could provide a video testimonial or a written testimonial that we can share via our social media outlets to share more about what we do and who we are in hopes of increasing our membership.
- Thank you – Ms. Cunningham thanked the board members for reaching out to donors and thanking them. Sending hand-written thank you notes, picking up the phone and calling donors and sending emails have had a tremendous impact on donor retention.

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

- CEO Scorecard – Discussion held that the CEO scorecard is the same format as last year with a quantitative section, self-evaluation and for the Executive/Governance Committee to complete.



- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported he had a meeting with Debbie Pucillo, a retired judge from Palm Beach, who is very interested in becoming a ChildNet board member.

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

Julie DeMar reported that the committee discussed the ranges of numbers of children assigned to case managers. In Broward, 81% of staff have under 15 children on their caseloads. There are a few challenges in Palm Beach in terms of caseload size. Discussion was held on different strategies to address larger caseloads. Several follow-ups have been done in trying to determine if there is any acuity model. Susan Eby, CCQO, has met with FAU twice to discuss any acuity models. FAU has reached out to other universities and there are no acuity models. Discussed gathering information at the time of exit interviews and using that information to inform how you move forward in case assignment. Another CBC, Embrace, has indicated they are working on a complex case study and how that may influence case assignment. We have reached out to them and are awaiting feedback. In addition, we addressed how we assign cases now, which involves both the director and supervisor making decisions about which case will go to which case manager. Assignment of cases is not just on a rotation basis.

NEW BUSINESS

- No new business to discuss

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- **ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Sheryl Williams, P.O. of Case Management and Adoptions, reported that in March 2021, ChildNet approved Juneteenth to be a paid ChildNet holiday, and ChildNet just observed our first Juneteenth on Friday, June 18, 2021. As one of the Juneteenth events, ChildNet participated in the Implicit Bias and Microaggression Training presented by Dr. Daniella Jones. One of our providers, National Youth Advocacy Program (NYAP), is very impressed on how we are incorporating black hair/skin care into our Child Resource Records (CRR) and providing to our foster parents and caregivers. They do business east of the Mississippi and as many places they are nationally, they have not seen any body with something so innovative. Mr. Rein also commended Ms. Williams and Dr. Tamaru Phillips.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Michael Lepera

- Michael Lepera noted how impressed he is with the strong makeup of professionals that we have on our Board. The level of the diversity of our board membership and the level of their involvement is truly appreciated. Mr. Lepera noted that the financial stability of ChildNet is commendable. Mr. Lepera noted that he is glad that we decided to focus on fundraising and diversifying our revenues. He agrees that getting more board members and more supporters around us to help diversify those revenues to have funds to take care of some of those items that we cannot use state funding for can help to prevent removals or help to accelerate permanency. Mr. Lepera noted that we need to continue focusing on employee welfare and engagement. Mr. Lepera concluded his report by thanking Larry Rein and his leadership team and staff on their visibility and professionalism as it really makes the job of the Board of Governors much easier.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- **COVID-19 Update** - Larry Rein reported that we are in the process of finishing office changes in both buildings. The goal is to gradually begin returning back to the offices on July 15th with a target date of our new normal by August 30th. Mr. Rein noted that no staff will work 100% off-site.
- **Issue of Workforce Stability and Support** – Mr. Rein is working hard to make this a major statewide issue. Due to this past legislative session, where basically we had to fight against things rather than take a leadership role in new policy for the state, the Florida Coalition for Children (FCC) is convening a Leadership Summit in July 2021. One of the three major topics of the Leadership Summit is 'workforce stability and support', in which Mr. Rein will try to move this to be one of the major legislative initiatives going forward for child welfare in the State of Florida. DCF Secretary Harris is wholeheartedly behind this initiative.



- **Legislative Update** - Larry Rein reported that, good news, there were no cuts to child welfare funding and, bad news, there was no increase statewide to CBC core funding. Palm Beach received \$485,000 in back of the bill funding. The legislature approved both special local appropriation requests for Palm Beach in the amounts of \$365,000 for the creation of a safety management team targeting families with adult substance abuse problems and \$685,000 to replicate the Oak Street group home project to serve the four most challenging dually dependent and delinquent young women in the county. The Governor approved the former but, regrettably, vetoed the latter.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 27, 2021, 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 10:13 a.m.



Dr. Victoria Thurston
Board Secretary



Date

(Corporate Seal)