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# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

## October 23, 2020

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**Board of Directors:**

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

**Unable to Attend:**

Amy Black, Jillian Smath, Josefa Benjamin

**Other Attendees:**

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Deena Ponto, Andrea Cunningham, Sheryl Williams, Tamaru Phillips, Allyson Gaiser, Stacy-Ann King, Julie Janello, Diane Rufus, Matthew Saler, Marcus Rankin, Joe Mbwambo, *DCF:* Dawn Liberta, Teresa Janeczek

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

- Michael Lepera, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Victoria Thurston, Board Secretary**

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The September 25, 2020 meeting minutes were reviewed. *A motion was moved to approve the minutes. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.*

**RESIGNATION – Michael Lepera, Board Chair**

- Christopher Cade submitted his resignation from the Board due to work commitments. We will now need to fill the vacancy of Board Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair.

**WELCOME – Michael Lepera, Board Chair**

- Mr. Lepera welcomed new Board member Dr. Ronald Ford who stated his appreciation of being given the opportunity to serve on the Board.

**CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Stacy-Ann King, Director of HR**

- The Broward September 2020 and Palm Beach 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Awards were presented to the following deserving employees:
  - September 2020 (Bwd) – Marcus Rankin, Child Advocate Supervisor Unit D1
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter (July-Sep. 2020) (PB) – Matthew Saler, MIS Support Specialist

**DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW**

- MIS Department – Joe Mbwambo, IT Officer provided a brief overview of the MIS (Management of Information Systems) department. In the past year, many things were done to improve the platform and security of our infrastructure. Mr. Mbwambo has ensured that there is sufficient equipment and a new application was implemented that now allows the department to better manage their staff equipment so



that they can deploy applications remotely and can easily see helpdesk tickets that come in. The new infrastructure provides better security overall and has increased the ability for end-users to have security training. This has lessened the stress for attacks on our network. Because of this new infrastructure, when we had to deploy all staff to work from home, we were able to get everyone working remotely within two (2) days of when the pandemic began. Donna Eprifania interjected that the MIS department now has a much better ability to respond to the workforce, and under Mr. Mbwambo's leadership, the MIS team has taken IT at ChildNet to a much more secure and efficient level.

### **FINANCE REPORT – Donna Eprifania, CFO**

- Donna Eprifania reported that the Finance Committee will meet next week. Ms. Eprifania noted that we received the close out letters from the Department of Children & Families and she is pleased to report that we are in a very healthy position as we close out FY 2019-2020. In Palm Beach, we received \$1.4 million in back of the bill funding, with approximately \$280,000 being given to Children's Home Society as they also submitted a request on top of the projected needed identified by ChildNet. After all reconciliation, ChildNet Palm Beach ended the year with a positive \$160,000 posture which will go against the rolling deficit of \$439,000. We have a rolling deficit still in Palm Beach County, but it has been reduced to \$280,000. In Broward County, we were able to add an additional \$8 million to our existing positive balance of \$3.6 million this fiscal year. We are using some of that to help support the OCP3 Grant. The additional monies were as a result of us being able to maintain our caseloads, being able to have children return home and having a lower census. As a result, ChildNet will be able to weather any reductions that DCF imposes without affecting our service delivery to our children and families, no reductions for our providers and nothing will be impacted with our workforce.
- State Budget Reductions – Larry Rein reported that the legislature makes the decision on the number of cuts to CBCs. The legislature has not met yet and the earliest would be after the November elections. The Secretary went to the Governor and received approval from the Governor that the cut should only be 3% for CBC lead agencies and managing entities. DCF will send amendments to our contracts to show the 3% cut. A couple of week ago, Mr. Rein and Donna Eprifania, CFO met with the Department CFO. ChildNet offered to have Palm Beach's 3% share to be taken out of Broward's surplus. The Department CFO is informally supportive of this suggestion. In addition, we proposed to them to consider going forward and allowing ChildNet to have one single contract instead of two separate contracts so that we could better serve the children and families of each county. The Department will review the possibilities with their General Counsel and with the Secretary.

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

- Larry Rein reported that with guidance and direction from DCF, we are doing in-home face-to-face visits once every 90 days and we back that up with video visits every other week. We are continuing with the supervised visitation program in Palm Beach and Broward, using interns from FAU and Nova, with visits being done on-site at our offices targeting families with children ages birth to 3. There has been a tremendous drop in the number of positive tests. So far in October, there have only been 4 children and 10 adults (caregivers and staff) that have tested positive.

### **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- Advisory Board Committee – Armando Fana, Committee Chair

Armando Fana reported that the Palm Beach Census was discussed. It was noted residential group care is trending downward from last year, and foster home and relative/non-relative is trending slightly upward. Discussion was also held on an article in the Palm Beach Post about the foster care system. This article originally came out in USA Today.



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

Andrea Cunningham reported the following.

- Annual Toy Drive – We will have a toy drive in both Broward and Palm Beach counties this year. We currently have 26 companies hosting a toy drive for us. Spirit Airlines and FPL recently joined. In addition, some have chosen to use our Amazon Wish List Link and others are still doing a physical toy drive.
- Grants – Child Net has been awarded two grants: 1) The Paul Palank Memorial Foundation awarded us \$20,000 for COVID-related expenses. 2) The Truist Foundation has awarded us a \$27,500 grant for leadership training.
- The Broward Sheriff's Office and Calvary Chapel partnered to provide Thanksgiving meals to families in our community. Lt. Col. Benjamin invited some of the families we serve to participate. We are happy to share that we have 20 families that have accepted.
- Sigrid McCawley is being honored by The Heart Gallery of Broward on November 19, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. at the Lauderdale Yacht Club for her dedication to child welfare.

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

- **Strategic Plan 2019-2022 – Amended Goal #2** – Larry Rein reported that as discussed at the last meeting, we are bringing forth the Amended Goal 2 for review and discussion:

Suggested Amended Goal #2 – Safely decrease the use of residential group care by 30%.

The evidence of goal progress in one year and the evidence of goal progress in three years remains at 10% decrease in the number of children placed in residential group care for a total of 30% decrease in three years. We are keeping the original goal "Increase inventory of foster homes in Palm Beach and Broward by 30% with marketing efforts which will also lead to increased community awareness of ChildNet", as an updated Action Step for year two.

*A motion was moved to approve Amended Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 as noted above. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.*

- Membership Recruitment – Larry Rein stated that we have sent Board Application Packets to two potential board applicants: 1) Sandra Remy, a former foster youth, and 2) Meghan Russell who has expertise in the finance field.

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

- Julie DeMar reported that the Committee reviewed some new DCF quality measures that are in draft form. Some of the quality metrics will give us a sense of where things will be leading in the new accountability bill and the move towards grading CBC systems. Committee also reviewed a DCF Heat map to look at different items within the system. Susan Eby presented on the integration of behavioral health substance abuse integration efforts in both counties. It was noted that there is a need for another member on the Program Quality Committee. Dr. Ronald Ford was nominated to join this committee and Michael Lepera will follow-up with Dr. Ford to determine his availability.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- There was no new business to report.



### CONTINUING BUSINESS

- ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update – Sheryl Williams reported that the next Workgroup meeting is scheduled for 10-29-20. Ms. Williams emailed staff of the podcast that was discussed at the last meeting. Victoria Thurston wanted to note that the survey comments come from not only current feelings but from long-term feelings. Melida Akiti noted that grants are available at the beginning of the year regarding racial equity. Michael Lepera noted that the Board needs guidance on how to use the information from the Workgroup to create a positive outcome. Both Melida Akiti and Larry Rein discussed that ChildNet's Employee Council, which has been in place for approximately two years, can work with the Anti-Racism Workgroup to communicate, in both directions, from staff and throughout the organization.

### BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Michael Lepera

- Michael Lepera noted that ChildNet is in a great financial position which affords flexibility to handle issues. Mr. Lepera encouraged everyone to open their hearts and focus on our fundraising and toy drive. USA Today had an article, in which ChildNet was not mentioned, that highlighted on the financial impact that agencies go through as a result of lack of funding and shows the pressure that we get put under. And lastly, Mr. Lepera again encouraged everyone to keep in contact with friends, family and colleagues during this pandemic.

### CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Case Management Transition - Mr. Rein reported that the transition began on August 24<sup>th</sup> and that we transitioned over 52 case-carrying case managers. We currently have 23 trainees available to join the Palm Beach case management workforce to help us reach our goal of 82 case-carrying case managers. We will continue to overhire until the workforce is stabilized. We had incredible help from other case management certified ChildNet staff (16 from Palm Beach and 25 from Broward) to help ease the workload in Palm Beach.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

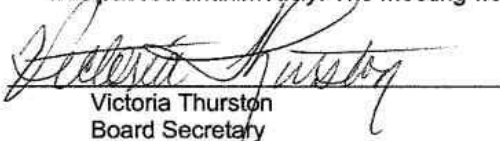
- There was no public comment.

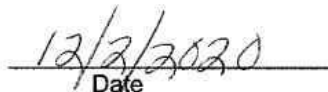
### NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next Board meeting is scheduled on Friday, November 20, 2020 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 9:19 a.m.

  
Victoria Thurston  
Board Secretary

  
Date

(Corporate Seal)