

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4th Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

A. Roll Call

Present: Christopher Cabot, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick

Excused: Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Kim Withrow

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

B. Review Agenda

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the April 15, 2026, Board meeting. Agenda Item V.B. Policy 6.3 Annual Budget (Board Vote) will be moved to Agenda Item III.B. Unresolved Action Items.

C. Review and Approve Minutes

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Minutes submitted for the March 11, 2026, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

MOTION: It was moved by Tamara Newton, seconded by Andrew Lipian to approve the March 11, 2026, Board Meeting Minutes. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

II. Public Comment

Board Chair Jim Miller confirmed that there were no requests from the public to address the Board.

III. Old Business

A. Tabled Items

1. 2026 Levy

The revenue generated by the current 2026-2030 1.8 mill renewal levy is not sustainable to cover the cost of agency operations. Each year, the ending fund balance/carryover continues to decrease. The Board is considering an additional levy to supplement the costs. Director of Fiscal Affairs, Jessica Basinski provided the Board with projections based on a .3 mill additional

levy for 5 years, 2027-2031, estimated to increase our revenue by approximately \$3.5 million per year. The Board asked about the impact on the taxpayers. Because it would be a new levy, it would increase the taxpayers annual costs. The Board’s first step is to approve a resolution asking the Commissioners to request the Auditor’s to provide the dollar amount that would be generated by the new levy. Board member Martin O’Donnell is requesting a document that outlines talking points to the community, should the Board receive questions regarding the new levy. The main Expenditure causing the deficit is Purchased Board and Care, due to the increase in the number of children in care, and the significant increase in placement costs. Kristen Fox-Berki will provide the Board with a synopsis of why the additional levy is necessary. Should we choose to place the additional levy on the November 2026 ballot, we must have the necessary documents to the Board of Elections by early August, including LCCS Board and Lorain County Board of Commissioners approval.

Resolution 04-2026-01

The Board hereby requests the Lorain County Board of Commissioners to request the Lorain County Auditor to certify to the Lorain County Board of Commissioners the total current tax valuation of the County and the dollar amount of revenue that would be generated by a 5-year .3 mill additional levy for years 2027 through 2031, for the purposes of funding essential services to Lorain County’s abused and neglected children.

MOTION: It was moved by Thomas Patrick, seconded by Tamara Newton to approve Resolution 04-2026-01. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O’Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

B. Unresolved Action Items

Policy 6.3 Annual Budget (Board Vote) *(Moved from Agenda Item V.B. Fiscal Reports)*

The Board was provided with the 2026-2027 Annual Budget, the LCCS master operational contract list, including contracts for the Connections Center, and the Personnel Plan, including Major Purchases, at the March 11, 2026, Board meeting, and asked to review the documents prior to today’s meeting.

Discussion:

- The ending fund balance continues to decrease annually due to the increase in placement costs.
- In October 2022, at the request of the Lorain County Budget Commission, the LCCS Board voted for a one-time .15 mill levy reduction for 2023 property tax collections, totaling approximately \$600,000. At that time, costs were lower and the carryover was much larger.

- Counties across the State are facing an increase in placement costs.
- Should the additional levy not pass in November 2026, the Board would have another opportunity to place the levy on the ballot in the primary elections in early 2027.
- As staff leave the agency, their positions are evaluated to determine whether to replace their position or reassign their responsibilities.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin O’Donnell, seconded by Christopher Cabot to approve the 2026-2027 Annual Budget. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O’Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

IV. Executive Director’s Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

There are no new hires or leaves for the month of March.

B. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

Kristen Fox-Berki reported that the April events are underway for National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Wear Blue day was April 8, 2026. Staff photos, wearing blue, were posted on Facebook and Instagram. The Auditor’s office, MHARS and Neighborhood Alliance also participated and shared photos. Pinwheels are displayed in front of the Administration Building and the Connections Center. Kristen Fox-Berki invited the Board members to attend the Ensure They Shine event on April 25, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at North Park Ice Arena in Elyria.

May is National Foster Care Month. The agency will provide a gift to our foster parents and Kristen Fox-Berki will give a presentation at the Lorain County Commissioners meeting in recognition of our foster parents.

The agency recently hosted a recruitment event. So far this year, there are three (3) new foster homes that have been fully licensed, and we received eleven (11) new applications.

C. Policy 7.14 Client Grievance

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the Ombudsman Quarterly Report from January 1, 2026, through March 31, 2026, including the number of Grievances Filed, Public Complaints, Telephone Calls, Emails, Walk-ins, New Requests for Ombudsman Services, Pending Requests Resolved from Last Quarter, and New Requests Resolved within this Quarter. Kristen Fox-Berki reviewed the Pending Requests Resolved from Last Quarter.

Kristen Fox-Berki shared the Proclamation, recognizing April 2026 as National Child Abuse Prevention Month in Lorain County, Ohio, and shared her recent opportunity to present at the Lorain County Commissioner’s meeting.

V. Fiscal Reports

A. Policy 6.1 Quarterly Financial Update

Quarterly Financial Statement as of March 31, 2026.

The Beginning Fund balance is \$11,204,448.84 and the Ending Fund Balance is \$6,061,286.39.

- The total Revenue for January – March 2026 was \$1,866,168.67.
 - We have not received the first half levy collection due to a new process in the Auditor’s office. It is expected that we will receive it mid-April. Historically the first collection is received in March. This amount will total around \$6,000,000.
- The total Expenditures for January – March 2026 were \$7,009,331.12.
 - Gas Mileage Reimbursement is lower than expected because the Auditor’s office is behind.
 - Services to Clients and their Families
 - Purchased Board and Care was a little over \$1.6 million for the quarter. We anticipate an increase in April as well because the Ohio Guidestone contract is not completed. This will cause a few months backlog that will be paid out in April or May.
 - KGAP exceeds the Monthly Board and Care amount.
 - ISP Cost- a reimbursement was paid out.
 - For the Connections Center, we paid out about \$30,000 for the quarter. Jessica Basinski is estimating about \$10,000 per month in expenses.

B. Policy 6.3 Annual Budget (Board Vote)

(Moved to Agenda Item III.B. Unresolved Action Items).

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

None.

VII. Executive Session *(to discuss litigation, personnel matters and other matters required to be kept confidential by law)*

None.

VIII. Announcements

None.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Tamara Newton, seconded by Christopher Cabot to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:31 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O’Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4th Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

Minutes Prepared by:
Kimberly Kassam, Administrative Supervisor

Approved by:
Jim Miller, Board Chair