

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 17, 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: Lee Armbruster, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick

Excused: Rania Assily, Andrew Lipian, 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 June 17, 2026, Board meeting. No additions or changes made.

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 May 20, 2026, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

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 Board invited Director of Fiscal Affairs Jessica Basinski to join, to discuss the levy. The LCCS Board passed a Resolution at the April 15, 2026, Board meeting to request a valuation from the Lorain County Auditor for a .30 mill additional levy. Based on the figures provided, this amount may not be enough to sustain placement costs and the current number of children in care. The Board may need to request an additional valuation from the auditor's office. Kristen Fox-Berki and Jessica Basinski provided the Board with three budget projections based on the revenue that would be generated by a .35 mill additional levy, a .40 mill additional levy and a .45 mill additional levy. All three projections are fairly conservative and do not account for a significant increase in placement costs or children in custody. The rise in the number of children in custody over the last few years is partially due to the federal Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP), which provides caregivers with financial assistance. To help expedite the court process, the KGAP procedure was updated to limit the time frame given to caregivers to

45 days to decide whether to apply for KGAP. Should they choose to receive KGAP, the child(ren) must remain in the agency's custody until a homestudy is completed, the caregiver becomes licensed foster parents, and the child(ren) has resided in the licensed foster home for six months (five months, plus at least one night in the sixth month). Should they choose not to receive KGAP, the agency can file a motion to request the court to place the child(ren) in the temporary custody of the caregiver more quickly. We are hopeful that the change to the procedure may decrease the number of children in care.

Based on the .35 additional levy projections, the Ending Fund Balance through 2030 does not exceed \$8 million, which may not be enough. The .40 and .45 additional levy projections are slightly more favorable. To help mitigate costs, we continue to evaluate the need to fill positions through employee attrition, saving between \$460,000-500,000. Staff are encouraged to refer families to available community resources, decreasing voucher costs. These combined efforts saved approximately \$700,000 from 2024 – 2025.

In previous years, the LCCS levy has been well supported when there is a large voter turnout. The 2026 fall election is a mid-term election year. Kristen Fox-Berki is asking the Board to vote on a Resolution to request a valuation from the auditor's office for a .35 mill additional levy, a .40 mill additional levy and a .45 mill additional levy to help the Board to make an informed decision. The Board asked about data from comparable-sized counties that may help support their decision. Kristen Fox-Berk offered to contact Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) to see if they could provide us with information on levies from other counties that are comparable in size to Lorain County.

The Board inquired what would be done if the levy failed in the November 3, 2026, election. Kristen Fox-Berki shared that our levy has always been well supported by our community. However, should the levy fail in the November 3, 2026, election, the levy would need to be placed on the ballot again next year. We would have enough funds for operations through December 2027, but it would be close. We will continue to manage costs that are within our control. Historically, in response to the Lorain County Budget Commission's request to reduce the carryover at that time and decrease the taxpayer burden, the Board voted to approve a one-time reduction on October 19, 2022, to forgo collection of 0.15 mill of its 1.8 mill Levy in Calendar Year 2023, only: equating to about \$600,000. Martin O'Donnell suggests that the Board ensure the requested 2027 levy millage amount is enough to avoid another levy request in the future. Competing county levies can also influence taxpayer decisions.

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with updated levy talking points. LCCS has a political action committee that raises funds for our levy, called the Friends of Children Services. The funds raised at the annual Princess Ball goes toward promoting the levy.

a. Resolution 06-2026-02

Levy Revenue Projection Resolution:

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 .35 mill additional levy, a .40 mill additional levy and a .45 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 Roberto Davila, seconded by Thomas Patrick to approve Resolution 06-2026-02. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0

Dan Gross noted the biggest hurdle is passing an additional levy [increase] more so than the amount requested. The Board will review the budget projections at the July Board meeting based on the amounts provided by the Auditor and decide.

Due to the Juneteenth Holiday on Friday June 19, 2026, and in observance of Independence Day on Friday, July 3, 2026, the County Commissioners meetings are limited for the next few weeks. To stay within the mandated timeline to have the levy on the November 3, 2026, ballot, Kristen Fox-Berki is scheduled to present on the levy to the Lorain County Board of Commissioners during the week of July 13, 2026. However, the next LCCS Board meeting is currently scheduled Wednesday, July 15, 2026. The Board has agreed to move the July LCCS Board meeting to the previous week. The next LCCS Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

B. Unresolved Action Items

None.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires:

1. Gabriel Papineau, DS Caseworker 5/4/26

Leaves:

1. Willisha Sharp, DS Caseworker 5/8
2. Rebekah Moon, Confidential Data Analyst 5/18
3. Constance Chrosniak, FBC Support Caseworker 5/29/26

Kristen Fox-Berki shared the current turnover rate is 9.7%, which is low.

B. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

The Subcommittee met on May 27, 2026. They are discussing the possibility of holding a larger event in collaboration with nearby county agencies to recruit foster parents. The next meeting will be held in July.

Foster Care Open House & Panel

Kristen Fox-Berki invited the Board to attend and/or extend the invitation to others for the Foster Care Open House & Panel on Wednesday August 5, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the Lorain County Community College Lorain Learning Center.

Independent Living (IL)

Three IL youth graduated from high school this year. Two of those individuals decided to join the workforce and are filling out applications. The third will be attending a 4-year college.

C. Policy 5.12 Executive Director Performance

The Board is required to perform an annual performance review of the Executive Director's performance, with a minimum of two Board officers assigned by the Chair, no later than 90 days prior to the anniversary date of hire of the Executive Director. The Executive Director's contract was completed last year for a three year term, from November 10, 2025, to November 10, 2028. Board Chair Jim Miller requested Board members to notify him of their interest to serve on the subcommittee. Chris Cabot suggested that at least some of the Board members that served on the subcommittee last year, participate again this year to evaluate progress.

V. Fiscal Reports

None.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. Resolution 06-2026-03

The Board previously approved a donation to the Esophageal Cancer Education Foundation per the family's wishes, in lieu of flowers, to express their condolences for the passing of County Administrator Jeff Armbruster, husband to Board Member Lee Armbruster. However, we were informed by the prosecutor's office that the donation is now allowed because the agency is levy funded.

Resolution to Rescind Donation:

The Board hereby rescinds the May 20, 2026, Motion to donate \$500.00 from the Board's annual budget to the Esophageal Cancer Education Foundation.

MOTION: It was moved by Roberto Davila, seconded by Dan Gross to approve Resolution 06-2026-03. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

- VII. Executive Session** *(to discuss litigation, personnel matters and other matters required to be kept confidential by law)*
None.

VIII. Announcements

The next LCCS Board meeting is rescheduled to Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Tamara Newton, seconded by Roberto Davila to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:33 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, 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, July 8, 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