

# **Lorain County Children Services**

## **Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, November 19, 2025 @ 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., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

#### **A. Roll Call**

**Present:** Christopher Cabot (*arrived prior to Agenda Item VI*), Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick

**Excused:** Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Deborah Ortner, Kim Withrow

**Also Present:** Julie Haight, Director of Social Service Programs

#### **B. Review Agenda**

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the November 19, 2025, 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 October 15, 2025, 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. Policy 4.1 Pay Scale- Non-Bargaining**

Tabled until union negotiations are completed.

##### **2. Therapy Dogs**

Board member Martin O'Donnell connected Kristen Fox-Berki to Christine Spaetzel, a volunteer through Pet Partners, who offered to provide services to our agency with her therapy dog, Kyra. They volunteer at hospitals, police and fire departments, camps for children with special needs and the Red Cross. Both Christine and Kyra are certified and required to go through an in person certification process every two years. There is no fee for this service. The Connections Center could also be included. We would be covered through Pet Partners insurance if there were an incident. We will alert staff that Kyra will be coming beforehand, in case any staff members are fearful of dogs, have allergies, etc.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Tamara Newton to approve therapy dog services through Pet Partners. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0

**B. Unresolved Action Items**

**1. Policy 1.2 Board Officers- Nominations**

Dan Gross nominated Jim Miller for Board Chair. Thomas Patrick seconded the nomination. Jim Miller accepted the nomination.

Tamara Newton nominated Andrew Lipian for Board Vice Chair. Dan Gross seconded the nomination. Andrew Lipian accepted the nomination.

The Board will vote on the Board Chair and Board Vice Chair nominations in December.

**2. Policy 5.6 Executive Director Contract**

This will be discussed in Executive Session, under Personnel Matters.

**IV. Executive Director's Report**

**A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves**

New Hires for the month of October:

1. Stephanie Bennett, DS Caseworker 10/20/25
2. Virginia Bowen, DS Caseworker 10/20/25
3. Jessica Dunavant, DS Caseworker 10/20/25
4. Kiley Kalina, DS Caseworker 10/20/25
5. Emily Kanzig, DS Caseworker, 10/20/25

Leaves for the month of October:

1. Nancy Griffiths, FBC Manager 10/1/25
2. Christina Rodriguez, DS Caseworker 10/10/25
3. Emily Kolb, DS Caseworker 10/17/25
4. Britni Walters, DS Caseworker 10/22/25

**B. Policy 6.6 Adoption, Foster & Kinship Rates**

The proposed Foster Care Rate increases for 2026 are:

- An additional \$1 for ages 3-15
- An additional \$3 for ages 16+

Based on our current list of children in custody, the total increase for 2026 would be \$206,955.00. Foster care rates are evaluated annually.

Adoption Rates are determined by the State and effective October 1, 2025, the Monthly Adoption Assistance Statewide Maximum was increased from \$1,162 to \$1,368. Adoption rates range from \$0 to \$1,368/month. Rates are negotiated between the agency and the prospective adoptive parents.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Roberto Davila, seconded by Tamara Newton to approve the proposed Foster Care Rates for 2026. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0

**C. LCCS Connections Center**

One of the furnaces at the Connections Center caused a gas leak. The gas company responded, evacuated the building and fixed the leak. The maintenance department had to order a new part to repair the furnace, and we are waiting for the part to deliver. There was another leak in the roof, separate from the other leaks that were previously repaired. A roofer was contacted, inspected the leak, and will make the repair soon. The phones and swipe badges are still on hold until the County IT department receives the needed part to complete their work.

**D. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment**

Rania Assily, Kristen Fox-Berki and Judith Padua met on October 21, 2025, to talk about ways that Rania Assily or her colleague, Marci Rapp from the Aspire Program at Tri-C, could support transitioning youth who live in or near Cuyahoga County. Judith Padua reviewed the recruitment plans for 2025 that focus on rural communities, teachers and veterans. A joint event between LCCS and the Lorain County Veterans Services Commission is occurring this evening, and one of our foster parents will be honored at this event. Rania Assily shared she was working on a Veteran's Day event at Tri-C and shared her point of contact with us. LCCS shared the flyer for the November 19, 2025, event with Rania Assily. Ms. Assily also mentioned a home schooling group she is familiar with that may be a good audience for recruitment activities.

**E. Princess Ball Update**

The 2025 Princess Ball was a huge success. We sold 240 tickets, with the highest event profit so far, totaling \$11,418.99. Sponsors played a vital role in our success and were featured on the screen overhead throughout the event. Julie Haight thanked everyone that contributed to the most successful Princess Ball yet.

**V. Fiscal Reports**

None.

**VI. New Business**

**A. New Items for Discussion and Approval**

**1. AllOne Health Contract Approval**

AllOne Health offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for employees, far more comprehensive than our current program. The cost is \$24 per employee, per year. For 150 employees, the contract amount would be \$3,735 annually. Our agreement would be under the current Commissioner's contract with AllOne Health.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Christopher Cabot to approve the AllOne Health Participation Agreement. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, 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)*

**MOTION:** It was moved by Dan Gross, seconded by Thomas Patrick to enter Executive Session to discuss litigation and personnel matters. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

**MOTION:** It was moved by Roberto Davila, seconded by Dan Gross to leave Executive Session. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

**MOTION:** It was moved by Andrew Lipian, seconded by Roberto Davila to approve the Employment Contract with Executive Director, Kristen Fox-Berki, consistent with her present employment contract from November 10, 2025, to November 10, 2028, with an increase to her current salary of 3.5% commencing November 2025, 4% commencing 2026, and 3% commencing November 2027. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

**VIII. Announcements**

None.

## **IX. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Tamara Newton to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:50 p.m. Motion carried.

### **Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

Minutes Prepared by:  
Kimberly Kassam, Administrative Supervisor

Approved by:  
Martin Heberling, Board Secretary