

# Lorain County Children Services

## Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 16, 2022 @ 5:00 p.m.

### **I. Call to Order**

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:04 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:** Tamika Bonilla (*arrived during Agenda Item IV*), Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Mallory Santiago

**Excused:** Lee Armbruster, Kenneth Glynn, Martin Heberling

**Also Present:** Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director and Judge James T. Walther

- **Swearing in Newly Appointed Board Member (*following Agenda Item IV, Executive Director's Report*)**

Newly appointed Board member Tamika Bonilla was sworn in by Judge James T. Walther. Following, the remainder of the group of Board members in attendance stood and recited the oath unanimously, administered by Judge Walther.

Judge Walther announced the month of November is National Adoption Month and requested to coordinate with LCCS to hold an Adoption Day in the month of November. Judge Walther invited the Board members to attend an upcoming adoption hearing.

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

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the February 16, 2022, Board meeting. The Swearing in Ceremony for newly appointed Board member Tamika Bonilla will be delayed until her arrival.

#### **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 January 19, 2022, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

### **II. Public Comment**

Board Chair Jim Miller noted that there was no one from the public present and wishing to address the Board.

### **III. Old Business**

#### **A. Tabled Items**

None.

#### **B. Unresolved Action Items**

None.

## **IV. Executive Director's Report**

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

New Hires for the month of January:

- Amanda Swanson, Direct Services Caseworker 1/3/22
- Dymond Caver, Direct Services Caseworker 1/10/22
- Christen Wilhelm, Direct Services Caseworker 1/10/22

Leaves for the month of January:

- Lynn Chapin, Direct Services Administrative Assistant 1/3/22
- Stacey Spicer, Direct Services Supervisor 1/4/22
- Jocelyn Cook, Direct Services Caseworker 1/10/22
- Dymond Caver, Direct Services Caseworker 1/14/22

Kristen Fox-Berki attended a meeting today with other PCSA directors as well as the Director of ODJFS. In this meeting, other agency leaders expressed their ongoing struggle with hiring and retention, and individual agencies shared their experiences, including a lack of applicants, high caseloads, work-related trauma, and safety issues resulting from an understaffed workforce. One agency shared that they lost 30 percent of their caseworker staff. Hiring and retention rises to the State level as agencies continue to look for ways to support their casework staff and seek recruitment strategies. Although we are not fully staffed, LCCS is fortunate to continue to recruit and hire applicants, and hopeful that we will be able to fill all the current vacant positions. Kristen Fox-Berki expressed her appreciation to the Board for approving an expansion to master's level degrees related to social work.

### **B. Policy 4.5 Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual**

Per Board Policy 4.5, "The Executive Director will present the agency's Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual as needed, for approval upon enactment, new policy creation or policy amendments." No changes to the LCCS Employee Operational Policy and Personnel Manual have been made, therefore there is nothing to report to the Board at this time.

## **V. Fiscal Reports**

None.

## **VI. New Business**

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

Over the last several years, the LCCS Director has been invited annually to meet with the Budget Commission, who meets monthly, to discuss the fund balance/large carryover, as we are public servants, levy funded and must reflect on fiscal responsibility of taxpayer contributions. Particularly since Governor DeWine took office, we have received unplanned revenue due to his advocacy and support for child welfare agencies. The additional allocations included MSY funds, Best Practice and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention. The Best Practice and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention funds will no longer go directly to the Counties and instead, the State will decide how to distribute those funds, allowing for an opportunity for counties that need it the most to benefit from these funds. Our agency

is fortunate to have a supportive community and will likely see a decrease in these allocations.

In addition to the State allocations, we were receiving local TANF funds from Lorain County Job and Family Services (LCJFS); these funds will not continue and instead will be used internally by JFS. Kristen Fox-Berki and Board Chair Jim Miller will attend the March 14, 2022, Budget Commission meeting to discuss the agency's budget, carryover and present ideas for utilization of additional funds to provide increased services to the community, which could include expedited mental health services to children in foster care and kinship placement. More information will be forthcoming.

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

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Mallory Santiago, seconded by Tamika Bonilla to move into Executive Session to discuss litigation. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Ayes:        | Tamika Bonilla, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Mallory Santiago |
| Nays:        | None- 0   |
| Abstentions: | None- 0   |

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Christina Doran, seconded by Andrew Lipian to move out of Executive Session.

**VIII. Announcements**

None.

**IX. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Mallory Santiago, seconded by Christina Doran to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:30 p.m. Motion carried.

The next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, 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:  
Christina Doran, Board Secretary