

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 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., 4th Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

A. Roll Call

Present: Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow

Excused: Lee Armbruster, Kenneth Glynn, Andrew Lipian, Tamara Newton

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

The Board welcomed new Board member, Martin O'Donnell. Judge James T. Walther will be present at the March 19, 2025, Board meeting to swear him in.

B. Review Agenda

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the February 19, 2025, Board meeting. No additions or changes made.

C. Review and Approve Minutes (*December 18, 2024 & January 15, 2025*)

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Minutes submitted for the December 18, 2024, and January 15, 2025, Board meetings. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Thomas Patrick to approve the December 18, 2024, and January 15, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

Mallory Santiago was congratulated for her years of service on the Lorain County Children Services Board, from February 15, 2017, through December 31, 2024. The Board thanked Ms. Santiago for her unwavering commitment to LCCS and to the children and families of Lorain County. Ms. Santiago shared that she enjoyed her time on the Board, it was an absolute privilege working with everyone, it is important work the Board is doing, LCCS is a wonderful agency, and staff are doing a fantastic job.

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

None.

B. Unresolved Action Items

None.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hire for the month of January:

1. Tanika Russell, DS Caseworker 1/13/25

Leaves for the month of January:

1. Michelle Hunt, DS Manager 1/3/25
2. Amelia Sas, Scan Clerk 1/17/25
3. Zaylon Green, DS Caseworker 1/28/25

B. Policy 2.2 Annual Policy Review (*every odd year*)

The Board policies are reviewed every odd year.

Questions:

- Regarding Policy 3.4 Public Comment
 - Clarification was provided regarding the guidelines available to the public on the agency's website, providing guidance on professional conduct.
 - Should a member of the public wish to provide a public comment later in the meeting after new business is discussed, they are encouraged to attend the following month to discuss under Agenda Item II, Public Comment. However, the Board will allow some flexibility.

There are no changes to the Board policies at this time. The Board will continue to review the Board policies every odd year, in accordance with the policy schedule.

C. Policy 4.5 Personnel Policy & Procedure Manual

Changes to the LCCS Employee Operational Policy and Personnel Manual are reviewed and approved by the Board. The manual was last revised February 14, 2023; there are currently no changes. The current union contract expires on March 31, 2025. Contract negotiations are anticipated to begin in March. Changes to the Collective Bargaining agreement (CBA) will bring changes to the manual. Kristen Fox-Berki proposes that the manual is presented to the Board again following negotiations. Revisions to the manual are approved by the prosecutor's office, prior to approval by the Board.

D. Visitation Center

Kristen Fox-Berki shared photos with the Board showing the progress of renovations to the interior of the building. The framing was completed in early February. The walls are now up, and we are in the process of choosing finishings i.e. carpeting, paint

colors, etc. They are currently ahead of schedule and could have the interior of the building completed in the summer. Grant applications were completed to help offset the cost of the outside play area, if approved. As we progress further into the renovation process, there will be additional expenses for office furniture, lighting, electrical, and other vendors. As an example, some of the lighting will need to be changed to LED lighting, which will cost an additional \$13,000. The bid for renovations by Williams Brothers Builders was approved for nearly \$450,000. This amount does not include the additional items referenced above. Kristen Fox-Berki is requesting the Board to approve \$250,000 in additional funding to pay for added expenses necessary to complete the project.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Christina Doran to approve additional funding for renovations to the Visitation Center, not to exceed \$250,000. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Martin O’Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

We originally budgeted \$1 million to build the visitation center; we are currently under budget. There will also be additional costs to the exterior of the building, once the interior is completed. The sign near the road will remain, but the plaque will be replaced, allowing us to change the display messages. We are currently contacting vendors to provide us with quotes for a playground area; estimates received thus far are averaging \$35-40,000. Grant applications were submitted to various foundations to offset this cost. Items that exceed \$77,500 would require competitive bids. Security cameras will be installed by the same vendor used for the Administration Building, as an extension of our current system.

E. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

The 2025 Foster Care Recruitment plan focuses on three areas: our rural community, veterans, and school personnel. Judith Padua, Foster Care Recruitment Coordinator, met with members of the Lorain County Veterans Services Commission (LCVSC) to discuss future collaboration opportunities.

Recruitment Events:

- Elyria VFW Post 1079 on February 12, 2025.
- Leadership Lorain County (LLC) Poverty simulation at Wellington High School on February 14, 2025.
- Lorain VFW Post 451 on February 20, 2025.
- Lorain County Township Association (LCTA) meeting on February 20, 2025. We do not currently have foster parents residing in the townships, and plan to focus more on rural areas.
- Life Series at the Tri-C Westshore campus in March.

Christina Doran will reach out to Kenneth Glynn to see about collaborating with Lorain County Community College.

V. Fiscal Reports

None.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. Resolution 02-2025-01

Resolution 02-2025-01 states “This Resolution captures the information contained within, and the Board hereby approves, the Personnel Summary Sheet, dated August 21, 2024, stating:

Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director of Lorain County Children Services (LCCS), increase of salary retroactive December 1, 2023, increase of 2.2%. Increase salary effective December 1, 2024, increase of 4.0%.”

MOTION: It was moved by Thomas Patrick, seconded by Kim Withrow to approve Resolution 02-2025-01. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Martin O’Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

2. Policy 7.2 Program Audit & Results- Foster Care Review

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) completed a PCSA Foster Care Review relative to Lorain County Children Services and were found to be in compliance with all applicable Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rules reviewed. The review began in August 2024 for the period of July 2022 to March 2024. The Board congratulated to the Family Based Care (FBC) department for a job well done.

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

None.

VIII. Announcements

Rania Assily recently met with Sefani Tedesse, who is starting a non-profit home in Cleveland for troubled teens, and thought this may be helpful for the children and families we serve. LCCS is always seeking new resources and programs to help families and children in need. Rania Assily will send the information to Kristen Fox-Berki.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Roberto Davila to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:34 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 19, 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:
Christina Doran, Board Secretary