

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, August 16, 2023 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4th Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

A. Roll Call

Present: Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Kenneth Glynn, Martin Heberling, Tawana Jackson, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Mallory Santiago

Excused: Christina Doran

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 August 16, 2023, 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 July 19, 2023, Board meeting. No additions or changes made. 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

1. Visitation Center

The Lorain County Prosecutor's office is drafting a (non-binding) letter of intent to lease the former Lorain County Visitor's Center on Leavitt Rd. in Amherst, with the option to purchase the property at the end of the lease for an agreed upon amount. The County cannot sell the building for less than the mortgage amount, which is approximately \$850,000. Dan Gross provided the Board with his notes from a meeting he attended this afternoon with the Lorain County Budget Director and the Director of the Visitor's Center. They are proposing we rent the building for \$4,500 per month for a 5-year term. The Board agrees that the term of the lease should be 10 years, to make the investment into renovating/repairing the property worthwhile. The renovation estimate is \$250,000. There are additional expenses expected for needed repairs, including

the parking lot, upgrading the HVAC, minor glass repair, updated landscaping and needed work to make the irrigation system operational. Some of these may not be needed right away. If the agency chooses to purchase the property at the end of the lease, the purchase price could not be less than what is owed by the County. We were looking to lease rather than purchase because the agency's costs are increasing and it would be more reasonable and more structured to be able to distribute funds monthly, to ensure the care of children. With the levy on the horizon, if the levy did not pass, funds would be limited because we used the funds to purchase the property upfront. To start, we would want to see amortization tables on their note. Once the letter of intent is completed, we will have an architect assess whether the building will meet our needs.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for the month of July:

1. Arin McElwain, DS Caseworker 7/17/23
2. Cynthia Hernandez, DS Caseworker 7/31/23
3. Christina Hehmeyer, Case Aide 7/31/23

Leaves for the month of July:

1. Karen Brank-Bennett, DS Caseworker 7/19/23
2. Kandyce Smith, DS Caseworker 7/24/23

B. Policy 7.1 Present All Programs and Services Not Required

The required duties of a Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) are outlined in section 5153.19 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC).

Services LCCS offers that are not required by the ORC include:

1. Case Management
2. Kinship Services
 - There is a unit dedicated to kinship care and provide kinship home assessments.
3. Lorain County Public Health Services
 - The agency has a contract with LCPH to complete a physical within [State-required] 5 days from the time a child enters our care. LCCS completes the physical within 2 days.
4. OhioSTART Casework Services
5. Case Aide Services
 - There are a total of 5 case aides; 4 are assigned to direct services and 1 is assigned to Independent Living (IL). The case aides transport children in foster care and monitor visits. The IL case aide also provides assistance to youth with tasks associated with the transition to adulthood, i.e., transportation to interviews, jobs, grocery shopping, etc.
6. Foster Care and Adoption Services
 - Although we do work with some private agencies, we are able to provide our own services licensing foster and foster- to-adopt families.
7. Family Reunification Court Services (formerly Family Drug Court)
8. Accelerated Safety Analysis Protocol (ASAP) Services

- The State provided the opportunity to start this initiative. We have one caseworker that looks at risk factors as referrals are screened in and completes a full review on the families that are identified as higher risk.
9. Ombudsman Services
- The agency has provided Ombudsman for several years. This is currently a part-time position and is vital to the agency. The Ombudsman receives a lot of requests for services and is a great mediator for the agency and clients.

Summer Camps:

Operation Open Heart and Girl Power camps were held in July. There were about 17 males that attended Operation Open Heart. Kristen Fox-Berki thanked our law enforcement partners, Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Sheriff’s Department. There were 16-17 females that attended Girl Power, which is run entirely by LCCS staff. Both camps were successful and provided great opportunities for the children.

Princess Ball

The 13th Annual Princess Ball will be held on Sunday, October 8, 2023, from 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at the LCCC Spitzer Conference Center Grand Ballroom. Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with a packet, including sponsorship forms. The event will also be advertised on Facebook.

V. Fiscal Reports

None.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. LCCFFC Contract Approval

Tabled.

2. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Strategic Plan

A Subcommittee was formed to work on the LCCS Strategic Plan. Subcommittee members include Andrew Lipian (subcommittee chair), Rania Assily, Martin Heberling, Tamara Newton, and Mallory Santiago. There will be an introductory subcommittee meeting tonight following the Board meeting. Andrew Lipian provided the Board with a flow chart. The subcommittee will meet immediately following the Board meetings from now through November, and plan to have the Strategic Plan finalized by December.

3. 2025 LCCS Levy

The next levy is scheduled to be on the ballot in November 2025. The Board will continue to hold discussions regarding whether to place the levy on the ballot a year early in November 2024 with the general election or wait until November 2025 as scheduled. The 2022 levy funds composed 53% of the agency’s budget, with the remainder from State and Federal funding. From 2018 – 2023 expenditures increased by 58.21%. Personnel costs increased 9-

10%, and placement costs increased 22-25 %. With these trends we would consider seeking a renewal of the levy, however there will be ongoing discussion before a decision is made to increase or renew. Waiting until the 2025 election would allow time to accurately size the levy and make a more informed decision. Director of Fiscal Affairs, Jessica Basinski will draft scenarios and projections for the levy upon Board request.

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

None.

VIII. Announcements

Rania Assily had the opportunity to shadow LCCS staff and learn more about the agency and commended the staff for their work.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Andrew Lipian, seconded by Roberto Davila to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:55 p.m. Motion carried.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 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:
Andrew Lipian, Board Vice Chair