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MINUTES OF LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES BOARD
Regular Meeting Held February 21, 2024

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The regular meeting of the Lucas County Children Services Board was held at 705 Adams Street, 3:00 P.M., in person and via Zoom.

Members Present: Dr. Cowell, Ms. Gagnon, Ms. McCollough, Rev. Dr. Perryman, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Ridi, Ms. Vasquez, and Mr. Walrod

Member(s) Absent: Ms. Arnold, Ms. Easterly (Zoom), and Mr. Schinharl

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Dr. Cowell called the February 21, 2024, regular meeting of the LCCS Board to order. Roll Call was taken. A quorum was present.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES

No new employees are to be introduced.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA AND JANUARY LCCS BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Dr. Cowell asked if any items would be removed from the Consent Agenda. None were removed.

Dr. Cowell read the Consent Agenda into the minutes:

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes from January 17, 2024, LCCS Board of Trustees Meeting
- Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes (2/5/24)
- Services and Programs Meeting Minutes (2/7/24)
- Finance Committee Meeting Minutes and additional finance documents attached (2/13/24)

Dr. Cowell asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Vasquez made a motion for approval, which Mr. Walrod seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS

Building Update:

Ms. Cully gave an update. Everything has continued to go well for the construction and restructuring of the Summit building. The few changes that needed to be made were minor. Ms. Cully invited the Board to tour the building thus far. Although PPE would be required, it is possible to tour the building as it is under construction. LCCS is still on track to move at the end of May or the Beginning of June.

The Project Manager has requested that the construction amount's Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) be increased. This increase will allow a refresher at the Northwest Ohio Regional Training Center and other infrastructure needs. ODJFS will reimburse LCCS for the time it uses the space, which is 90% estimated
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between $100,000.00 and $120,000.00 to redo the floors, demo, and walls. LCCS will ask the Commissioners to increase the GMP by $150,000.00 to cover this and any last-minute costs that may come up.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business for this report.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Dr. Cowell thanked everyone for the help in transitioning into the new role as Board Chair.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

LCCS CHILD PLACEMENT STATISTICS:

	Current Month	Previous Month
Agency Foster Homes	295	292
Subsidized Adoptions	1,139	1,140
Purchased Boarding Homes	206	196
Institutions/Group Homes	23	23
Relative Placement	391	392

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ACTIVITIES

LCCS Community Forum, March 14, 2024 – Impact of Racial Bias and Disproportionality in Child Welfare

The Lucas County Children Services Department of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Strategy will be hosting a Community Forum to discuss the impact of racial bias and disproportionality in the child welfare system on Thursday, March 14, 2024, from 10:00 AM – 2:30 PM at the McMaster Center located at 325 N. Michigan St, Toledo. So far there are 202 people attending. Board members are invited. Registration is required.

COA Reaccreditation

LCCS achieved national accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA) in 2005. Subsequently, the county sought and obtained reaccreditation four times (every four years). It is time to consider an application for the fifth reaccreditation cycle. The current reaccreditation expires on September 30, 2025. Usually, the recommendation would be that the process begins; however, these are not normal times.

Some considerations:

1. Last cycle, LCCS paid a reaccreditation fee of $33,745 and site visit fees of $8,250 (those may vary depending on the number of site assessors and where they're coming from) for a total of $42,195. That does not count Agency costs associated with preparing for reaccreditation. The total cost for the upcoming COA Public Agency reaccreditation is currently $61,802. This includes a reaccreditation fee of $46,352, a site visit fee of $11,250, and a maintenance fee of $3,000.
2. There are only nine out of 88 counties that are currently accredited. This is down from a peak of 24 in 2014. That means 15 counties have chosen not to pursue reaccreditation over the last ten years.
3. The current workforce crisis, fiscal crisis, placement crisis, and leadership transition make this a particularly undesirable time for this type of activity.
4. The primary benefit of accreditation lies in the initial certification. Reaccreditation ensures continued fidelity to the concepts developed during initial accreditation but contributes relatively little added benefit.

If reaccreditation is not sought out now, Lucas County has two options.

1. One option is to postpone everything by 3 months.
2. The other option is to extend reaccreditation for an entire year. This extension would cost the agency an additional $5000. This would allow LCCS to wait and see if the agency wants to pursue this reaccreditation. If LCCS decides not to pursue reaccreditation after the year ends, there would be no cost to the agency.

The directors proposed allowing the agency to pursue option two. Ms. McCollough motioned to grant LCCS's proposal of extending accreditation for a year to decide if that is best. Dr. Rev. Perryman seconded this motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Levy Planning Projections

As part of the budgeting process last year, the Agency Administration presented the Board with projected expenditures, revenue, and fund balances for calendar years 2023, 2024 and the ensuing ten years. The forecasting philosophy we used was "best guess." This means that we were attempting to be as accurate as possible with respect to how we would finish 2023, what we thought 2024 would look like, and to project, as accurately as possible, 2025-2033. Using this model in the budgeting process makes sense because, if we're wrong, we can always make adjustments through the budgeted year so long as we have sufficient reserves.

However, when the budgeting question involves a significant part of our total revenue generation over the next five to ten years, it makes sense to think in the context of the "worst of the realistic scenarios." This is because the decisions we make at that level have the potential to significantly impact our operations for a significant amount of time. Further, we cannot easily correct this if we find out 2-3 years down the road that our projections were wrong or that we underestimated our financial needs. As leaders, we have an obligation to the children currently under our protection and those who will come in the future to (1) have the wisdom to ensure that we have adequate funds to keep them safe for the foreseeable future and (2) demonstrate the courage to seek the appropriate funding to do so on their behalf. To fail in either respect would be to abrogate our responsibility under the law.

In recognition of those concepts, the Finance Committee directed the Administration to prepare ten-year projections based upon the "worst of the realistic scenarios" for use in their levy request deliberations. Below are the highlights of the differences between the "best guess" and the "worst of the realistic" philosophies:

1. Employee Compensation – historical practice has been to provide a 3% increase to base for both bargaining and non-bargaining with another 3% step increase for bargaining unit members on the scale. This has historically resulted in 4 to 4.25% increases in overall labor costs. However, due to retirements and our inability to maintain authorized staffing levels, we actually spent 0.41% ***less*** on labor in 2023 than we did in 2024. In using our "worst of the realistic scenario philosophies" we factored in an immediate return to full staffing levels in 2024 and that those staffing levels continue to remain consistent at authorized levels through the next ten years. This results in an 8.98% increase in labor costs in 2024 and approximately a 4.5% increase thereafter (that is after medical insurance costs reset to normal in 2027).
2. Placements – last year, we implemented specific strategies to reduce placement costs, specifically congregate care. We spent $19.3 M in placements in 2023. Our "best guess" was that we would be able to mitigate that to $16.1 M in 2024 and return to historical levels of $12.5 M in 2025. However, we while we made some initial progress, we have leveled off over the last five months at 2023 levels of around $19 M. Therefore, our levy projections predict that we have peaked at $19.3 and will remain there for the indefinite future. We built in a 3% increase each year for inflation.
3. State Revenue – our "best guess" was that the state would continue to increase its investment in state funding as it has historically done and in light of the fact that there is a new state-level department being created. However, based upon the Finance Committee's recommendation, we backed the increase out and held the state contribution flat at HB 66 levels.
4. Federal Funding – although federal funding has historically increased, based upon two years of actual experience with the FFPSA, the Finance Committee suggested that we keep the federal reimbursement rate flat.
5. Inflation – the Federal Reserve targets 2% inflation. However, inflation over the last ten years has averaged 2.65%. It has averaged 2.47% over the last 20 years. Our "best guess" used 2% inflation for all expenses which are subject to inflation. The finance committee, after much discussion, agreed that it would be prudent to project a 4% inflation rate.

Levy Options and Next Steps

In preparation for last week's Finance Committee meeting, Agency administration presented the committee with six potential levy strategies. After many insightful questions, robust discussion and careful consideration, the Committee narrowed their preferences to two viable scenarios. Administration will work over the next month to do a deeper dive into the two suggestions and draft a more detailed analysis of the advantages/disadvantages of each. The Finance Committee will discuss each option in more detail at the March meeting and may have a final recommendation for the full Board at the March meeting.

Building Update

Construction continues to remain on schedule. There have been some minor hiccups and changes – none of which were out of the realm of normal expectancy. We are still on schedule to move to the new building in May or June 2023. Our current focus continues to be on cleaning up and minimizing items that are taken to the other building. We continue to monitor construction and IT to ensure cost are controlled and the project is moving forward timely.

DONATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS

A recent partnership between LCCS and Toledo Metro Federal Credit Union won a state award. LCCS and the credit union won a $10,000 grant from the Ohio Credit Union Foundation to teach a dual course for Independent Living students—eight weeks of financial literacy (using a Young Money University curriculum) and a tenant rights and responsibilities class with the Fair Housing Center. The grant covered two years' worth of courses. Students received matching savings accounts for their attendance and if they completed both sets of classes, the credit union (at its own expense) purchased either a Chromebook or tools to enter an apprenticeship, so students were emancipating equipped for a better future. **That program came in first place** on the state level for the Desjardin Financial Education Award from the Ohio Credit Union League. The program came in second place on the national level and will be recognized at the Credit Union General Affairs Conference in Washington, D.C. in March.

LCCS recently completed a $25,000 collaborative Equity and Access grant with The Movement funded by the Greater Toledo Community Foundation. More than 1,400 people were reached by the combined efforts of the two groups to 1.) triage difficulties in their lives, such as rent, utilities, GED completion, or job opportunities; and/or 2.) Parent Empowerment Institute programming. The grant focused on taking those services directly to neighborhood community centers in zip codes experiencing a large increase in child abuse/neglect incidents.

Students at the TPS Pre-Med and Health Sciences Academy collected personal care products and put together 25 hygiene kits to donate to the children LCCS serves. That January donation was one of several student-led service projects this academic year to benefit their peers in foster/kinship care.

IN THE MEDIA

The Blade, blade.com WTVG, 13 abc.com	The Movement, LCCS partnership (Randy Muth comments)	1-31-2024
WTVG, 13 abc.com	New LCCS Board Officers	2-5-2024

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Ms. McCollough to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. Rev. Dr. Perryman seconded the motion.

A roll Call was taken, and all members were present except for Ms. Arnold, Ms. Easterly (Zoom), and Mr. Schinharl. The motion carried upon roll call vote.

OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION/OPEN SESSION

Ms. McCollough made a motion to come out of the Executive Session. Rev. Dr. Perryman seconded the motion.

A roll Call was taken, and all members were present except for Ms. Arnold, Ms. Easterly (Zoom), and Mr. Schinharl. The motion was carried upon a roll call vote.

At the conclusion of the executive session and in open session, Ms. Gagnon made a motion to grant a three percent increase to the base rate of pay for each non-bargaining employee effective May 1, 2024, with the exception of the Executive Director, and to provide a one-time $1,500.00 lump sum payment to each non-bargaining employee, payable in the pay period covering May 1, 2024, with the exception of the Executive Director. Ms. McCollough provided the second for this motion.

Having been properly moved, Dr. Cowell provided an opportunity for discussion. After discussion, Dr. Cowell set the motion to vote. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Ms. McCollough
Seconded by Mr. Ridi.
The meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Alethea Easterly
Board Secretary