

**WESTERN PRAIRIE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING**  
**October 6, 2023**

The meeting of the Joint Powers Board for Western Prairie Human Services was held October 6, 2023 at the Western Prairie Human Services Office in Elbow Lake.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Doyle Sperr  
Paul Gremmels  
Troy Johnson  
Ken Johnson  
Paul Gerde  
Larry Lindor  
Paul Wildman  
Dwight Walvatne

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Stacy Hennen, Director  
Kari Rude, Deputy Director/HR Director  
Tracy Bowman, Fiscal Manager  
Crystal Zaviska, Financial Assistance Supervisor  
Dwight Nelson, Traverse County Commissioner  
Petra Steinhofer, Lead Eligibility Worker  
Annie, Emily, Stacy, Jackie, Michelle and Stephanie

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Bill LaValley  
Gordy Wagner

**A. Opening:**

1. Chair Troy Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.
3. The agenda was reviewed. Item 19 was move to item 16. Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU.
4. Approval of the September 8, 2023 meeting minutes. After reviewing the minutes, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU.
5. A summary of the September 2023 bills was presented by the director. After discussion, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the bill summaries, seconded by Commissioner Sperr, MCU.
  - a. The fiscal manager reviewed August 2023 financial information. After questions, Commissioner Gremmels made a motion to approve the financial reports, seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU.

**B. CONTRACTS/AGREEMENTS**

**6. CaseWorks Portal Contract**

The director presented information on CaseWorks is our Electronic Document Managing System (EDMS) that replaced Laser Fiche and App Extender before we merged. We are looking to add a component to our EDMS system that we think will have positive implications for the people that we serve. CaseWorks is rolling out a customer portal and we would like to be a part of the first round of that roll-out. The portal would be for any of our social services or eligibility programs and would allow the people we serve to take a picture of a form or upload a document and send it directly to their case worker. It would go right to the person's doc box, be date stamped and processed. Western Prairie Human Services would pay the one time licensing fee and the 2024 ongoing maintenance and support costs. The agency is able to pay for the upfront costs and the 2024 maintenance of it through the unwind funds, so there would not need to incorporate the maintenance fees in our budget until 2025. There is a one-time licensing costs: \$12,500, an annual maintenance and support costs: \$4,375. The total cost, paid with unwind dollars from the State: \$16,875. After questions/discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Gerde, MCU.

#### **7. School Transportations Agreement, Minnewaska**

The director explained statute requires schools to enter into a contract with their local social services agency to address transportation for foster kids. Some of their funding is based on them getting a transportation agreement with local social service agencies. If the student still lives within the district or has an IEP the school will provide transportation. If the child moves to a different district the two entities will work together to arrange transportation. This has been our standard operating procedure for some time. Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU.

#### **8. School Transportations Agreement, WCA**

The director explained that this is the same as the other contracts we have approved for school transportation. This is the standard agreement which follows the one just approved. Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU.

#### **9. School Transportations Agreement, Ashby**

The director explained that this is the same as the other contracts we have approved for school transportation. This is the standard agreement which follows the one just approved. Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU.

#### **10. Lutheran Social Services (LSS) Contract**

The director presented a proposed contract with LSS. Western Prairie Human Services does not currently have other providers willing to provide intensive in home services. LSS also provides skills services and CIBS in home services. They are asking for a 3% increase in rates over last year. Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Lindor, MCU.

#### **11. Nine County Child Support Consortium**

The director stated the Father's Resource Program has been a resource within WPHS and for the residents of Grant and Pope counties. The proposed is a MOU between Otter Tail County Human Services and Multi-County Consortium of Social Service Agencies. Last year, WPHS looked into another Father's Resource program, but found the cost to serve WPHS residence was over \$35,000. The agency has worked with Father's Resources to identify barriers to access the program. Mahube-Otwa has since updated their website and on the home page. This will help WPHS residence know that they are at the correct website to receive services through the Father's Resource Program. The cost of the program is \$6,600. After questions/discussion, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the MOU, seconded by Commissioner Sperr, MCU.

#### **12. Union MOU re: legislative changes**

The director reported that last month the board moved to defer passing the MOU the union sent based on new legislation until our attorney had time to review it. The agency attorney reviewed it and is in agreement with passing the MOU as it is a reflection of legislative changes that occurred. Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the MOU, seconded by Commissioner Gremmels, MCU.

**C. OLD BUSINESS**

**13. Out of Home Placement List**

The director reviewed the out of home placement list for August, 2023. The number of children in out of home placement decreased from 27 to 24. The director reviewed the categories of cases and progress made with reunification or permanency of the children. The other sheet shows caseload numbers for all of our social workers.

**14. Case Counts**

The director shared case count numbers. The child protection numbers are trending upwards, which is normal for this time of year. The child protection employees provided mandated reporting training for several schools after offering it to all schools. The children and adult mental health cases are increasing. This is an area the agency has statutory guidelines both on caseload numbers and the fact that they are entitlement services. The agency is not accepting referrals for treatment care coordination at this time in order to accommodate the increase in mental health cases. The Adult protection numbers continue to be high. Child Support cases have decreased from emancipations, and cases being paid in full. Child Care assistance is steady. The agency is seeing many applications, but a lack of follow through on verifications. The number of service providers remain steady. Health Care has seen a decrease of 100 cases in MNSURE. The majority of cases were due to a lack of response and adverse changes; meaning that some moved to private insurance on the market, insurance assistance. SNAP cases have a decrease. The amount of reapplications are causing the number to decrease.

**15. Personnel/Hiring update**

The director presented the personnel update for the month. The agency currently has four positions open, two at each site.

**D. New Business:**

**16. Eligibility Worker of the Year**

The director and financial assistance supervisor announced Petra Steinhofner, Lead Eligibility worker in the family area, is the Minnesota Eligibility Worker of the Year. Petra was nominated by her supervisor and co-workers. The board commended and applauded Petra for her work within Western Prairie Human Services for the people we serve.

**17. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter SNAP Timeliness Report**

The director provided information on the timeliness to SNAP report. The team achieved their timeliness goals set by DHS in processing expedited SNAP and regular SNAP at above 95%. This is the second quarter in 2023 to achieve this high measure and only 16 agencies received this achievement in quarter 2.

**18. Request to waive childcare licensing fees**

The director reported that for the last 2 years the agency has waived licensing and relicensing fees for family child cares. Due to the continuing need for family child cares and the additional assistance provided during COVID is disappearing this fall, the agency is requesting to waive the fees again for at least 2024. The fees are \$50.00 for a one year license and \$100.00 for a two year license. After questions/discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the waiver of childcare licensing fees for 2024 and 2025, seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU.

**19. Health Insurance Rates for 2024**

The deputy director/human resources director presented health insurance rates for 2024. The rates increased more than expected for the upcoming year. The insurance committee met and recommended plans with increased deductibles to lower the monthly premiums for employees. Even with the higher deductibles, the monthly premiums increased between \$54.53-\$78.13 per individual policy and \$136.33-\$195.34 per family policy. The personnel committee met and approved the recommendation from the insurance committee. The amount budgeted for 2024 was \$603,195.84 and the estimated cost since receiving the final numbers is \$619,595.52. This is an increase of \$16,399.68. After questions/discussion, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the health insurance plans and premiums, seconded by Commissioner Gerde, MCU. Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the increase in contribution amount for non-union employees, seconded by Commissioner Gerde, MCU.

**20. Union MOA Re: Comp and Class study**

The director updated the board of commissioners on the comp and class study. Per the previous month's board action our attorney reached out to the union and indicated that the agency was willing to do a full comp and class study in 2024 for the 2025 contract with the stipulation that the agency would determine where on the scale employees were placed, which would be the step closest to their current wage that indicated an increase. It also indicated the agency would not have appeals of the pay grade determined by the study, but would have a process for disputing the job description before it was turned in to be graded and the staff would be part of the overall development of their job descriptions. The union requested that we put that into an MOU which we did. The union voted and unanimously determined that they would agree to a full class and comp study but would not agree to any other terms. Per our previous motions and discussions we will not be doing a full class and compensation study.

**21. Legislative Issues**

The director shared information on legislative issues potentially coming in the 2024 session.

**Report from Board Appointments:**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Troy Johnson at 11:12 a.m.

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| A. Lakeland Mental Health Center.....         | K. Johnson/Gerde                   |
| B. Horizon Community Health Board.....        | Sperr/Walvatne/Lindor/Wagner       |
| C. PrimeWest Health CBP .....                 | Wagner/K.Johnson/T. Johnson/Lindor |
| D. West Central Communities Action, Inc. .... | K.Johnson/Gremmels                 |
| E. Agency on Aging.....                       | Lindor/LaValley                    |
| F. Child Protection Pre-Placement.....        | T. Johnson/Gremmels                |
| G. Rainbow Rider .....                        | LaValley/Walvatne/Gerde/           |
| H. R4S Governing and Executive Board.....     | K. Johnson/Lindor                  |
| I. Child and Youth Council.....               | Sperr/Wagner                       |
| J. WPHS Personnel Committee.....              | Lindor/Wildman/Sperr/T. Johnson    |
| K. WPHS Executive Committee.....              | T. Johnson/Walvatne/Gremmels       |
| L. WPHS Finance Committee.....                | Gerde/Lindor/LaValley/K. Johnson   |
| M. WPHS Safety Committee.....                 | Sperr/Wildman                      |

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Board Chair

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Board Secretary