

## **Connections for Independent Living**

### **Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, October 20, 2021 @11:00 a.m.-** digital meeting room.

Attendance in the meeting:

President-Mary Jo Brockshus, Secretary-Elizabeth Mahoney, Member-Kate Howell, Member-Lou Steinberg, Member-Erica Barraza, Executive Director-Rochelle Miller, Executive Associate-Carol Cochrane

President Brockshus called the meeting to order at 11:11 a.m.

President Brockshus inquired if there were any questions concerning the minutes from the September meeting. Hearing none, Director Steinberg motioned to approve the minutes of the September 22, 2021 Board of Directors meeting, Secretary Mahoney seconded. Vote taken. Motion approved unanimously.

#### **Financial Report**

Executive Director Miller shared the dashboard presenting the budget vs. actual numbers for the end of the fiscal year. She explained that total expenses for the fiscal year were 111% of the budget. As the capital improvement pieces were not budgeted, this was an acceptable amount of deviation. In this next fiscal year the Director will use extreme caution in adhering to the budget in order to make up for some of the spending in 2021. The revenue piece came in at 99% of the budget for the fiscal year. The details by revenue source were reviewed. These included CDLE both part B and State General Funds, SSI and SSDI, Part C funding and fee for service funds. As many of these funds are obligatory to use, the spending was watched and reviewed to ensure proper utilization of funds. The board and executive director discussed the items presented.

As the financial dashboard is a high level review, the board and staff are able to quickly see what is happening in each department. This enabled an informed decision to raise rates in the interpreting area at the beginning of the next calendar year. Notices to this effect are in development and will be sent out within the next few weeks. As the new budget is based on the prior year figures, it is more informed than in prior years. Expenses of working from home, interpreting, and accounting consulting were discussed. Executive Director Miller suggested that if more funding becomes available, a potential review of a 2 % COLA for staff and a reinstatement of the 4% match in the 403(b) be considered.

## **Operations and Executive Director Report**

ED Miller began with a presentation of the matter of the unpaid bills due from UNC. Last week a letter was sent to UNC requesting payment with a request for response by the end of this week. If there is no positive answer, the next step is to remain open to mediation while presenting them with a demand for full payment of the past due items including interest and attorney fees. There was a brief discussion by the board on the matter.

Next in the report ED Miller stated that due to the recent uptick in COVID-19 cases and deaths in the catchment area, Connections made the decision to return to work from home for non-essential staff. Two of the groups, the deaf social group and the Reeve Grant will still be operated in hybrid fashion. Necessary appointments in person will be arranged so that only two or three people will be in the building at any given time. Masks will be worn and distancing and safety stressed.

The audit by BDO will commence in November. The state will conduct their annual review of Connections the week of November 8, 2021. The exit visit is scheduled via Zoom for November 12, 2021. All board members are invited to attend, however, the only required member is the board chair.

The SEEKS program is now being billed appropriately. This is a 5 year grant from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Four of our staff members are trained. They are assisting people in the process of finding employment that pays more than minimum wage without negatively affecting their SSI or SSDI benefits. This program has also improved our relationship with the state.

The waiting list for Section 8 Housing Vouchers was open in October. We received another 14 vouchers and are working on a way for Independent Living Specialists (ILS) to assist people in this program.

Transitions has four people they are actively working to move out of congregate care. Home health care was found for the person waiting to transition. This transition from nursing home to independent living should be completed in November.

Interpreting is working proactively to increase utilization. The VRI room is available for usage.

Greeley City Council approved the request for a block grant to fix the entryway of the Connections building. \$13,000.00 must be raised in order for the entryway to be completed. The board discussed various fundraising options. Connections did not receive the OtterCares grant as the 35th anniversary celebration was not considered a

fundraising event. We are awaiting the decision on the Weld Trust grant request and the United Way of Morgan County grant.

Media and outreach efforts are focussing on the Colorado Gives Day event in December. The month of October saw fifteen impressions for the ad campaign on Facebook.

Staff retention and appreciation was discussed. ED Miller stressed that the employees need to be made aware of their value. As such, she plans to write personal letters in the holiday card to let staff know how much they are appreciated, how grateful she is, and how she can't imagine doing what Connections does without their assistance. A holiday party for staff and board members is under development. If it is held, it will be a lunch in the Connections building.

### **Old Business**

President Brockshus stated the positions of Board Treasurer and Board Secretary should be filled. After discussion, Director Steinberg was named as Treasurer. Director Mahoney agreed to keep the position of Secretary until such time as another Board member volunteers.

Next, the need to increase the number of board members was discussed. The past year saw the addition of two new members, but one member was lost for a net gain of one. Ideally, the next board member should be from one of the eastern counties and have expertise in law or human resources. Vice-Chair Mahoney will be diving into this further with the nominations committee in early December.

A priority of fundraising is necessary in the coming year. The capital campaign and rebuilding of the entryway is of particular importance. Additionally it would be beneficial to develop an endowment fund and a development plan.

Secretary Mahoney stated that it is important to reach consumers outside of the Weld county area. ED Miller stated that Connections has made efforts to that end. Connections attended Wray days, has two ILS staff members who live in the area and is attending various chamber of commerce meetings and dinners in these counties. Additionally, the relationship with Northeastern Junior College in Sterling is being nurtured and regrown to assist with our foothold in that area.

In conclusion, the main board project focus for 2022 is recruiting board members and developing the capital campaign fund.

The next board meeting is on November 17, 2021 via ZOOM at 11:00 a.m.

Director Howell moved to adjourn the meeting. Treasurer Steinberg Seconded. Motion passed unanimously. The Board adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, done to the best of my belief and ability, by Carol Cochrane.

**APPROVED AT BOARD MEETING** held November 17, 2021.

Affirmed by:  Date: 11/17/2021 | 1:30 PM PST  
Elizabeth Mahoney, Board Secretary