

**WESTERN PRAIRIE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING**  
**February 3, 2023**

The meeting of the Joint Powers Board for Western Prairie Human Services was held February 3, 2023 at the Western Prairie Human Services Office in Glenwood.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Bill LaValley  
Paul Gremmels  
Troy Johnson  
Ken Johnson  
Doyle Sperr  
Paul Wildman  
Paul Gerde  
Dwight Walvatne

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Stacy Hennen, Western Prairie Director  
Tracy Bowman, Fiscal Manager  
Kari Rude, Deputy Director, HR  
Dwight Nelson, Traverse County Commissioner

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Larry Lindor  
Gordy Wagner

**A. OPENING:**

1. Chair Dwight Walvatne called the meeting to order at 9:00am.  
\*The director went over new staff at the Elbow Lake site, Office Support Specialist Katie Kubisch. She is currently training in Glenwood and will be in person for an introduction in April.
2. Election of Officers
  - a. Chair: Chair Walvatne called for nominations for the 02/23-02/24 period. Commissioner Ken Johnson nominated Commissioner Troy Johnson for Chair, seconded by Commissioner Sperr. Nominations were called for two more times with no further nominations, MCU. Chair Troy Johnson took over the remainder of the meeting.
  - b. Vice Chair: Commissioner Ken Johnson nominated Commissioner Paul Gerde as Vice Chair. Commissioner Gerde declined the nomination based on a prior conflict. Commissioner Paul Wildman nominated Commissioner Walvatne as vice chair, seconded by Commissioner Paul Gerde. Nominations were called for two more times, with no further nominations, MCU.
  - c. Executive Member: Commissioner Doyle Sperr nominated Commissioner Paul Gremmels for the executive committee, seconded by Commissioner Bill LaValley. Nominations were called for two more times, with no further nominations MCU.
3. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.
4. The agenda was reviewed and Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU.
5. Approval of the January 6<sup>th</sup> meeting: After reviewing the minutes, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU.
6. A summary of bills was presented by the fiscal manager. After a review of the bills, Commissioner Sperr made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU.
  - a. The fiscal manager reviewed the financial statements and went over year-end revenues broken out by types of revenue. She first went over the recoveries revenue and discussed the various types of revenue. She then reviewed all of our waiver and targeted case management revenue. The commissioners reviewed the information, asked questions, and discussed the data. After questions, Commissioner Walvatne made a motion to approve the financial reports, seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU.

**B. CONTRACTS**

7. **Contract with Pope County Collaborative Coordinator:** The director reviewed the 2023 contract with the coordinator of the Pope County Child and Youth Collaborative. The director indicated that the monthly rate is the same as last year and reviewed with the board how the coordinator came to be a contracted position, versus an employee of record at the school. The director indicated that the contract was reviewed and edited by the agency attorney and corrections and suggestions made were implemented. After review, Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Gremmels, MCU.
8. **Ray of Hope 2023 Contract:** The board reviewed the contract from Ray of Hope for various services related to training and development of staff and units. The director noted that we have used these services to do group training with units and assist in employee development when it was determined to be appropriate. The rates are the same except for the coaching service, which went up \$5 per hour. We have contracted with this vendor for three years and have found them helpful in developing our teams, particularly child protection with the turnover rate. The director views this service as one that assists us in retention. After discussion, Commissioner LaValley made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Gerde, MCU.

**C. OLD BUSINESS**

9. **Out of Home Placement List:**

The director reviewed the agencies out of home placement list. She noted that at the end of December WPHS had 25 kids in placement, the same as the previous month. The director reviewed the categories and the progress made in each category. We have three 18-21 placements, one who will be aging out within the next few months, and four waived placements. We have nine kids that are in the process of permanency, one which was completed in December. We are still working towards reunification with the remainder of the kids. The director noted that we are very close to permanency with seven of the

permanency kids, and also noted that we just received a placement from another county of a sibling group of three, so we hope to remain around the same as we are.

10. **Case Counts:**

The director reviewed the case counts and asked if there were questions on the summary given in the cover sheet. There are small variations in the caseloads, but nothing significant. The board asked questions and discussed the various types of cases.

11. **Personnel/Hiring Updates:**

The director updated the board on the two positions just filled after internal moves made a month ago. At this time, we have one open position, which the board approved last month. We have hired an account technician and office support for the Elbow Lake office. Our one position open is a financial case aide in Glenwood. We have only had one vacancy since the beginning of the year. We have one approved leave of absence right now. We are focusing on training the newer people we have and ensuring they have what they need. We discussed our payroll system again and the difficulties we have been having. The board posed the question of if we should continue with this system and the deputy director spoke to that. She indicated that she feels that we are close to being where we want it to be and she wanted more time. The director noted that she will be gone for the board meeting next month and the deputy director would be handling board.

**D. NEW BUSINESS:**

12. **Addition to the Employee personnel manual Article XXIV: Leaves:**

The deputy director talked about the change to the personnel policy, it is not in the union contract and we do not have plans to put it in the contract. This would allow paid leave for a period of up to four hours to attend the funeral of an employee who was actively employed by Western Prairie at the time of their death. The personnel committee did review this prior to the board meeting and moved it forward to the full board. The board discussed this and after discussion Commissioner Ken Johnson made a motion to approve the addition to the policy, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU.

13. **Purchasing Policy:**

The director presented a purchasing policy at the recommendation of the executive committee. It would allow the director to approve non-budgeted purchases that are under \$5,000 and budgeted purchases under \$25,000. There was robust discussion about the policy and different variations that may be possible. After discussion, Commissioner Walvatne made a motion to approve the policy as written, seconded by Commissioner Sperr, MCU.

14. **Official Depositories of Western Prairie Human Services:**

The director indicated that we need to appoint official depositories for the next 12 months for Western Prairie Human Services. For 2023 the director proposes Glenwood State Bank and Bank of the West since that is where we have our accounts now. As we work to get our feet under us, we would want to approve every bank so we have options. We are still really focusing on operationalizing. After review and discussion, which included the commissioner agreeing that we should put all banks in 2024, Commissioner Gerde made a motion making Glenwood State Bank and Bank of the West as our official depositories, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne. MCU.

15. **Official Newspaper(s) for Western Prairie Human Services:**

The director indicated that we need to determine official newspaper(s) for Western Prairie Human Services, since we will then post requests for proposals and open positions in those papers. The director recommended making the Grant County Herald and Pope County Tribune the official newspapers for Western Prairie. After review, Commissioner Walvatne made a motion to make the Grant County Herald and the Pope County Tribune Western Prairie Human Service's official Newspapers, seconded by Commissioner Gremmels, MCU.

16. **Board Meeting Schedule:**

The director presented a schedule of official Western Prairie Human Services Board Meetings that included date, time, and location. Further, it's continued to be on the first Friday of every month with the same rotation of locations. The schedule went through February of 2024. After review, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the schedule as presented, seconded by Commissioner Sperr, MCU.

17. **Current Organizational Chart:**

The director presented the current organizational chart to the board for review. The board reviewed and discussed.

18. **Per Diems for 02/2023 through 02/2024:**

The director noted that in 2022 the board per diem was set at \$100 per meeting with mileage paid at the current IRS rate. The director requested that the board decide if they want to make a change in that or keep it the same for the next year. Commissioner Gerde made a motion to continue with the same per diem for Western Prairie board meetings and committee meetings, \$100 per meeting and whatever the current IRS rate of mileage is at the time of the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Sperr, MCU.

19. **Attorney Engagement:**

The director indicated that we have received a large data request that is outside the normal scope in terms of specialization that our agency attorney normally handles. The agency attorney and director have spoken about this several times and it is the agency attorney's recommendation that we retain an attorney who specializes in this to better function. The director noted that Kristi Hastings from Pemberton Law does specialize in this and has agreed to take this on for her normal rate of \$235 per hour for actual time spent only. The board asked questions about the scope being requested and the director then answered the questions. The director also noted that as a young agency, we are still developing policies in some of these areas and Ms. Hastings would also help us develop strong policies. After discussion, Commissioner Walvatne made a motion to approve the terms and rates for engagement with Ms. Hastings out of

Pemberton Law, seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU.

- The director talked about the data request and the conversation we have been having with our contracted technology provider, Morris Electronics, about the size, scope, and time of the request. Morris Electronics CEO, Shawn Larsen is recommending that Western Prairie consider purchasing an Archiver. The director explained that an archiver will allow us to pull data off more easily and it will also implement whatever retention schedule we decide to implement for e-mails as we consider policies. The director noted that since we are hosted on the Grant County Server there is a chance that they will be interested in sharing the cost of an archiver and sharing the product. The director would be pursuing that. The board wanted to be sure that this hardware would be of use to Grant County outside of this data request, which covers the old Grant County Social Services server and the Western Prairie server. The director assured them that it would and that was the only reason we were considering asking them. The board asked if the director had an idea on the cost and the director stated she did not have a range or idea of what the cost was, but she expected to get that early next week. The director noted that this wasn't really something that could wait an additional month, that we have timelines and obligations to do our best to collect the data as quickly as possible. After discussion, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to allow the director to approve the purchase of an archiver if it proved to be time sensitive with approval of a member of the executive committee, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU.

**Report from Board Appointments:**

- A. Lakeland Mental Health Center..... K. Johnson/Gerde
- B. Horizon Community Health Board..... Sperr/Walvatne/Lindor/Wagner
- C. PrimeWest Health County Based Purchasing..... Wagner/Lindor/K. Johnson/T. Johnson
- D. West Central Community Action INC..... K. Johnson
- E. Agency on Aging..... Lindor/LaValley
- F. Child Protection Pre-Placement..... T. Johnson
- G. Rainbow Rider..... LaValley/Walvatne/Gerde
- H. R4S Governing and Executive Board..... K. Johnson

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Troy Johnson at 11:38 am.

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Board Chair

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Board Secretary