NORTH Dakota | State Hospital
Be Legendary. HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

GOVERNING BODY MINUTES
Monday – September 8, 2025 – 9:00 a.m.
Chamber of Commerce Conference Room/Teams

Members Present/Absent:

☒ Pam Sagness, Chairperson
☒ Aaron Olson, Superintendent
☒ Dr. Eduardo Yabut, Medical Director
☒ Matthew McCleary, Mental Health America of ND
☒ Representative Karen Rohr
☐ Vacant Position, Consumer-at-Large
☒ Allyson Hicks, Attorney General's Office
☒ Courtney Peterson, Assistant CFO, Fiscal Administration
☒ Dr. Dan Cramer, Statewide HSC Administrator
☒ Pat Traynor, Interim Commissioner of ND DHHS

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Pam Sagness, Chairperson.

Approval of Minutes: MOTION by Representative Rohr- *Approve June 9, 2025, minutes.* Second by Commissioner Pat Traynor. Unanimous approval.

New Business:

- **Superintendent Reappointment – Pam Sagness**
  Discussion: The superintendent term is for two years. Aaron Olson was reappointed at the end of August.
  Recommendations: No new recommendations made.
  Follow-up: None noted.

- **New Medical Staff Credentialing – Dr. Yabut**
  Discussion: Dr. Yabut presented Blessing George-Chukwu, NP, to be credentialed.
  Recommendation: Roll call vote taken for approval.

  MOTION by Commissioner Traynor– *Approve Blessing George- Chukwu for credentialing.* Second by Superintendent Olson.
  Yes – Peterson, Cramer, Rohr, Yabut, Olson, Sagness, McCleary, Traynor

  Follow-up: None noted.

- **Introduction of New Board Member – Pam Sagness**

Discussion: Matthew McCleary, Deputy Director of Mental Health America of North Dakota and North Dakota Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health introduced himself to members.
Recommendation: None noted.
Follow-up: None noted.

- **Medical Staff Resignation – Dr. Yabut**
  Discussion: Lori Evjen retired after 45 years as an addiction counselor and Melanie Flynn resigned from her role as residential director after approximately ten years.
  Recommendations: None noted.
  Follow-up: None noted.

- **Draft 2026 Meeting Dates**
  Discussion: Dates for next year's meetings discussed.
  Recommendations: Will continue with meeting the second Monday every three months and keeping virtual meeting option.
  Follow-up: Teams calendar invitations to be sent to members for the 2026 meetings.

Reports:

- Annual Safety and Security Report – Larry Culp, Director of Safety and Security.
  Discussion:
  - Report includes physical security review including the development of the Lahaug Control Center, key card security implementation, and installation of cameras at strategic points throughout the facility.
  - Security management - additional security training is being provided for the department. Simulated training for emergency events like crisis codes started a few weeks ago.
  - Utility system management – No utility system failures were reported in the past two years.
  - Medical equipment - National Recall Alert Center Certificate of Recognition received.
  - Two hospital-wide emergency drills were completed, and two active Code Oranges occurred.
  - Recommendations for continued improvement include continued security training, assessing and updating two-way radios, and reviewing/updating protocols for the new State Hospital.

  Recommendations: Members have received the annual report. No new recommendations made.

  MOTION by Commissioner Traynor– *Approve Annual Safety and Security Report.* Second by Dr. Cramer.
  Yes – Peterson, Cramer, Rohr, Yabut, Olson, Sagness, McCleary, Traynor

  Follow-up: None noted.

- Annual Human Resources Report – Aaron Olson, Superintendent. Report

received.

- Bobbie not able to attend meeting. Superintendent Olson reviewed the report with members.
- 2023 turnover rate= 23% and 2024 turnover rate= 26%. So far this year, the rate= 17%. Staff are looking at ways to continue to work with NDSH. Goal is to try to find ways to train and educate staff so they feel like the hospital is investing in them, and they will invest with the hospital.
- Time required to hire new employees discussed. There is a delay currently related to reposting process. Looking further into hiring process recommended.

- New State Hospital Report – Mike VanKlei, Owner's Representative/Tegra Group, Lindsey Ashley, Statewide Construction Manager, Cody Kinnischtzke, Facility and Admin. Services Director
  - New NDSH Steering Committee discussed including current members. There have been two meetings so far.
  - 2025 construction schedule and bid package information provided by Mike. First bid package was under budget, so some items were able to be put back into the budget that were part of the original plan. New NDSH opening planned for Spring 2028.

- Superintendent's Report – Aaron Olson, Superintendent
  - Average second quarter daily census= 74 with 100 admissions and 104 discharges noted during this period.
  - Workforce recruitment and stabilization are being worked on as well as strategically focusing on training and education processes.
  - Current hospital workflows are also being evaluated as it relates to the new State Hospital. Two units were recently brought together to create a forensic unit. This has allowed streamlining of our workforce.
  - Code BERT (Behavioral Emergency Response Team) created. Team identified with specific responsibilities during the code.
  - Recommendation received to bring training and education plan to next meeting.

- Medical Director's Report – Dr. Yabut, Medical Director. Report received.
  - Recruitment of permanent psychiatrists, clinical forensic psychologists, and a family physician continues.
  - Need for clinical forensic psychologists noted.1125 evaluations were completed in the last biennium, and this number continues to increase exponentially. Forensic evaluator responsibilities also explained.
  - NDSH continues to be a rotation site for UND medical students and psychiatric residents.
  - All medical staff have attended at least 50% of medical staff meetings. Each medical staff member is assigned to a committee.
  - Recommendation given to create a visual showing increase in number of evaluations over the past five years for a future meeting.

- Quality Management (QM) Comparative Statistics Report– Deb Eissinger, QM Director
    - QM report needs to be tabled as alterations noted in Avatar caused some changes to the data sent to NRI. Data will be re-sent to NRI once corrected.

- Financial Report – Courtney Peterson, Assistant CFO. Report received.
    - Reporting through June 30, 2025, SOTEP and State Hospital expended a total of 94% of expenditures.
    - Budget was re-adjusted, so some open-position salaries were transitioned to traveling staff contractual agreements.
    - Revenues came in close at the end of the biennium, just shy of 1.67 million.
    - 12.5 million SIIF (Strategic Investment and Improvement Funds) fully expended in previous biennium.
    - Recommendation received to compare numbers with past biennia and to add a revenue portion from NDSH Revenue Director for December's meeting.

- Plant Services Report– Jeff Comer, Plant Services Director. Report received.
    - One open position currently in housekeeping.
    - 100-150 open new work orders every week. 100-175 are re-occurring orders.
    - Chiller issues over a weekend in LaHaug building.
    - The grounds department continues to work with trees being knocked down from the summer storms.
    - JRCC has moved into new maintenance shop and will demolish their old shop. NDSH assisting JRCC with coordinating with contractors.
    - All capital projects from 2023-25 biennium were completed. Research continues pertaining to capital projects for 2025-27 biennium.
    - Department is getting ready for fall/winter work and making sure equipment works.
    - Meetings are coming up with DOCR and NDSH regarding future building and program plans.

- Department of Health and Human Services Report – Pat Traynor, Interim Commissioner of DHHS and Pam Sagness, Chairperson
    - Presenting to the DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) Committee currently.
    - Looking at human behavioral psychology right now as it relates to promoting employee wellness.
    - Leading with Light training next week.
    - Emily O'Brien is the new HHS Deputy Commissioner.
    - One Big Beautiful Bill (100 million dollars/year for five years) feedback is being requested pertaining to improving rural healthcare delivery, workforce technology, access to care, and so forth. Statewide plan is due in December.
    - 2025 Behavioral Health Conference is coming up on October 20-23. This is free to HHS staff and sister agencies.
    - Recommendation given for audit report update to be provided at

December meeting. These are the follow-ups from the audit findings from several years ago.

- NDSH Staff and Public Comment Period
  No comments noted.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m. MOTION by Dr. Yabut - *Adjourn meeting*. Second by Dr. Cramer. Unanimous approval.

Next Meeting: December 8th, 9:00 a.m., Chamber of Commerce Conference Room/Teams

Recorded by: Jodi Grugel