

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES
November 6, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Board of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) was held November 6, 2024 at Conway Human Development Center. The meeting convened at 10:33 a.m. pursuant to the call of the Board Chair.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Suzann McCommon, Randy Laverty, Linda Patterson, and Michelle Loe via Zoom.

STAFF PRESENT: Medicaid Specialty Populations Director Melissa Weatherton, DDS Director Jennifer Brezée, DDS Deputy Director Thomas Tarpley, Jeff Gonyea, Sarah Murphy, Kerry Gambill, Diane Keith, Mark Wargo, Avis Lane, Tammy Benbrook, Amanda Cox, Victor Eackles, and Kathleen Hoskins.

OTHERS PRESENT: Deborah Rainwater, Wensday Kraemer and MacKenzie Bell of Disability Rights Arkansas, Lisa Kraemer, Loretta Alexander, Della Hintergardt, Floyd Hintergardt, Stacey Sides, Kimberly Dodd, Attorney General Representative Michael Bynum, Stephens Investment Consultant Hank Phiefer, and Katrina Robertson.

Ms. McCommon called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Ms. McCommon called for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 5, 2024 regular meeting of the DDS Board. Ms. Patterson made a motion that the minutes be approved. Mr. Laverty seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. McCommon called for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 20, 2024 called meeting of the DDS Board. Mr. Laverty made a motion that the minutes be approved. Ms. Loe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Superintendents of the human development centers shared items of interest regarding campus activities, hiring efforts, and construction updates. Conway HDC Superintendent Sarah Murphy announced that Rebecca Lowrance of the CHDC recreation department was named the 2024 DDS Employee of the Year. University of Central Arkansas OT students have been assisting with on campus initiatives. Jonesboro HDC Superintendent Diane Keith highlighted JHDC's 50th Anniversary celebration. A donation from the Knights of Columbus purchased an Aquaponics plant growing program. Plants and fish are grown together, and the fish supply the nutrients for the plants. Booneville HDC Superintendent Jeff Gonyea advised residents operated an aid station during the Booneville marathon and the Elks Club sponsored a cookout on campus. Arkadelphia HDC Superintendent Kerry Gambill shared information regarding the 10th Annual Walkathon scheduled for December 8th. She also updated the Board on the final bathroom renovations. Southeast Arkansas HDC Superintendent Mark Wargo provided updates regarding expansions in 18 and 19 Hickory and outlined upcoming client/community events.

Ms. McCommon introduced Stephens Investment Consultant Hank Pheifer. Mr. Pheifer will now manage the Board's investment account and advised he will continue the current investment strategy.

Ms. Brezée advised that during her first quarter as DDS Director, she's had the opportunity to spend time at each of the human development centers and visit with staff and families. She has also conducted DDS presentations at various conferences. A report regarding the We Heart initiative is currently being prepared for legislative review in December. Approximately \$2500.00 was raised during the 8th Annual Fall Food and Craft Fair held on October 4th. Consideration is being given to holding the event on a Wednesday in 2025 to help increase the downtown traffic. The Blue Umbrella holiday open house is scheduled for November 13th. The DDS budget hearing at the Capitol will also be held on November 13th.

Mr. Tarpley provided the Board with an update on Arkansas Rural Connect. They agreed to the Board's terms to cover costs associated with any property damage. Work has begun to lay the broadband fiber infrastructure. He also advised that the Booneville HDC revitalization project proposal by Liquid Love Ministries will not move forward.

Ms. Weatherton addressed the Board regarding budget hearings, the upcoming legislative session, construction priorities, and unfunded capital improvement appropriations. The plan is for current construction funds generated through cost savings from the DDS budget to be utilized with a focus on providing placement for children and people with complex needs through expansions on the Booneville and Warren campuses. Ms. McCommon called for a motion to reaffirm the priorities as stated by Ms. Weatherton. Mr. Laverty made the motion. Ms. Patterson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

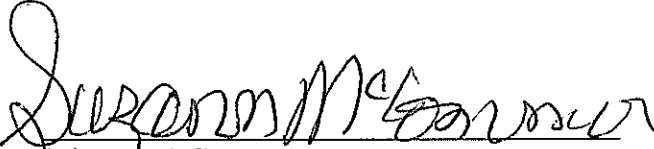
Ms. Brezée noted that staff is working with the Governor's office to fill the two open Board positions.

HDC parents and family members Deborah Rainwater, Della Hintergardt, Loretta Alexander, Kimberly Dodd, Stacey Sides, and Katrina Robertson thanked the Board and staff for the care provided to their loved ones and applauded the decision to allocate construction funds for children and individuals with complex needs.

Ms. Benbrook thanked the Board for the We Heart donation and FF/CFR for the assistance they have provided. Ms. Gambill announced that parents may also nominate staff to receive the We Heart award.

With no further business, Ms. McCommon called for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Patterson made the motion. Mr. Laverty seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

ATTEST:


Suzann McCommon
Chair, Board of DDS


Executive Secretary