

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES
May 1, 2024

The regular meeting of the Board of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) was held May 1, 2024 at Conway Human Development Center. The meeting convened at 10:34 a.m. pursuant to the call of the Board Chair.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Suzann McCommon, David Rosegrant, Linda Patterson, and Randy Lavery.

STAFF PRESENT: Medicaid Speciality Populations Director Melissa Weatherton, DDS Interim Director Thomas Tarpley, Jeff Gonyea, Sarah Murphy, Kerry Gambill, Diane Keith, Dana Harvey, Avis Lane, Tammy Benbrook, Amanda Cox, and Raven Fuller.

OTHERS PRESENT: Deborah Rainwater, Kris Stewart and MacKenzie Bell of Disability Rights Arkansas, Kimberly Dodd, Attorney General Representative Michael Bynum, Executive Director of the Governor's Council of Developmental Disabilities Johnathan Taylor, and Jennifer Brezee.

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

Ms. McCommon called for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 7, 2024 regular meeting of the DDS Board. Mr. Rosegrant made a motion that the minutes be approved. Ms. Patterson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. McCommon introduced Attorney General Representative Michael Bynum and Johnathan Taylor, Director of the Governor's Council of Developmental Disabilities and thanked them for attending.

The Superintendents of the human development centers shared items of interest regarding campus activities, hiring efforts, and construction updates. Conway HDC Superintendent Sarah Murphy reported the CHDC greenhouse is generating a substantial amount of produce, and sales have begun. She also gave an overview of the 22nd Annual Beyond The Borders conference scheduled for August 8th and 9th. Jonesboro HDC Superintendent Diane Keith shared that their first JHDC garden sale of the year generated over \$3000 in sales. The center also celebrated their 6th annual JHDC Gala sponsored by the Volunteer Council. Architects met regarding groundbreaking for the new medical building. Booneville HDC Superintendent Jeff Gonyea advised town hall meetings are scheduled to resume. The Well Being Champions have health fairs planned for the Fall. Completion of the new building will occur in approximately 60 days. Arkadelphia HDC Superintendent Kerry Gambill highlighted members of the AHDC swim team received medals during the Special Olympics. Officers for the Elks visited the campus and will return later in the month for the annual picnic. To date 300 Razorback banks have been produced by AHDC clients. Southeast Arkansas HDC Assistant Superintendent Dana Harvey shared that building 19 is near completion. The punch list for the multipurpose building is currently being addressed. She also provided an overview of various festivals and activities.

Ms. Weatherton thanked Mr. Tarpley for serving as DDS Acting Director for the past 6 months. She then introduced Jennifer Brezee, provided Ms. Brezee's background information and recommended that she begin as DDS Director on June 1st.

Mr. Laverty made a motion to appoint Jennifer Brezee as the new DDS Director. Mr. Rosegrant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Tarpley and Mr. Gonyea provided the Board with an overview of a Booneville HDC revitalization project proposal by Liquid Love Ministries. The group would like to upgrade the rodeo grounds to provide equine therapy and trail rides to at risk youth and other community organizations. The Board requested additional information regarding liability and potential benefits for BHDC clients.

Mr. Tarpley updated the Board on the status of the funds for timber and mineral rights proceeds. He requested that the Board consider the use of these funds for human development center master plan construction. The monies would be transferred to a specific account for the Booneville HDC 4, 8-bed construction project. Ms. McCommon recommended the funds initially be transferred to the DDS investment account to accrue interest. Mr. Tarpley will provide the Board with additional information regarding this option. Ms. McCommon then provided the history of the Board's investment account and how it was started with cash and inherited properties by a group of parents.

Federal funds were previously utilized to implement broadband at Booneville HDC. Arkansas Rural Connect (Attachment 1) has asked to lay the broadband fiber infrastructure, at no cost, as they intend to bid on the next state broadband contract. The Board voiced concerns regarding potential property damage. Mr. Tarpley will ask the DHS attorneys to devise a contract for the Board's review which stipulates Arkansas Rural Connect with repair any damage caused.

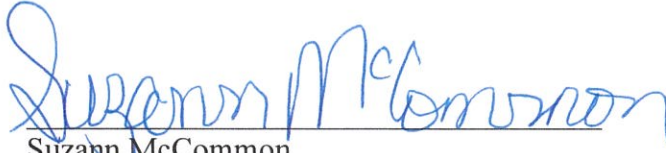
Ms. Weatherton advised that HDC parents Katrina Roberton, Carole Sherman, and Kimberly Dodd recently attended Public Health Committee. They spoke highly of the superintendents and staff and addressed the nurses' salary concerns. Ms. Weatherton noted the campuses are doing well with CNAs. The struggle, however, continues to maintain adequate RNs and LPNs despite pay increases as salaries are still not competitive with private healthcare facilities. A proposal is scheduled to be presented to OPM, Veterans Affairs, Department of Health, and DHS in hopes of addressing the issue.

A kickoff event is scheduled for May 3rd to announce four early identification prevention pilot programs utilizing American Rescue Plan funds. The focus will involve comprehensive screening, offering appropriate services, and family involvement. Also, on May 3rd, an announcement will be made regarding \$30,000,000 awarded by the Governor to build Medicaid programs and that applications are live on the DHS website. In addition, a roadmap report will be released to outline the 18 initiatives being built with these funds.

Ms. McCommon thanked Arkadelphia HDC parent Kimberly Dodd for speaking before the Public Health Committee and sharing about her son. Ms. Dodd expressed her appreciation for the HDCs and the staff.

With no further business, Ms. McCommon called for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned.
Mr. Rosegrant made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Patterson seconded the
motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

ATTEST:


Suzann McCommon
Chair, Board of DDS


Executive Secretary

