

**MINUTES**

LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTHWEST MINNESOTA  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA  
VIA TEAMS MEETING AND IN-PERSON

September 20, 2023  
5:00 p.m.

I.  
**ROLL CALL, INTRODUCTIONS, WELCOME**

The Board of Directors of Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM) on September 20, 2023, at 5 p.m. Some members attended virtually and some in person.

The meeting was called to order by President Bob Blatti at 5 p.m. In addition, the following members were present: Amber Gustafson, Ben Olson, Cindy Gabbert, David Frank, Kristine Goddard-Anderson, Deb Kukowski, Christel Croxen, Jeff Hane, Joe Glasrud, Rachel Prudhomme, Leigh Nelson, and Sarah Jones.

The following staff members were present: Anne Hoefgen, Shelley Treib, and Ruth Ruch.

II.  
**MISSION MOMENT-- INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF (JESS, SETH AND CRYSTAL)**

Jess Faunce introduced herself as the new attorney for the Alexandria office and she works remotely out of her home in Minneapolis. She talked about her background with Montana Legal Aid and as a public defender. Because Jess is located in the Twin Cities, she'll be able to attend events for LSNM rather than staff driving there.

Seth then introduced himself as the new IT Specialist/Office Manager located in Moorhead. He does office management for all three offices. He talked about his background in IT and said he is excited to work for LSNM.

Crystal introduced herself as LSNM's new Community Engagement and Outreach Coordinator. She told the board about her previous employment with other non-profits so she is familiar with LSNM's many collaborative agencies and is thrilled to be a new member of the LSNM staff.

The Board welcomed and thanked Jess, Seth, and Crystal. They then left the meeting.

III.  
**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2023, BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING**

The minutes from the Board meeting of May 18, 2023, were presented for approval. Dave made a motion to approve the Minutes. The motion was seconded by Amber. There being no objection, motion carried.

IV.  
BOARD TRAINING – PLANNING FOR 2024

Anne referred the Board members to the Propel Board training that was emailed to them with other materials for this meeting. She asked if anyone had anything specific, they would like Board training on. Rachel would like something on the responsibilities of the financial aspect of being on the Board. Anne will investigate that. Bob also asked Anne put together training for new members on LSNM history, structure, regulations, etc. Anne said she would do that.

V.  
STATISTICS/FINANCIAL REPORT

- a. 2023 Stats to Date
- b. Financial Statements Year to Date
- c. Budget Projections
- d. Employee benefits updates
- e. Approve new signer for LSNM Bank Accounts
- f. Approve Accounting Manual

Shelley pointed out the financial handouts are in a new design and asked if there were problems with the way the finances are being presented. There were no concerns.

Specifically, she noted on the Profit and Loss Statement (January 1-August 31, 2023), with 66.7% of the year complete, the expenses are slightly over (53%) what was budgeted as there are several accounts that were not included in the original budget: Strength Training Consultant, New laptops for staff, more usage of interpreters. Also, the Audit & Insurance have been paid in full. She noted LSNM switched insurance brokers and there was an increase on the value of the office properties LSNM owns.

Commented [GU1]: 53%

In regard to Revenues, Shelley noted there was a significant increase in funding from the state. Anne then explained that legal aid funding is a line item in the Minnesota Supreme Court's funding. Anne explained there are five (5) regional legal aid programs in Minnesota where that money is distributed based on poverty populations through the Legal Services Advisory Committee (LSAC).

Bob then asked what the Alexandria grant was. Shelley said it is called the "HEAL Project" for Douglas County residents on housing issues.

Shelley asked if there were any questions on the financial handouts. There were none.

Agenda item VI. LSNM, b. Review Bids for Moorhead Roof project. She showed the Board

three (3) proposals she was given by area contractors. She has more detailed information about the specifics on the proposals, but noted that Herzog was the most expensive. The board asked if a motion needed to be made now on which one to accept. Shelley said not at this time as the work on the roof wouldn't be done until next spring anyway. What she provided was just for their information. Kristine suggested we have the City Inspector look at the detailed bids to see if there is anything that stands out to him that could be a problem. Anne and Shelley will contact the City Inspector.

Next, Shelley found a different insurance broker and was able to get good rates on dental and vision insurance for employees. Fourteen (14) employees signed up for those benefits. She said employees also have options to add critical illness, and accident insurance. For the 2024 year. Short-term disability has been added as a benefit for all staff. Shelley is getting proposals for health insurance premiums for 2024 and will have that information to the Board at the November meeting.

Commented [GU2]: different insurance broker. and LSNM has elected to give all employees Short-term disability they do not elect.

Anne announced Heidi Uecker, Director of Litigation and Advocacy is moving to South Carolina in October but will continue to be employed and work remotely. However, Heidi is one of the signers on the bank accounts and will need to be replaced. Anne suggested having Renee Charon, Managing Attorney for the Moorhead office, be the second signer. Kristine made a motion to remove Heidi Uecker as a signer from the bank accounts and to add Renee Charon as an authorized signer to the bank accounts. That motion was seconded by Ben. There being no objection, motion carried.

Agenda item VI. LSNM, c. 45 CFR 1631 Policy revision. Anne then explained that LSC asked for changes to 45 CFR Regulation 1631 – Procurement, Contracting and Agreement policy. LSC asked that LSNM clarify applicability of vendor reference requirements to say, “for contracts or purchases that exceed \$20,000.” Ben made a motion to approve that addition which was seconded by Leigh. There being no objection, motion carried.

Finally, Shelley asked the board to review the updated Accounting Manual. She explained the revisions to the manual were recommendations provided by Corrine Campbell, LSC's Fiscal Compliance Analyst for the Office of Compliance and Enforcement (OCE). She said the changes were noted by Corrine when LSC's OCE visited in August 2022. A motion was made by Ben to approve all changes to the Accounting Manual, including the above change to 45 CFR Regulation 1631. The motion was seconded by Deb. There being no objection, motion carried.

## VI. LSNM

- a. New Salary ranges (reconvene compensation improvement working group?)
- b. Review Bids for Moorhead Roof project – previously discussed above
- c. 45 CFR 1631 Policy revisions - previously discussed above
- d. Personnel Policy revisions
  - a. Anti-nepotism policy
  - b. No alcohol reimbursement

Anne asked the Board to review the Salary Range handout which was emailed to all members. She is asking for a motion to approve the ranges retroactive to July 1, 2023. The increases are a result of the large funding increase from the state. She also proposes that on January 1, 2024, salaries increase by 6% and then July 1, 2024, an additional 8% increase. This would be in line with what the Legal Service Coalition promised the Minnesota Legislature when asking for increased funding. There was a lot of discussion about the compression of the salary ranges and how the proposal is comparable to what other public attorneys are making. Anne would like to organize a salary improvement working group. Anne will collect materials on everything she has from the state regarding the comparable ranges. Ben, Kristine, and Dave volunteered to be a part of that working group. Anne will set up a virtual meeting. Then Dave made a motion to approve the proposed salary ranges retroactive to July 1, 2023. Jeff seconded the motion. There being no objection, motion carried.

Anne would like the board to review two policies for the Personnel Manual. The first is the anti-nepotism policy that, again, at LSC's OCE's visit last August, asked that we use a more thorough policy. Anne reviewed those changes. The other change would be added on page 11, section 6. Reimbursement of Employment-Related Expenses, c. **Meals and Lodging**, the following language: "LSNM will not reimburse for alcohol or recreational drugs. Employees must submit itemized receipts to ensure that they are not requesting reimbursement for ineligible expenses." Kristine made a motion to approve the two changes noted to the Personnel Manual effective September 20, 2023. Amber seconded the motion. There being no objection, motion carried.

#### VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. Strategic Plan Update. Anne gave an update that she is working on the Strategic Plan for 2024-2026. A copy of the draft was shared via video with all members, showing how she is going to document quarterly goals and milestones.

b. Report on Non-Priority Casework. There were no cases to report.

#### VIII.

#### CLIENT ISSUES

Bob proposed a client "working group" to meet quarterly before an upcoming Board meeting to discuss client issues. Cindy and Leigh agreed to be on that working group. Ruth will send a meeting invite for them to brainstorm.

#### IX. BOARD ISSUES

a. Judicare Fee Waiver Request. After reviewing the documentation the Board was sent for the Lindsay Forsgren's fee waiver request, Dave made a motion to approve paying the remainder of the bill of \$979.79. That motion was seconded by Leigh. There being no objection, motion carried.

- b. LSC training - Review of LSC's restrictions on political and lobbying activities of LSC grantees. Anne gave a PowerPoint presentation.
- c. Board member recruitment. Anne said she would like any recommendations for new board members that are low -income aka "client eligible."

X.  
OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, David made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Jeff. There being no objection, motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Missy Becker-Cook, Secretary-Treasurer