

Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities

March 25, 2025, Board Meeting

Minutes

Call to Order

A meeting of the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities was held on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 2950 Whipple Avenue NW, Canton, Ohio, and by video teleconference. President Dr. Jessica Falvo Lang called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Roll Call:

Board Members:

Present:

President Dr. Jessica Falvo Lang
Vice President Jennifer Moff
Recording Secretary Cindi Sutter
Maria Heege
Carmelita Smith

Absent:

Crystal Waters

Also Attending:

Bill Green, Superintendent
Leigh Donatella, CFO/Business Manager
Lisa Parramore, Communications Manager
Connie Poulton, Director of Human Resources

In Memoriam:

A moment of silence was observed for the following: Scott Whitehurst, age 52, passed away on February 7, 2025. He received services from our SSA Department. Christopher Boyd, age 65, Passed away on February 10, 2025. Christopher graduated from Southgate School and previously worked at the Stark DD Workshops. He also received services from our SSA Department. Barbara Meola, age 74, passed away on February 11, 2025. Barbara previously attended the Stark DD Workshops and received services from our SSA Department. Thomas Matheny, age 68, passed away on February 13, 2025. He received services from our SSA Department. Kathleen Bovee, age 40, passed away on February 28, 2025. She received services from the SSA Department. Steven Crum, age 48, passed away on March 1, 2025. He received services from our SSA Department. James Hudson, age 34, passed away on March 5, 2025. James was a Special Olympics athlete and received services from our SSA Department. El Hampton, age 69, passed away on March 8, 2025. He received services from our SSA Department. Carl Schillinger, age 69, passed away on March 11, 2025. He received services from our SSA Department.

Minutes of the Previous Board Meeting:

President Dr. Falvo Lang requested a motion to approve the minutes from the Board Meeting held on February 25, 2025.

Jennifer Moff moved for approval. Maria Heege seconded.

The Board duly adopted.

March Awareness Presentation

Lisa Parramore, Communications Manager, shared a PowerPoint presentation. On March 7, we kicked off the month with the fifth annual Mall Walk for Awareness. Lisa shared that the point of this event is to just be out in the community. This year, we had 20 stations at the Mall Walk, and she shared an overview of participants, including our Agency and community partners. On March 20, we held our 4th annual Unified Basketball Game, where Stark DD staff, provider staff, and Special Olympians joined as four teams to compete for the win. She gave an overview of the event, including that for the first time this year we had a unified cheer squad, noting how this was the biggest turnout. Walsh University was thrilled with the turnout. Books We Love, is a program where we donate a selected book to all first grade teachers in Stark County. This year was from a local author, "Super Special Magic Shoes," written by a local mom who wrote this book about her daughter. Lisa provided an overview of Piper's Key, an initiative that helps to provide books that focus on inclusivity in the community.

Next, Lisa introduced Mary, a previous Ambassador from 2020, Melissa from Jason's Place, and Mary's Mom. Melissa approached the podium and talked about how Mary loves books and how they read every day. We were discussing

what we could do with Mary's outcomes, and an idea to have a book drive. Mary understood and expressed that she wanted to do this. Mary ended up collecting over 800 books that were donated to Taft Elementary, which were distributed to all children, and the library. Donna Shackle, Mary's SSA, shared how the Stark DD Staff supported the book drive, noting how the Wellness Committee collaborated to encourage book donations, and how all staff who had worked with Mary were more than eager to contribute. Jennifer Moff mentioned that Taft was very appreciative of Mary's initiative, and that many positive messages were coming from Taft regarding this effort.

We are support in the moment, but we are also support for a lifetime. This concluded the presentation.

Public Speaks:

None.

President's Report:

President Dr. Falvo Lang shared that she was delighted to participate in this year's mall walk with my daughter, Olivia. It was a great turnout, and seeing so many people gathered and participating was nice. Events like this are significant and now have become a part of what we do each March, so participants come to expect it. I appreciated the participation of so many of our community agencies. Also, thank you again, Lisa, for highlighting all the activities that are done this month to promote awareness.

We are still waiting for the appointment of our seventh board member. As a reminder, this is a probate appointment, and Judge Kirt Warren is required to post the vacancy in the newspaper for two consecutive weekends to garner interest. We hope to have someone seated for our April board meeting. Speaking of our April meeting, it will be abbreviated, and we will have our second board training immediately after it.

This concludes the president's report.

Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent Green welcomed everyone again to the meeting. Greetings, and I hope your March has been well. As you have heard, March has been a meaningful Month for us, marked by Disability Awareness. Regarding other developments in Ohio, I would like to provide an update on one piece of legislation and then share a story about a compliment that Stark County received.

We are encouraged to see Senate Bill 35 introduced in the Senate. This bill will establish supported decision-making as a less restrictive alternative to guardianship for adults with developmental disabilities and provide a framework for Probate Courts to follow. Supported decision-making empowers individuals with disabilities to make their own choices while receiving guidance from a trusted network of supporters, allies, and loved ones. Instead of relying on guardianship, it enables individuals to maintain autonomy and control over decisions that affect their lives, which is at the heart of the person-centered planning process.

I want to conclude by sharing a compliment that Stark County received from Chris Crine from the Department of Youth Services, as we collaborated with other agencies to address the needs of a single youth. Maria heard this story at Family Council, and I would like to share it here as well.

"John's story is one of resilience, transformation, and the incredible power of community. His journey, shaped by compassion and dedication, began in 2023 when he arrived at the Ohio Department of Youth Services and was placed at Indian River. At the time, John was grappling with significant challenges—mental health struggles, delayed cognitive skills, and higher-level needs that left his future uncertain. Yet, those who worked with him saw beyond his difficulties and recognized the untapped potential within him.

The turning point came when John's Individual Education Plan revealed he could benefit from developmental disability services. Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities stepped in to assess his needs, confirming his eligibility for essential lifelong support. Their services ranged from housing and transportation to employment opportunities, daily care, and service and support administration. Though John hailed from Franklin County, the decision was made to keep him in Stark County, where he could find a stronger foundation for success—a community that embraced him despite the absence of family or support back home.

For John, the meaning of “family” took on a transformative new definition. He learned that family isn’t limited to blood relations—it’s the people who walk alongside you, sharing in your struggles and triumphs. In Stark County, John found this sense of belonging, forging meaningful connections with individuals who cared deeply about his progress. In 2024, John’s path forward gained clarity when Stark County Family Council began coordinating his care. Biweekly meetings became a cornerstone of his transformation—opportunities to review his achievements, address challenges, set goals, and plan for his release. This collaborative effort brought together dedicated community partners who worked tirelessly to ensure John had the resources and support he needed. Special thanks are due to Children’s Protective Services for organizing these sessions, and to individuals such as Bob Hurless (ComQuest), Linda Adams, Julie Willis, and Rachel Poling, whose steadfast dedication had a lasting impact on John’s journey.

The day John moved into his new home marked a moment of joy and hope a week or so ago. Meeting his neighbors—and their friendly dog—brought a genuine smile to his face, as he embraced the start of his new chapter. Starting from scratch is never easy, but thanks to financial support from Stark DD, Ohio RISE, and the ARC of Ohio, John had everything he needed to begin rebuilding his life: food, clothing, hygiene items, and more. He also enrolled in services from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, aiming to secure a competitive job that would further bolster his independence.

This is not just John’s story—it’s a story of collaboration, compassion, and the extraordinary impact of community. It reminds us all that it truly does take a village. Every person who contributed to John’s success, whether through time, effort, or unwavering belief in his potential, has helped him step into a brighter future. Today, as John begins this new chapter of his life, he carries hope in his heart and the collective support of his village behind him.”

This story really just captures our mission: Supporting people with disabilities and their families. Although we serve over 4,500 people, we serve each person, one at a time.

This concludes the superintendent’s report.

Committee/Department/Other Reports:

- A. Finance Committee – Minutes in Board packet
Next Meeting: April 15, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.
- B. Personnel Committee – Minutes in Board packet
Next Meeting: April 18, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.
- C. Ethics Council – Minutes in Board packet
Next Meeting: April 23, 2024, at 5:45 p.m.

Old and New Business:

None.

Presentation: Stark DD’s Intake Department

Tana Crouse, Assistant Director of the SSA Department, shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Intake Department. She provided an overview of the staff who work in intake, and what their roles are, including a Supervisor, two Intake SSAs, and three Eligibility SSAs. Tana then provided a breakdown of the criteria that is needed for a person to be eligible for services, and explained the assessments that are used in Ohio.

She then shared a snapshot of the Stark DD Website, noting that a person can start the eligibility process by filling out the form on our website, or by contacting Stark DD Intake by phone or email. She explained that the Intake SSA then reaches out to connect with the family, and collects information needed to pass on to Eligibility Specialists. Eligibility Specialists then look at the documents received to determine if there is a disability. Then once determined eligible or not eligible, resources are provided. We are required to assist those who are not eligible, and provide them with resources given their specific needs. If eligible, they are then placed with an SSA.

Tana then shared some metrics, including the number of eligible, not eligible, and cases closed. The number of referrals continues to grow year over year. A question was asked as to how long the process takes. Tana responded that it varies, based on how quickly records are received. Once medical records are received we have 45 days to complete the process. What slows the process down is the delay in receiving records or releases, however, we recently implemented electronic forms for this process, so this has helped to cut time down.

This concluded the presentation.

First Reading of Board Policies:

The Director of Human Resources, Connie Poulton, gave the first readings on the following policies. These policies will be presented during the April Board meeting for second reading and Board approval.

Policy 2.29 Free Choice of Provider – Reviewed
Policy 4.40 Payroll – Reviewed
Policy 5.21 Preschool Transitions – Reviewed
Policy 6.01 IT Acceptable Use – Reviewed
Policy 6.24 Acceptable AI Use – New

Financials and Board Resolutions:

03-16-25: Operating Fund #071

A. Two Payrolls for February	\$1,437,376.08
B. Bills for Payment in February	\$1,872,256.11
TOTAL:	<u>\$3,308,632.19</u>

Maria Heege moved for approval of Resolution 03-16-25. Jennifer Moff seconded.

Discussion:

Leigh Donatella, CFO/Business Manager, reported that for February 2025, total local revenue was \$278,349, total state revenue was \$436,972, and total federal revenue was \$484,144. Therefore, the total revenue received for February was \$1.2 million. For February 2025 expenditures, there were two payrolls totaling \$1.4 million, total benefits paid of \$835,796, and total other expenditures of \$1.04 million.

For year-to-date cash, we started 2025 with \$49.9 million. We have \$89,477 in open 2024 purchase orders. Open 2025 purchase orders totaled \$16 million at the end of February. With the net change in the financial position of negative \$11.1 million, the month ended with unencumbered cash of \$22.9 million, and with our reserve balance account in the amount of \$10 million, the actual unencumbered cash at the end of February was \$12.9 million.

Looking at the February budget versus actual statement, focusing on year-to-date, we have received \$2.3 million in revenue, which is 4.33% of the total revenues that we expect to receive. We have spent \$13.4 million, 19.49% of the total expenditures budgeted. The available budget at the end of February was \$39.3 million, made up mostly of personnel and unencumbered waiver match.

In reviewing prior-year encumbrances, the Board carried over \$491,856 from 2024. To date, \$363,883 of the purchase orders have been paid, \$38,494 have been canceled, and there is a remaining balance of \$89,477 for 2024 purchase orders. For Resolution 03-16-25, there were two February payrolls of \$1.4 million, and other non-payroll expenses of \$1.9 million.

The Board duly adopted.

03-17-25: This resolution approves a one-year extension of the labor agreement with the SCEPTA Union.

Jennifer Moff moved for approval of Resolution 03-17-25. Maria Heege seconded.

Discussion:

Connie Poulton, Director of Human Resources, informed the Board that this resolution approves a one-year wage adjustment of three and one-half percent (3.5%) for SCEPTA-represented employees, effective May 22, 2025. The one (1) year extension agreement between the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Stark County Educators and Trainers Association (SCEPTA) is effective June 1, 2025 through May 31, 2026. The Board and the SCEPTA have agreed to a one (1) year contract extension agreement on March 6, 2025. The SCEPTA union represents 95 employees who work as intervention specialists (teachers), intervention specialist assistants (teacher assistants), developmental specialists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapy assistants, and nurses. The one-year agreement calls for a wage adjustment of three and one-half percent (3.5%) effective May 22, 2025. The cost of the 1-year agreement is approximately \$173,280.

The Board duly adopted.

03-18-25: Resolution to approve the Stark County Schools Council of Governments Dental Insurance program

Cindi Sutter moved for approval of Resolution 03-18-25. Carmelita Smith seconded.

Discussion:

Connie Poulton, Director of Human Resources, informed the Board that this resolution authorizes the implementation of a new Dental Plan through the Stark County Schools Council of Governments effective July 1, 2025, at a cost not to exceed to \$600,000. Effective July 1, 2025, the Board will transition from Aultcare to The Stark County Schools' Council of Governments (COG) for dental coverage. Currently, the employee premium contribution is 50% and the Board contribution is 50% (Total plan cost is ~\$290,000). For the new plan, the employee contribution will be 25%, which equals ~ \$150,000 per year, and the Board contribution will be 75%, which is ~\$450,000 per year. In 2022, The Stark County Schools' Council of Governments (COG), stated that all entities' participating in their Health Benefit Plan were expected to utilize their flexible spending, vision, and dental coverage by 2027. This requirement was announced as a condition of maintaining membership in our current health insurance plans provided by Stark County Schools with the goal of ensuring that the health plan is affordable for its' members.

The Board duly adopted.

03-19-25: Resolution to approve Capital Housing Assistance Funds with Hope Homes

Jennifer Moff moved for approval of Resolution 03-18-25. Maria Heege seconded.

Discussion:

Leigh Donatella, CFO/Business Manager, explained that this resolution is In accordance with Ohio Administrative Code 5123:1-03, a County Board of Developmental Disabilities and a nonprofit housing corporation may access State Community Capital Assistance Funds from the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) to purchase property to provide housing for people with developmental disabilities. The Capital Assistance Funds provide the equivalent of a loan that is forgiven over a period of 15 years (180 months). Capital Community Housing projects are cost-neutral to the Board.

After the application process is complete, typically DODD sends the funds to the Board, who then passes them through to the nonprofit housing corporation. In this case, Hope Homes Foundation Inc. did not provide the capital outlay, so the Board receives the reimbursement and transfers the money to the North East Ohio Network and the Stark DD account where the capital outlay originated. Upon completion of the project, Hope Homes Foundation, Inc. becomes the landlord and owner of records. The Board holds a promissory note on the property for the 15-year term.

The Board duly adopted.

03-20-25: Resolution to approve Capital Housing Assistance Funds

Maria Heege moved for approval of Resolution 03-20-25. Carmelita Smith seconded.

Discussion:

Leigh Donatella explained that In accordance with Ohio Administrative Code 5123:1-03, a County Board of Developmental Disabilities and a nonprofit housing corporation may access State Community Capital Assistance Funds from the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) to purchase property to provide housing for people with developmental disabilities. The Capital Assistance Funds provide the equivalent of a loan that is forgiven over a period of 15 years (180 months). Capital Community Housing projects are cost neutral to the Board. After the application process is complete, typically DODD sends the funds to the Board, who then passes them through to the nonprofit housing corporation. In this case, the Hope Homes Foundation Inc. did not provide the capital outlay, so the Board receives the reimbursement and transfers the money to the North East Ohio Network

and the Stark DD account where the capital outlay originated. Upon completion of the project, Hope Homes Foundation, Inc. becomes the landlord and owner of records. The Board holds a promissory note on the property for the 15 year term.

The Board duly adopted.

Second Readings:

03-21-25: Resolution to approve the Board policies presented for second reading.

Maria Heege moved for approval of Resolution 03-21-25. Jennifer Moff seconded.

Connie Poulton, Director of Human Resources, gave a brief summary of the policies presented for second reading:

Policy 2.10 Risk Management – Reviewed
Policy 4.23 Resignation – Reviewed
Policy 6.14 IT Physical Security – Reviewed
Policy 6.15 IT Remote Access – Reviewed

The Board duly adopted.

Adjournment:

President Dr. Falvo Lang requested a motion to adjourn. First, Maria Heege shared that it was Bill Green's 30th service year, noting how they are so lucky to have Bill to lead the agency, and thanked him for his service.

Maria Heege moved for approval. Carmelita Smith seconded. The Board adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Note: The next Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Ernest Cohen Room at Whipple-Dale Centre.