

**ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY**

**SPECIAL FULL BOARD MEETING**

**Teleconference**

**March 27,2020**

**1:00 p.m.**

**Taken at:**

**3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 120**

**Anchorage, Alaska**

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**Trustees Present:**

Mary Jane Michael, Chair

Anita Halterman

John Sturgeon

Ken McCarty

Chris Cooke

Laraine Derr

Verne' Boerner

**Trust Staff Present:**

Mike Abbott

Steve Williams

Miri Smith-Coolidge

Kelda Barstad

Luke Lind

Michael Baldwin

Carrie Predeger

Katie Baldwin-Johnson

Jimael Johnson

Valette Keller

Eric Boyer

Autumn Vea

Allison Biastock

**Trust Land Office:**

Wyn Menefee

Jusdi Doucet

**Also participating:**

Rhonda Boyles; Nona Safra.

## PROCEEDINGS

### CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR MICHAEL called the meeting to order and did a roll call. She went through the protocol of the meeting since it was teleconferenced. She reminded all that it was being recorded verbatim. She asked for any other announcements. There being none, she asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

**MOTION:** A motion to approve the agenda was made by TRUSTEE BOERNER; seconded by TRUSTEE STURGEON.

*There being no objection, the MOTION was approved.*

CHAIR MICHAEL asked for any ethics disclosures. There being none, she moved on to the agenda. She stated that the only item on the agenda is the COVID-19 response funding. She asked for the motion.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by TRUSTEE COOKE that the Board approve using \$1 million in FY20 Authority Grant Funds to establish a COVID-19 response grant program to assist organizations serving Trust beneficiaries to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The Authority Grant Funds to create this grant program are outlined as described in the materials with the motion; seconded by TRUSTEE DERR.

CHAIR MICHAEL asked for an overview of the request.

MR. ABBOTT stated that staff has been thinking about how the Trust could support the beneficiaries during a challenging experience. Perhaps taking advantage of the Trust resources and putting them to work to minimize the disruption to the behavioral healthcare system in the state of Alaska. He continued that the recommendation is to make a budget-neutral amendment to the FY20 budget and take funds from four currently budgeted accounts and move them into a new budget allocation specifically designed to support Trust beneficiaries in response to COVID-19. He stated that the four program areas recommended are the FY20 emergency assistance funds; the FY20 pooled predevelopment fund; the FY20 supplemental dental grant fund; and a portion of the FY20 substance abuse prevention and treatment focus area funds. He explained that these funds are currently authorized in the FY20 budget, but are not expected to be spent down for a number of different reasons. He explained the reasoning behind using these four funds.

TRUSTEE COOKE stated that it is important to not only work with the partners and programs the Trust funds to preserve their viability, and to retain the workforce that serves the beneficiaries. He asked if there are any other funds that may be redeployed in response to the current emergency.

MR. ABBOTT replied that there still remains approximately \$500,000 of unallocated or unauthorized FY20 revenues that could be added if needed at a later date. He added that he believed this amount is enough for now.

TRUSTEE DERR stated that this million dollars is money that would ordinarily go forward into lapsed funds. She asked what this would do to the bottom line for the FY21 budget and how much would it reduce next year's budget.

MR. ABBOTT replied that the FY21 budget would not be affected unless the half million dollars of unallocated money was tapped into.

TRUSTEE BOERNER asked if the FY20 SAPT focus area fund is postponed will there be a need for that in FY21.

MR. ABBOTT replied that there is SAPT funding for that general purpose in the FY21 budget, and it is anticipated that there will be sufficient FY21 funding to cover that.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN asked about how expended funds were used.

MR. ABBOTT replied that he did not have the list of grantees in front of him and would get that shortly. He stated that instead of processing grants for three quarters of a million dollars, grants for a little over a quarter of a million dollars were processed. He added that he would forward that list of grantees before the end of the afternoon.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated that this reallocation may not impact FY21, but what about FY22.

MR. ABBOTT replied that he did not expect it to impact the ability to both maintain the current concentration on focus areas and a couple of other overarching priorities and still help beneficiaries get through COVID-19.

TRUSTEE McCARTY stated that the projection in the 2021 budget is having funds for all the different projects and asked if this will be put above that.

MR. ABBOTT replied, based on what is anticipated today, there will be support for the substance abuse treatment prevention needs that are being anticipated.

TRUSTEE STURGEON stated concern on spending this money because in business one of the first things to preserve is the cash so core responsibilities can be met. He added this could be discussed at a later meeting.

MR. ABBOTT replied that staff is prepared to give a more thorough conversation at the April Finance Committee meeting.

CHAIR MICHAEL asked to proceed with how these funds will be applied.

MR. ABBOTT stated that the plan developed to implement, if the trustees endorse the staff recommendation, would be to immediately begin contacting the different beneficiary-serving organizations that we worked with to begin to understand the scale and severity of the need, and to put in place an accelerated, streamlined granting process. He anticipated that the funding will go out in relatively small chunks. They will be designed to help agencies address issues related to maintaining service levels. He added that weekly updates on grant decisions from the funding

pot will be prepared, if approved.

TRUSTEE DERR asked for an example of who might not be receiving revenue, why they would not be, and why they are asking for funds.

TRUSTEE BOERNER stated, as an example, a number of providers have postponed or canceled appointments for folks if they are not essential. She continued that not having appointments impacts revenue and their ability to see the beneficiaries, and that impacts their cash-flows.

MS. BALDWIN-JOHNSON stated that with staff staying home and not providing direct service, the level of the clinical wrap-around services has declined. There are very specific concerns about a loss of Medicaid revenue because of the reduction of services and individual client contacts.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated some observations on the fact that Medicaid just put out some guidance for providers that allow utilization of telehealth. She continued that what bothered her is the need to access for mental health services and there does not appear to be a contingency plan to allow people to receive or access these services in the event of an emergency. She would like to see some help working on that, developing some options moving forward. She talked about the \$1.25 billion coming to Alaska which should be used to provide relief for staffing concerns for businesses. Her fear is if there are no contingencies, that future business will not get back to business as usual.

MR. ABBOTT responded that, although for-profit providers are not a big part of the granted agencies, occasional grants are made to for-profits if there is satisfaction that the grant is necessary to serve beneficiaries and not simply advancing the profit of a business owner. He asked Deputy Commissioner Wall to answer the question regarding telehealth.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WALL appreciated the invitation to attend and talked about the precipitous times in the face of a pandemic. He stated that much of the United States is developing their response to this. He explained that organizations like the Department of Health and Social Services are trying to get to the next layer in how to address the pandemic. In order to do that, a couple of formal waivers from requirements in the Federal Government have been applied for. The internal guidance from the Department of how much is going to be applied is in the last stages of development. That explanation will be out shortly. He talked about some of the other efforts that need to happen. He added that there is a large packet of changes to regulations coming out in the next week in response to the state emergency. He explained that a cross-department work group was put together to get through the layers of effort.

CHAIR MICHAEL thanked the Deputy Commissioner for being there, and recognized Trustee McCarty.

TRUSTEE McCARTY asked if the waiver that is being submitted would be retroactive.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WALL replied that it is retroactive to the date that Secretary Azar declared the emergency.

TRUSTEE McCARTY asked if there was a formula for the Trust to be reimbursed.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WALL stated that funding will be available, and there is a tremendous amount of focus in funding becoming available on an individual response. The Federal Government has been very helpful.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN reiterated her questions on the funding that is coming to Alaska and wanted assurances that the Trust would not be in a spot where funds cannot be recovered that may have been made available otherwise because the Trust acted too quickly. She asked for a concept and some understanding of what disruptions in supplies and services would be addressed with these grant funds. She added that, in the Governor's address, her understanding was that there were no supply-chain disruptions for Alaska. She would like to understand the difference.

MR. ABBOTT stated that he did not know whether there was a supply-chain disruption or not. He responded that partners that are working with their clients that did not need supplies, like personal protective equipment, now do need that. He added, that is what the Trust funding could help with. He stated that he agreed that grantees are also tracking other sources of funding. He continued that if a situation is identified where Trust funds are duplicative, then the funding would be reduced accordingly. In the potential conflict with Medicaid, the Trust funds are not going to be used to pay for services to beneficiaries. The funds are going to be used for organizational relief. They are not designed to be subsidizing or otherwise funding services that are otherwise reimbursable by or billable to Medicaid. He added that he did not believe that was a conflict at this time.

TRUSTEE BOERNER commented that the amounts for the agencies would be on average around \$25,000. It is not a big amount, but she wanted to be careful not to build in too much overhead and administrative burden because that would take away from the intent and getting more services out to the beneficiaries. She also pointed out that Alaska has a very high percentage of those above 400 percent of the Federal poverty level that have no insurance coverage. From the tribal perspective, when so many strings are attached, it may take away from the intended purpose of truly benefiting the beneficiaries.

MS. BOYLES stated that Trustee Boerner made some good points and she concurred. She continued that it is an obligation to take care of the beneficiaries, and in this difficult time we probably do not have a clue of what they are going through.

CHAIR MICHAEL moved to the motion and called a roll call vote.

*After a roll call vote, the MOTION was passed unanimously: (Trustee Cooke, yes; Trustee McCarty, yes; Trustee Boerner, yes; Trustee Derr, yes; Trustee Halterman, yes; Trustee Sturgeon, yes; Trustee Michael, yes).*

CHAIR MICHAEL asked for any other business to come before the board.

MR. ABBOTT thanked the trustees for coming together so quickly and for participating so thoughtfully. Staff appreciated the support for this recommendation, and they will do their best to make the Trust proud. He added that reports on this will begin in a week.

CHAIR MICHAEL thanked Mr. Abbott and staff for putting this all together, and the trustees for

being online.

MR. McCARTY asked Mr. Abbott how this information about this available resource will get out to Alaskan providers.

MR. ABBOTT replied that a variety of networks will be used: the Alaska Behavioral Health Association network; the Primary Care Association network; the Alaska Native Health Board network; the Trust network of past grantees, and others. He stated that he was confident that the word would get out, and that we will not lack for good, strong applications.

CHAIR MICHAEL asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION:** A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by TRUSTEE HALTERMAN; seconded by TRUSTEE STURGEON.

*There being no objection, the MOTION was approved.*

(Special Full Board Meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.)