

**ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY**

**FULL BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**January 24, 2023**

**8:30 a.m.**

**WebEx Videoconference/Teleconference**

**Originating at:**

**Elizabeth Peratovich Hall  
320 West Willoughby Avenue  
Juneau, Alaska 99801**

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**Trustees Present:**

Anita Halterman, Chair  
Verne' Boerner (Virtual)  
Brent Fisher  
Rhonda Boyles  
Kevin Fimon  
Agnes Moran  
John Sturgeon

**Trust Staff Present:**

Steve Williams  
Katie Baldwin-Johnson  
Carol Howarth  
Miri Smith-Coolidge  
Kelda Barstad  
Michael Baldwin  
Eric Boyer  
Valette Keller  
Autumn Vea  
Allison Biastock  
Kat Roch  
Luke Lind  
Travis Welch  
Jimael Johnson  
Carrie Predeger

**Trust Land Office staff present:**

Jusdi Warner  
Jeff Green

**Also participating:** Patrick Reinhardt; Beverly Schoonover; Jon Haghayeghi; Heidi Lieb-Williams; Commissioner Kim Kovol; Dr. Anne Zink; Deputy Commissioner Emily Ricci; Commissioner Heidi Hedberg; Heather Carpenter, Brenda Moore; Mary David; Marsha Oss; Bobby Dorton; Mandy Cole; Lance Hanes; Thomas Norris; Don Habeger; Michele Girault; Barb Rath; Hannah Ashenfelter; Lee Breinig; Diane Fielden; Andrew Hinton; Lenise Henderson.

## PROCEEDINGS

### CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR HALTERMAN called the meeting to order and began with the roll call. She stated that there was a quorum and asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

*After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Boerner, yes; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Trustee Sturgeon, yes.)*

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated that the Trust Guiding Principles, Mission Statement and the Trust Projects' Flow Charts were in the packet. She asked for any ethics disclosures. There being none, she moved to the approval of the minutes from the November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, meeting.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**MOTION:** A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 16 and 17, 2022, Board meeting by TRUSTEE MORAN; seconded by TRUSTEE STURGEON.

*After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Boerner, yes; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Trustee Sturgeon, yes.)*

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated that the Trust's current bylaws were on page 33 of the packet for reference, and asked if there were any questions about the documents. There being none, she moved to the Mission Moment, and asked Mr. Welch to introduce the speaker.

### MISSION MOMENT

MR. WELCH welcomed all to Juneau. He continued that they would hear about one of the Beneficiary Project Initiatives which originated in 2004. The notion behind BPI is to help beneficiaries conceive and manage programs that focus on peer-to-peer support. He explained that the purpose of the focus area was to develop safe, effective services for beneficiaries using peer support, recovery-based models that provide supports and services to help them live their best lives in their communities. He continued that the Polaris House, located in Juneau, is one of the BPI-funded programs. It is a clubhouse community dedicated to recovery for mental illness. He introduced Hazel LeCount, the executive director of Polaris House, and her friend, Kathy Peterson.

MS. LECOUNT thanked all for the opportunity to be there, and for all of their support. She stated that they are an evidence-based clubhouse and are a part of Clubhouse International. They are one of over 350 clubhouses across the world -- 30 countries, and six continents. She explained that they help assist beneficiaries to receive a better education, obtain housing, set referrals for mental health assistance. There are three different employment programs for the members and beneficiaries. One is a transitional employment which was specifically for

someone getting back into the workforce for about 12 to 20 hours; does not interfere with the Social Security benefits; and provides an opportunity to build a resume and get back into the workforce. There is also supported employment which helps with communication with employers. They help with bus passes and transportation to better equip our members to get paid employment. She stated that, above all, Polaris House is a safe place to belong. Lunches are provided five days a week, and members come in to sit and eat lunch together as a family. We are open every holiday that is observed, and we provide a meal to be served at home. Polaris House provides a home setting, is open on weekends, and has social activities. We fish, camp and hike and do most things people enjoy, and we do it as a family. She asked Ms. Peterson to continue.

MS. PETERSON stated that she is a long-time Juneauite. She has been a member of Polaris House even before there was a physical place. She explained that they began in the library thinking about what was wanted and started off accepting grants. Polaris House began in one bedroom, one room, with a hot plate and gorilla bars. Today there are over 40 members that come in throughout the month. She continued that she utilizes the Polaris House as a safe spot for her day, beginning with a cup of coffee, coming back for lunch, and then debriefing in the afternoon. There are times when she is needed, and she volunteers for four or five hours, which keeps her part of the community. She is treated with respect and like a human. She gave a brief background of herself and her schizoaffective disorder, which caused her many years in and out of the hospital. Since being actively involved with Polaris House, there has been less hospitalization. She has a sense of purpose. She added that she is also the newsletter editor, and every month puts out what is happening at Polaris House. She also does a quarterly newsletter with the upcoming events. She talked about her upcoming trip to South Carolina for an International Clubhouse for two weeks to learn how other clubhouses work in the United States.

MR. WELCH thanked both and asked for any questions from the trustees.

TRUSTEE BOERNER stated appreciation for the presentation and thanked both presenters.

TRUSTEE MORAN thanked them and asked if the general population was fairly transient or stable.

MS. LECOUNT replied that they are year-round and have quarterly between 40 and 60 members, unduplicated, coming through the clubhouse. During the summer, the population is a little lower because people are out doing things. It seems like there is a different population in the winter than in the summer.

MR. WELCH asked about the International Clubhouse model and to share what it is about.

MS. LECOUNT replied that the clubhouse model helps members to live their best life with employment. Employment is the key to success. It is key to recovering from mental illness. They strive to see the members live their best lives. Everything in the clubhouse is done side by side with the members. They build on the talents and abilities they already have. That gives empowerment and confidence for them to move forward in their lives outside of the clubhouse. She added that Polaris House is accredited through Clubhouse International. Right now, they have a one-year conditional accreditation, and they need to work on some recommendations. Once that is all in place, then a three-year unconditional accreditation will be received.

CHAIR HALTERMAN asked if they only serve the mentally ill population.

MS. LECOUNT replied that the criteria for becoming a member is having been diagnosed with a mental illness one time in their life. They work with a broad spectrum of mental illnesses. She stated that she has been with Polaris House for nine years, and when she began, there was a lot of alcoholism. The population now deals with everything from depression to autism and many different diagnoses. Members are coming in with the need to work on their own recovery. Also provided is a weekly dual recovery meeting for those suffering from a chemical dependency and a mental illness. It is a small meeting, and it is consistent.

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated appreciation for the presentation.

MR. WELCH added that during the COVID pandemic, Polaris House went above and beyond. It was a champion and hero for Trust beneficiaries in Juneau. They prepared meals and delivered them to their members to keep that engagement.

MS. LECOUNT added that during the pandemic, staff came in and prepared Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner. There were over 120 meals prepared and delivered through the community to members and family members for Thanksgiving.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. LeCount and staff for being there for the community and for the presentation. She moved to the staff update.

#### **STAFF UPDATE**

CEO WILLIAMS began with an update on what was going on, some key things that affect the Trust Authority, as well as some of the issues that impact the beneficiaries. He introduced Janie Ferguson, the newest staffperson.

MS. FERGUSON stated that today is Say 6 at the Trust as a program officer. She is a lifelong Alaskan with roots in Western Alaska, and is an enrolled tribal member of the Native Village of Mekoryuk. There are tons of reindeer and muskox out there. She added that she is thrilled to start learning how to support beneficiaries and working with the Trust.

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated that they all look forward to working with her.

CEO WILLIAMS stated that he is happy to have Ms. Ferguson on board. He moved to the annual report and continued that it was broken down in several ways. There is everything from the partnership grants to the mini grants to the dental grants to all of the work that the grants do to support the work in the focus areas and initiatives. He added that it is an incredible resource for trustees and others to have that information at their fingertips. It is also a huge resource to demonstrate the work and the partnerships that the Trust had over the course of 2022. It was an incredible amount of work for the staff that work with the grantees identified in the investment report. This makes sure that the Trust funds carry out the mission and meets the needs of the beneficiaries. He stated that he was very proud of the annual reports and encouraged the trustees to look at it and to reach out to one of the program officers with any questions. He briefly reported on the lack of press releases related to trustee appointments from the Governor and the hope that the appointment was forthcoming. He moved to the update with the partners at the

Department of Health and the Department of Community and Family Services and the advocates and others that embark on the work required through the passage of HB 172. That is the bill that allows for services to be designated by the Department to provide involuntary and voluntary services related to Crisis Now and crisis stabilization. He continued that at the end of the bill is a section that outlines elements of a report that needs to be delivered to the Legislature by next fall. Trustees approved funding for a contract to be able to support the work, which has been awarded, and we are in the process of engaging and carrying out that work. He added that this included community participation in gathering information. He moved to the conversations that had been started with past partners related to Morningside Hospital and the Lost Alaskans Database. Some years ago, the Trust provided grant funding to Information Insights and possibly Access Alaska to develop a database to try and find the names of individuals that had been sent out of state in territorial days and early statehood days to Morningside and other institutions. That work had created a database that individuals were able to be cataloged and then created the ability for people to go in and look for the name of a friend or loved one to see where they may have been. He added that retired Judge Niesje Steinkruger, Ellen Ganley, Karen Perdue, and a few others, were trying to make sure, as they are in retirement, that the work of creating that database does not get lost. He stated that he would keep the trustees abreast of how the conversation unfolds going forward. He moved to a follow-up to a question asked at the Finance Committee about the number of permanent transfers of earnings to the principal for inflation-proofing. He replied that there were eight permanent transfers to principal spread over the years since the Trust's inception, for a total of \$151 million. He went through the three key elements that were used in a way to not only meet the needs of what is being done now, but also to protect the purchasing power of the Trust for the future and future beneficiaries. He moved to the governance -- the review of the bylaws, the review of the charters -- that were done with Katherine Woods, the contractor. He talked about the themes that were generated to make sure that the people on the teams can really look at and represent the beneficiaries.

CHAIR HALTERMAN moved to the Program & Planning report.

### **PROGRAM & PLANNING REPORT/UPDATE**

TRUSTEE BOERNER began with a quick summary of the meeting beginning with an update on the Crisis Now initiative, and then to the progress made on the Phase 2 planning grant for the crisis stabilization program. She stated that it was reviewed and recommended for approval to the Full Board. She continued that the committee also approved funding to support the project management contract needed to maintain organization and progress. There was also a wonderful presentation from Alberta Unok from the Alaska Native Health Board and April Kyle from Southcentral Foundation presenting on the overall Alaska Tribal Health System.

**MOTION:** A motion that the Board of Trustees approve the Program & Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the \$1,554,269 FY23 Mental Health and Addiction Intervention Focus Area Allocation to the Providence Health and Services Alaska, doing business as Providence Alaska Medical Center, for the Crisis Stabilization Center, Phase 2 ramp-up and launch -- the funds will come from the FY23 Crisis Continuum of Care bucket line -- was made by TRUSTEE BOERNER; seconded by TRUSTEE MORAN.

MS. BALDWIN-JOHNSON stated that online is Renee Rafferty, director of Behavioral Health for Providence. She continued that they are excited to be at the point where the Full Board had

the opportunity to consider the Program & Planning Committee recommendation for approval of Phase 2. She talked about the Phase 1 funding, which was a planning grant for Providence and team to do the due diligence necessary to understand what the crisis-stabilization, no-wrong-door model was, consistent with how RI International was operating in Arizona as well as in other states. She asked for any questions.

TRUSTEE BOYLES stated that it was very visionary of this group to come back and say to start training, because in Year 2 and 3 they would be ready to be used for what was really needed. She complimented the whole project and fully supported it.

TRUSTEE MORAN was impressed with the amount of leveraged funding, and she thought Providence did a phenomenal job of that.

CHAIR HALTERMAN called the roll-call vote.

*After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Boerner, yes; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Trustee Sturgeon, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)*

TRUSTEE BOERNER concluded her report.

#### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT/UPDATE**

CHAIR HALTERMAN moved to the Resource Management Committee report on the Sitka Tiny House approval, and recognized CEO Williams.

CEO WILLIAMS gave a brief report on how the Sitka Homeless Coalition came to request the parcel in Sitka to benefit their program and the services provided to individuals in Sitka who were houseless or homeless. He stated that the request was to be able to lease the land at a reduced, below-fair-market-value rate. The presentation was done at the Resource Management Committee meeting, and we had a great dialogue. The committee approved that motion unanimously. Upon approval from the RMC, the project was public-noticed for 30 days. He continued that some feedback was received, and that was put into the packet. He asked for any comments or questions from the trustees.

TRUSTEE BOYLES asked about the lease, renewable options, and more information.

MR. GREEN replied that if there were a crisis, the lease would be structured in a way that it would terminate, and all of the surface rights would go back to the Trust unencumbered. He added that the term is for 30 years.

TRUSTEE MORAN asked if there were sufficient funds to complete construction of the project and how they planned to make it a sustainable project.

MR. HINTON stated that he is the director of the Sitka Homeless Coalition. He talked about the funds which would be disbursed through a CS grant in the early summer. There is also an expected large funding source coming through which had been very successful with the fundraising efforts on a grassroots level. He added that there is a lot of support for the project. He continued that it is anticipated that vouchers will be utilized for the sustenance of the project.

CHAIR HALTERMAN asked that the motion be read into the record.

**MOTION:** A motion that the Board of Trustees approve the Resource Management Committee's recommendation to approve the annual rent of 1 percent of the appraised fair market value for a 30-year ground lease of USS 3695, Lot 3 in Sitka, Alaska, with the Sitka Homeless Coalition for the Hitx'1 Saani, Little House, project was made by TRUSTEE STURGEON; seconded by TRUSTEE FIMON.

TRUSTEE FIMON asked for clarification on the funding with some level of certainty.

MR. HINTON stated that, for the immediate future, the funding is secure, and we will have the funding secure to operate the project. The funds are in place to build the structures.

TRUSTEE FISHER asked to be reminded why the entire parcel, all the property, is being leased, and not just the portion that will be used.

MR. GREEN replied that the main reason for that was the timeline and the expense. In order to make the parcel only the size of the three acres that the project required, the parcel would need to be subdivided, which takes time to go through the platting process. It was not absolutely necessary. The lease would be structured in a way that if there is a community need and it was potentially financially and economically viable and beneficial for the Trust, there will be the ability to go back and subdivide at a later date.

TRUSTEE FIMON asked about liability as it pertained to the property.

MR. GREEN replied that the lease would have all of the standard liability language in it, and indemnification language, and the Sitka Homeless Coalition will have commercial general liability insurance and will be protected in that fashion. The Trust will be protected through all of the standard language, which is in ground leases. It is reviewed by the Department of Law and is sound.

TRUSTEE STURGEON asked about a Phase 2 environmental analysis to make sure there is no contamination on the site.

MR. GREEN replied that it is a clean parcel with no environmental concerns.

MS. WARNER explained that they start with an environmental site assessment for Phase 1 and do all the research on the history of the site and its previous uses.

TRUSTEE BOERNER stated concern for the future looking at towards the end of this lease, to have language included that the tenant would do any sort of remediation if there was any necessary.

MS. WARNER explained that it was the standard ground lease, and there is language that indemnifies the Trust and names us as an additional insured. The Trust owns the ground and is only leasing the ground. The Sitka Homeless Coalition owns the buildings, and they are entrusted to take care of them to a standard that the lease requires. There are stipulations to

uphold that.

CHAIR HALTERMAN called the question.

*After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Boerner, yes; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Trustee Moran, yes; Trustee Sturgeon, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)*

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked the coalition for bringing this project forward, and called a break.

(Break.)

CHAIR HALTERMAN called the meeting back to order and stated that next on the agenda was a discussion about the Trust meeting dates. She recognized CEO Williams.

CEO WILLIAMS went through the committee meeting dates currently scheduled for July in order to mitigate the summer activities and vacations. He went through the agendas and the FY25 budget and the trajectory from July to September 15<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the meetings could be moved to one week earlier without affecting the August board meetings. He added that the staff recommendation was to keep the dates as they were scheduled.

A discussion ensued.

TRUSTEE BOERNER stated, from a Program Committee perspective and the work that has to occur with the statutory advisory boards, that she definitely recommended keeping the dates as they are. She added that with everything that goes into developing the budgets, the Program & Planning Committee will be a full-time commitment for those meetings.

CHAIR HALTERMAN clarified that there is no action to take on this. She stated that the consensus was to keep the meetings as planned, and called a break.

(Break.)

CHAIR HALTERMAN turned the meeting over to CEO Williams to introduce the speakers.

CEO WILLIAMS stated that this was getting the Department of Health and the Department of Family & Community Services as advisors to the Trust together to have a dialogue. He introduced Commissioner Designee Hedberg and Commissioner Designee Kovol, and thanked them for being here and for making it a priority.

COMMISSIONER HEDBERG thanked the Trust for the invitation and stated that she would talk about the Healthy Families Initiative, which was the Governor's initiative, and then about the public assistance network. She also introduced Dr. Anne Zink, the chief medical officer, to talk about the work around the complex care and a few other things. She introduced Deputy Commissioner Emily Ricci, who oversees the Division of Behavioral Health, Seniors and Disability Services, and Health Care Services. She then introduced Heather Carpenter, the Health Policy Advisor, and then Commissioner Kovol to give her updates. She began with the



Healthy Families Initiative and stated that the Governor is very passionate about families. The initiative is divided into three pillars: healthy beginnings; improving access to care, which is behavioral health and health care; and the third is healthy communities. The fourth goal is extending postpartum care. It is a broad framework for all to come together and for the next four years to have a 50-year impact. She gave a brief background on herself and then talked about the solutions being worked on. The good news is that August and September were completely cleared for recertifications for SNAP; and they are making huge progress. She asked Dr. Anne Zink to talk about complex care.

DR. ZINK stated that she is the chief medical officer for the State of Alaska and highlighted a couple of things about Healthy Families. She talked about disease mitigation and the large increased rates being seen in syphilis, particularly for the long-term and tertiary syphilis cases that can lead to long-term mental health diagnoses, including some people that will need long-term care. She stated concern about this because providers have not seen syphilis during their careers, and congenital syphilis is starting to be seen. That is why there is funding available for that. She moved to the crisis system of care and thanked all for the support for the NUBE Conference. She talked about that experience and then touched on complex care, complex planning, and making sure the systems work for people instead of people working for systems.

MS. CARPENTER thanked the trustees who supported a large group of staff members from both the Department of Health and DFCS to travel to Arizona in December to have an immersion in what RI does and how they were 30 years ahead of us in implementing the Crisis Now model. It was a very beneficial trip. She thanked the trustees for their investment in the contractor to support the HB 172 report, which is really focused on patient rights and improving outcomes. The contractor is imperative to getting the work done. She added that there will be many updates as the year goes on with a lot of public comment which will provide a lot of benefits to the system as that care continues to improve. She passed it on to Emily Ricci.

COMMISSIONER RICCI stated that she is also new to the department. She echoed the thanks to the board and the Trust. She continued that she participated in the conference in Arizona and found it to be incredibly enlightening and informative. She stated that one of the divisions she oversees is the Division of Behavioral Health, and some of the focus has been on the 1115 waiver. She went through some of the updates on that and wanted to be sure that the behavioral providers have the financial support needed to ensure that continuum of care was functioning. They were also in the process of renewing the 1115 waiver.

COMMISSIONER KOVOL also echoed the thanks to the board and staff for the continued support to the departments. She emphasized complex care as a focus out of Family & Community Services, which has had amazing talks and collaboration. They also continue focusing on software needs and want to improve those services for internal and external customers and clients. She talked about the large focus of recruitment and retention, which will need more training, more one-on-ones, which is really important. She continued that the Governor recognized Nurse Rebecca from API, who is one of the RN educators, legacy staff and a fabulous person. One of the things she said was that she was encouraged by how we are looking at the guiding principles, and the mantra of Service First.

TRUSTEE BOYLES stated that if change is wanted that professional, good people need to be hired, and she was so happy to see five women sitting there. What a contribution they are

making to the state. She wants to only talk about Crisis Now and was happy that the Governor sees the vision and the big picture, because everything that is being done will solve many of the problems that politicians deal with, as well as families. She thanked them for what they do.

TRUSTEE MORAN thanked them for coming, and stated that one of the issues that is dealt with a lot is the mental health within schools. There has been some positive movement on that, and she asked if they were seeing the same thing.

COMMISSIONER KOVOL replied that they were seeing an incredible amount of coordination between the complex care unit regarding to the collaboration with the school districts, which has gotten better. But an increase is also noticed.

DR. ZINK stated that there is an increase in adolescents and elderly presenting to the emergency department during the pandemic with acute psychiatric needs: suicide and depression. The early data from last year is starting to show an increase in suicidality across numerous age groups. There were also an increased number of students being presented to emergency departments for acute psychiatric services from schools.

MS. CARPENTER added that contractors have given recommendations, as well as other outside agencies, to increase Medicaid billable services in schools. She highlighted the work being done in the Anchorage and Mat-Su areas on leveraging that Medicaid billing.

CHAIR HALTERMAN recognized Trustee Boerner.

TRUSTEE BOERNER thanked Commissioner Hedberg and stated that it made her happy to call her “Commissioner.” She also thanked her predecessor and was glad that Commissioner Crum is still closely tied to the Trust in another capacity. She acknowledged and thanked her for stepping up and for her long partnership with both the beneficiaries and for Alaskans as a whole. She was glad that she had the opportunity to travel to Arizona. She is also a huge fan of the Crisis Now model and was happy to see it moving forward. She welcomed and thanked Deputy Commissioner Ricci and also thanked Acting Commissioner Kovol for stepping up and dedicating their talents to benefit Alaskans and the Trust beneficiaries. She also recognized Dr. Zink, and wished that she could have been there in person, but she just started Term 3 of the second year of her program, and she missed them all. She talked about the points brought up about the complex care and the three pillars. She asked how the first pillar related in the individual level of care and the involvement with state and communities. She asked that they share a bit about what it would mean for Rural Alaska.

DR. ZINK stated that, of the three pillars, the first was the most challenging because of what is needed, who needs to be at the table, and how that works differently depending on what requirements there are. She noted the need to make sure to be able to share HIPAA-compliant data between the departments, and that is key to being able to work together. She explained in more detail, and noted that the vision now is a rundown of the critical cases. There has been a series of kids in the rural hubs stuck for a long period of time needing care. She added that it is getting the right people to the table to figure out the system to make it work as well in the rural areas and the urban areas.

CHAIR HALTERMAN asked the panel to respond to Trustee Boyles’ question about how the

Trust could help. She stressed her appreciation for each of them, and the leadership roles they stepped into.

MS. CARPENTER stated that it was a great question and talked about two areas to put on the radar. They had conversations with providers on how to increase Title 47 beds, specifically for youth. Right now, there are only ten beds at the Alaska Psychiatric Institute. There were conversations specifically with Fairbanks, with Family Centered Services of Alaska, which has a facility that is almost tailor-made for this work, which could be something that the Trust could look at. That area, in particular, increasing the youth beds, is ripe for trustee consideration. Additionally, at the Improving Lives Conference, there was a complex-care panel that brought up the need for the Department of Health to look at a couple of things; one of those was acuity-based rates. That may be an area to advocate for when looking at the Medicaid budget and having conversations with the Legislature. She continued that a harder conversation would be looking at what an Alaska solution would look like for an immediate-care facility. There is a proud history of moving away from institutions. So much so that when an Alaskan has really complex care there is nowhere to serve them in Alaska. She added that there is still the statute on the books that would allow licensing an intermediate-care facility. She explained this is more detail.

DR. ZINK stated appreciation for the question, and noted that the funding request in the Governor's budget only happens if it is funded. There is a reliance on technology that is only noticed if it is not there. The systems in state government are overburdened, overtaxed and way out of date. The healthcare cannot get into peoples' hands without some serious investment in the information and technology. That is being worked on for an improved relationship for both physical and mental health. The hope is to then build on top of that for AKAIMS and other key data systems to get improved systems for the direct providers to really minimize the burden on them. She added that on Friday in Anchorage there will be a public health conference and the HIE board will be holding an IT-specific day to bring providers, stakeholders, IT vendors all in the same room to talk.

COMMISSIONER HEDBERG commented on the great updates and added that the partnership between the Departments and Mental Health Trust is key, and the ongoing communication is really important.

COMMISSIONER KOVOL stated appreciation for Ms. Carpenter bringing up some of those key issues from the DFCS. The ten youth beds at API are full, and they have been full. In 2019, there were 19 beds, and today there are 72 and all are full. The waitlist on Title 47 is 23 and it continues being an issue. Dementia-related diseases are top priorities, and we are seeing more elders coming in at further stages, Level 4 and Level 5. That means a need for more trained folks, reduced census, one-on-one issues. Staff is needed. She stated her appreciation for the collaboration and the conversations.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked them for all of the helpful answers, and moved to the lunch break.

(Lunch break.)

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated that it was the time on the agenda set aside for public comment,

and recognized Marsha Oss from Fairbanks Reentry.

MS. OSS (Speaking Native language) stated that her Christian name is Marsha Jean Thomason Oss and she has lived off and on in Alaska since 1980. She currently works at Fairbanks City Hall. She continued that she was representing herself as an individual with lived experience in many areas, a former reentry case manager, and as the coordinator of the Fairbanks Reentry Coalition. She was born in Idaho to a multi-racial family with untreated mental illness, SUD issues, domestic violence and sexual abuse. She was in juvenile detention, foster care, and girls' homes. At 15, she was sold into human trafficking in California, Nevada, and Alaska. In 1988, she went for treatment for intravenous methamphetamine drug use and learned that her story could avert misery and death for other people going through what she had gone through, and she let go of all of the shame that came with her past. She started carrying 12-step meetings into prisons. At a year sober, she went to work at a juvenile detention facility; at five years' sober, she began college through Voc Rehab; at 14 years sober, she became a correctional officer. When she took the oath of office it was related to being a good community member and a good citizen, and she realized that she could give back. At 16 years sober, she started her career as a substance-use professional. Today is 35 years later. She stated that she had help from multiple community services to shift her self-perception on her recovery journey. She is a substance-use counselor and a certified traditional peer-support specialist. She asked for Trust participation in shifting perceptions, creating miracles, and the continuing support of programs that include reentry in REACH, peer support, and one-step agency services to get the message of hope and recovery to justice-involved individuals, and create safer communities across Alaska.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Oss and recognized Bobby Dorton.

MR. DORTON stated that he is originally from Northway, and is now living in Fairbanks. He thanked each and every one of the trustees. He explained that five years ago he was released after doing eight years of incarceration, and he had nothing. The Trust provided, through mini-grants, the things he needed to succeed. He worked as a substance-abuse counselor and got his certificate through RADAC and worked at Ralph Perdue Center for four years. This year the Tanana Chiefs Conference hired him as one of their leadership team members, and he is now developing programs and implementing them at Tanana Chiefs Conference. He was able to get through ICWA with a legal team. He added that it is very important for him to show the emotions in his face to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority who helped him when no one else would. That is very important to him. He stated that he is also part of the ABADA and the Alaska Mental Health Board and recently was named commissioner for peer support through ACBHC, a certification board for Alaska. He is an advocate for peer support and developed a program around rural peer support called Traditional Peer Support. He continued that the program he is designing for Tanana Chiefs Conference is a reentry program for Rural Alaska. He thanked the Trust for saving his life.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Dorton and recognized Mandy Cole.

MS. COLE stated that she is the executive of AWARE in Juneau. AWARE was incorporated in 1978 and began offering services for domestic and sexual violence individuals, including shelter and advocacy within the legal system. Today, AWARE serves nine Southeast Alaskan communities; provides emergency shelter and transitional housing for people of all genders; facilitates programming for men who use abusive tactics; and hosts a community antiviolence

prevention program that has been recognized around the state. She continued that the work of AWARE was varied and often comes down to the goal of stronger, safer relationships in the community. She added that, for over 12 years, AWARE had included housing provisions in its strategic planning. She talked about the lack of affordable housing, and that AWARE is currently building a housing project on Cordova Street which the Trust was helping with. She stated that she was there to say that the issue of housing and domestic violence and sexual violence had deeper implications than many folks realize. Several years ago, Juneau instituted a no-camping ordinance Downtown to prevent people from sleeping in doorways. The testimony from the people living on the streets was compelling. One woman talked about the security she felt sleeping in a doorway rather than the open because she only had to protect one side of her body from assault. AWARE stated that housing for survivors is within their mission, and she hoped that the Trust would continue expanding its investment in survivor programs that prioritize housing. She thanked the Trust for supporting their projects, and for the chance to speak.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Cole and recognized Lance Hanes.

MR. HANES stated that he was a 2014 graduate of Alaska Therapeutic Courts; and was also on the board of directors for the Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni. He thanked the Trust for their support of therapeutic courts and his alumni. He continued that, after 25 years of continuous drug and alcohol abuse and incarceration, he was offered therapeutic courts in 2013 on his last DUI. Looking at an 18-month long program was intimidating, and his alumni helped him to navigate through that process and helped him to continue in the program and stay calm through those processes. He stated that, through the therapeutic court, he found accountability and has maintained over nine years of continuous sobriety. He now supports the recovery services in Anchorage and in Mat-Su, and is a nationally certified counselor. He also is a program supervisor for an Anchorage residential treatments facility. Those ties help him to navigate people through the therapeutic court systems. He asked that the Trust maintains that support, and thanked the trustees.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Hanes and recognized Thomas Norris.

MR. NORRIS stated he has been an Alaskan resident for almost 33 years. He has traveled and worked all over the state. He continued that he was representing himself as a recovering addict who had been struggling with schizophrenia-like mental health issues for almost 13 years. He talked about his struggles in school and starting oxycontin his first semester attending UAA. That was when his addiction began, and he dropped out of college that first semester. He attended a treatment facility in Anchorage last year for about two months, and he walked away from there. He fled the state and witnessed a lot of drug use down South in the streets. He ended up homeless and addicted to fentanyl. He came back here and turned himself in, and is enrolled in a different treatment facility in Juneau. He added that he had been sober for six months thanks to the structure, the case manager, good counselors and the opportunity. He asked if there could be a state-operated recreational sober center open to help unite recovering addicts, former inmates, sober supports, peer supports, and advocates of sobriety to give information on resources.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Norris and stated she had no one else in the room that was identified for public comment. She turned to the folks online for anyone that was interested in

giving public comment.

MS. GIRAULT stated that she is the executive director of Hope Community Resources, a nonprofit provider of disability mental health supports based in Anchorage, but provided statewide services. She was there to amplify some of the report that will be given by Patrick Reinhart and Kim Champney, talking about the distress of the provider community across the state providing disability services. She continued that Hope has been in business for over 53 years, and if nothing changes in the rates of reimbursement there is a glide path of three to five years. Hope serves hundreds of people across the state of Alaska, and the community system is a safety net for those with disabilities and mental health needs. She encouraged the trustees to continue supporting initiatives that bolster the infrastructure of community providers. The initiatives for workforce development are critical because of the lack of workforce. She stated that her testimony was to amplify some of the detail that Patrick and Kim would be sharing, to express gratitude for your support, to continue those, and to alert you that the provider system needs infrastructure investment in order to sustain them into the future.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Girault and asked for anyone else online that wished to give testimony.

MS. CHILDRESS stated that she has been a resident of Juneau for about 13 years. She moved from Oregon and was happy to raise two of her children in this beautiful town. She continued that she was there to advocate and support families and parents that are supporting children with mental health and cognitive or behavioral diagnoses that affect families as a whole. She talked about her child that was six or seven years old when the diagnosis was autism, ADHD, behavior, oppositional defiance. In the second grade she was told to put him in an institution. She discovered the Medicaid waiver DD system and was able to navigate that very difficult process, and she thought this would get a support staff. That did not happen, and she explained all the situations where the staff put the child at risk for harming themselves and left. There is no one available that can take that pay rate, take that training, and do the job. She advocated for better compensation for the providers, for training opportunities and resources to be made available so that these kids do not end up in institutions.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Childress and recognized the next online speaker.

MS. RATH thanked the Alaska Mental Health Trust for the time invested in coming to Crisis Safety. She stated that she was Barbara Rath, the executive director for the Arc of Anchorage, a 65-year-old nonprofit agency supporting individuals who experience developmental disabilities and/or mental, behavioral health challenges, residing in the land of the Dena'ina people. She recalled why the Trust was founded: So that beneficiaries would be supported through advocacy, mindful planning, funding, and implementation of programs with purposeful services. She was there to advocate for her agency, and also for each beneficiary in the Alaska community. Along with the various COVID challenges faced, the DD industry had not received a rate rebase since 2011, and we cannot pay a meaningful wage in today's climate, in addition to a workforce shortage. This agency is one of two that support individuals with complex medical needs 24/7, and I am certain that if things do not change, services will not be sustained because the current rates do not cover around-the-clock services and expenses. She went through three costly examples and stated that the Arc of Anchorage, the second largest DD provider, has about three to four years before it can no longer make payroll. They are currently drawing on their

reserves, and we will have to consider drastic measures. She asked the Trust to continue looking out for the beneficiaries and providers with ongoing advocacy funding and service programs. She thanked them for their time and support.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Rath, and asked for anyone else online that would like to give testimony.

MS. ASHENFELTER stated that she was Hannah Ashenfelter, the director of operations at REACH, Inc., here in Juneau, Alaska. Her background with disabilities comes from birth, living with her brother who has a severe autism disability. She continued that she always felt that she needed to advocate for those who could not voice their services or needs. She started her work at about 11 years old, and has been advocating ever since. She explained that REACH is a nonprofit organization that works with individuals who have developmental or physical disabilities in Juneau, Petersburg, Ketchikan, Sitka, and Haines for the last 45 years. They work every day to help individuals with disabilities work jobs, live their day-to-day lives, and provide to those residing in their group homes. She talked about the huge staffing shortage and struggling with the reimbursement rates from the State that failed to match the rising costs in the economy. She added that they continue to support families and try to help ease the burden. She thanked the Trust for their help and support.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Ashenfelter, and asked for anyone else online to testify. There being no one, she called on Don Habeger in the room.

MR. HABEGER stated that he is the community coalition coordinator for the Juneau Reentry Coalition. He had been a coalition coordinator since 2016 and invited all to the Juneau Reentry Coalition simulation tomorrow from 4:00 to 6:00, at the JAC. Second, he talked about recidivism reduction, and that would drop below 60 this year. He added that it was work but the Trust is making a difference, and it ought to continue investing in reentry.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Habeger and made one more call to ensure that everyone that wanted to speak had an opportunity. She asked the person that raised their hand to come forward.

MR. BREINIG stated that he was Lee Breinig and is a Trust beneficiary. He thanked the Trust for all the work they do on behalf of the beneficiary population. He continued that there was a particularly unmet need regarding the fentanyl crisis, and anything that can be done to address that in terms of the larger scope of what is going on within Rural Alaska is incredibly important. He added that for people to find recovery, they have to actually live long enough in order to do that. He thanked the trustees for their time.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Breinig for his testimony. She stated that if anyone wished to give public comment and did not have the opportunity to be heard, written comments are always welcome and may be submitted to the trustees at any time. It can be done via e-mail at [public.comment@mhtrust.org](mailto:public.comment@mhtrust.org); by fax at 907-269-7966; or mail them to 3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200, Anchorage, Alaska 99508. She closed the public comment period and moved to the statutory adviser updates, and welcomed Steve Williams to make introductions.

## **STATUTORY ADVISOR UPDATE**

MR. WILLIAMS stated that in the room were Patrick Reinhart with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and Jon Haghayeghi with the Alaska Commission on Aging. He continued that on the phone was Bev Schoonover, executive director for the Alaska Mental Health Board, the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and the Suicide Prevention Council. He acknowledged two board members of the advisory boards in the room: Lee Breinig, who just provided that poignant public testimony, and Diane Fieldon who has a seat on each of those three boards. He thanked them for joining us.

MS. SCHOONOVER stated that it is always a pleasure to talk to the trustees on behalf of AMHB/ABADA. The advisory boards are charged with planning and coordinating the behavioral services funded by the State of Alaska. The joint mission of the boards is to advocate for programs and services that promote healthy, independent, productive Alaskans. She was glad that Lee Breinig and Diane Fieldon were there to represent the boards in person. Charlene Tautfest, the Alaska Mental Health Board chair, was unable to attend the meeting. Brenda Moore, the vice chair of the Alaska Mental Health Board, was online. She took a moment to state appreciation for the public comment heard and was amazed that people were willing to come and share their personal stories. She began with their achievements and stated that one of the biggest achievements was the amount of community partners engaged in their work, and she talked about what they do to meet their statutory duties. She also recognized all the community partners that take time out of their day to come meet with the boards and allow us to come to their site facilities. She then highlighted some of the big work from last year. She went through her presentation, pointing out the different achievements, especially the amount of community partners engaged in their work that meet their statutory duties. She pointed out the support of the Governor's Advisory Council on Opioid Remediation and added that Chair Halterman was the chair of that group. Board members participated in those meetings, and it was a great activity. She continued through her presentation and the recognition of the activities and achievements. She stated that the next board meeting will be in Juneau this spring, and we will be solidifying those dates soon. The joint advocacy teleconferences begin Friday, January 27, at 12:15 p.m. She announced that Stephanie Hopkins, a Health and Social Services planner with the board for two years, was recently promoted to that joint advocacy coordinator position. She will be an excellent resource moving forward with the Alaska Legislature. She stated that the Five-Year Suicide Prevention Plan was out for public comment. Comments will be taken formally until the end of the week, but we can take comments until the end of the month. She thanked board members for calling in and for the staff that work for AMHB/ABADA and all of their work. She concluded her presentation.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Schoonover and asked the trustees for any questions.

TRUSTEE BOERNER took the opportunity to thank Ms. Schoonover for her many years of work and the partnership. She stated that Ms. Schoonover had been there before she started as a trustee, and since her tenure has always had great presentations.

TRUSTEE MORAN thanked Ms. Schoonover for her presentation. She stated that a board member brought up an X waiver and asked for a brief description of what that was.

MS. SCHOONOVER encouraged her to talk to Lee about this because he was the expert. She believed that it was about medication-assisted treatment and access for providers to provide more



medication-assisted treatment. She continued that she knew a little about it, but not enough to speak on it as an expert. She suggested talking with Lee for additional information after.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Schoonover for her service in this role and added that it had been very educational sitting in on those advocacy calls. It is a very informative process. She stated appreciation for her time and tenure. She asked for any other questions. There being none, she moved to the Alaska Commission on Aging.

#### **ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING**

MR. HAGHAYEGHI stated that the handouts would be slightly different than what will be seen on the board. The Senior Snapshot has been published, and the advisory advocacy day meeting set the advocacy priorities for the year and will be in the presentation. He stated that their mission was to ensure that the seniors can age with dignity and independence, and that motivates the activities, which are motivated by the statute, including advocating for older Alaskans, providing advice to the Governor, Legislature, and the congressional delegation, as well as the Trust. We provide recommendations to the Mental Health Trust on programs and services to improve the lives of senior beneficiaries of the Trust. He moved to the continuum of care, which is a great illustration of the services that are essential to keeping seniors independent. He continued his presentation and touched on some updates, went over some statistics from the Senior Snapshot, discussed the State Plan, went through some of the data, talked about the process, looked at that data, and then talked about the advocacy priorities.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Haghayeghi.

TRUSTEE FISHER asked in regard to the growth of seniors if there was any data of how many of them spend 12 months in Alaska versus nine months versus six months.

MR. HAGHAYEGHI replied that he did not know the answer to that and would have to look further into the data.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Trustee Fisher for the great question and recognized Trustee Boyles.

TRUSTEE BOYLES talked about her husband who had diffuse Lewy body disease that could not be diagnosed in the state of Alaska, and we had to go Outside. She asked if the State has the skill to take care of that very horrible disease.

MR. HAGHAYEGHI replied that, personally, he did not believe that the State did. The need for this will only increase and it was highlighted in one of the sub-bullets of the last slide that we are underserved. People do not know where to go, and it is a problem.

A brief discussion ensued.

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated appreciation for the presentation and looked forward to additional information about those populations and improvements to programs.

TRUSTEE BOERNER shared her general appreciation and thanked Mr. Haghayeghi for a good presentation and for the work he did.

CHAIR HALTERMAN recognized Patrick Reinhart from the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

**GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

MR. REINHART stated that he is the director of the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education. He stated that he would be turning most of his time to his colleague, Kim Champney, the executive director of the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities. He had come to realize that the system is in crisis because of the workforce issues and some of the other issues being faced. He continued with the shared vision from several years ago: Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, towards a meaningful life in their home, their job, and their community. The vision includes support of families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future. He added, that is what is wanted, but we are moving further away from it every day. He turned it over to Kim Champney.

MS. CHAMPNEY began by reminding all of the people that called in at the public comment. The thing that struck her was that there was no mention of the developmental disability crisis. She talked about a provider organization in Anchorage that closed its doors this fall; and it was not a small one. It was a medium-sized one; 100 people with no services. Arc and Hope, the most well established in the state, are on a glide path where their board of directors are talking about what happens when. She added that she has been in this field over 25 years and has never had these kinds of conversations. She noted that she gave some of that context because it was an opportunity to elevate the use of the term “crisis.” She shared a story of a 10-year-old child with a rough start: A lot of abuse; was removed from his biological family; and was adopted. He was autistic; had a genetic disorder; and had a feeding tube because of his medical issues. The original adoptive family gave him up because he got harder to care for as he got older. The second adoptive family had a couple of children with disabilities and knew what they were getting into. The older children had waiver services and some supports, which soon dried up because of the worker shortages and COVID. There were no services for the older children. The second adopted family gave him up because he was on the waitlist and could not access services. They dropped him off at the hospital, and he is in the foster care system and has a waiver. He is still working through eligibility and the level-of-care process; so, no services. The worker shortage is only part of it. The systems are really broken. She added that the home- and community-based waiver system is not working right now, and we are not even at that point of being inundated with older Alaskans with dementia that need care. She continued through her presentation, pointing out the deterioration of economic and social well-being and the breakdown of the community-based system; and then the barriers to transitioning out. She added that there was no mechanism to support complex care, and she appreciates that that is on Dr. Zink’s radar. She stated that the DD system is in a downward spiral.

MR. REINHART stated that what was learned directly from the Department of Labor is there is a huge net migration of potential workers. Alaska is one of the few states that has a significant net migration of potential workers.

MS. CHAMPNEY continued that the Department of Justice report that came out in December and talked about children with behavioral health needs. She has noticed that children with developmental disabilities are not specifically identified very readily in this system.

MR. REINHART emphasized that they were talking in terms of home- and community-based services in terms of the total health care spend being small. He added that just a shift in the way services are provided would be very meaningful.

MS. CHAMPNEY stated that the hope was that the Department takes into consideration public comment, and that the rates could shift in a more positive direction. She continued that a couple of the proposed rates were going to be reduced instead of increased. The second need is to redesign the home- and community-based system, which is how those rates should be determined.

MR. REINHART added the fear of sliding back towards institutional care, and five years ago we would have said, “Over my dead body.” He stated that it may be part of the solution. He concluded his presentation.

MS. CHAMPNEY thanked all for their support, which is much appreciated and important.

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated appreciation for the presentation, and added that it was a lot of daunting information. She added that she thought that there is a lot that could be done. She also stated appreciation for the work they both do.

TRUSTEE MORAN hopes for an answer to her earlier question to Mr. Breinig.

TRUSTEE BOYLES asked if the three presentations and the directors and chairmen of the boards all sat down and prioritized to come up with a common thread that would help in all three of these areas to help keep a forward movement.

MR. REINHART replied that he thought it would. He stated that there were all kinds of potentials that cross all of the beneficiary groups in respect to the systems. The hardest part is finding people.

MR. HAGHAYEGHI stated that there are huge overlaps in the ability to come up with solutions that allow more flexibility.

TRUSTEE BOYLES stated something had to be done, and it could be done one bite at a time. She asked what she could do to help.

TRUSTEE FIMON wondered if the problem could really be focused on, because it continues to evolve. He stated appreciation for all the inputs.

MS. SCHOONOVER reminded all that they were in the process of working with Alison Biastock to come up with the joint advocacy priorities: the three boards, workforce, behavioral health services, community-based services. There is employment and a slot for the need to work together when those resources were done. She hopes that the legislators are being talked to because they break down the issues and the reasons for the concerns about those joint advocacy priorities.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Schoonover and asked Mr. Breinig to answer the question

for the trustees.

MR. BREINIG talked about the X waiver. He stated that there were basically two approaches in the medical model of addressing the context of opioids; going down the chronic pain path, or going down the opioid-use-disorder path. He continued that it was illegal for a physician to prescribe opioids to an individual outside of the scope of chronic pain. The Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000 changed some of that for allowing physicians to put people on Schedule 3 narcotics or below for the purposes of withdrawal management or maintenance and medication-assisted treatment capacity. They have to apply for a DEA X waiver. There was talk that the problem with that was that it was unregulated and maybe should go back to allowing particularly the prescribing of methadone, to super constrict federal and commissioning guidelines for prescribing methadone within a clinic setting to an outpatient setting.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Lee for the clarification.

TRUSTEE MORAN also thanked him.

CHAIR HALTERMAN asked Eric Boyer to talk about the site visit.

MR. BOYER noted that several years ago the Trust approved a funding increment for capital support with multiple other organizations to fund this crisis stabilization center. Trust support and funding got this project going and on the ground.

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated they would recess and convene at the back doors.

MR. WILLIAMS reminded everyone that tomorrow they were to be first up on Senate Finance at 9:00 am at the Capitol.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Williams and recessed the meeting.

(Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Full Board meeting recessed at 2:20 p.m.)