

**ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY
PROGRAM & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 21, 2026
Hybrid/Zoom Videoconference
8:30 a.m.**

**Originating at:
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200
Anchorage, Alaska 99508**

Trustees Present:

Agnes Moran, Chair
Kevin Fimon
Corri Feige
Brent Fisher, Ex-officio

Other Trustees Present:

Anita Halterman
Josie Hickel

Trust Staff Present:

Mary Wilson
Allison Biastock
Katie Baldwin-Johnson
Shannon Cochran
Valette Keller
Julee Farley
Luke Lind
Carrie Predeger
Michael Baldwin
Eric Boyer
Kat Roch
Kelda Barstad
Tina Voelker-Ross
Eliza Muse
Debbie DeLong
Heather Phelps
Samantha Potts

Also participating:

Patrick Reinhart; Carmen Wenger; Daniel Hartman; Katie Jacques; Joan O'Keefe; Kim Champney; Shannon Baird; Hayley Norris; Tiffany; Marty Lange; Mara L. Petersburg; Michelle Snowden; Ann Ringstad; Sue Perlis; Kenneth Schneider; Laura Reijns; Rachel Olson; Jason Hahn; Tamara Ben-Yosef; Tiffany Hall; Shannon Baid; Joan O'Keefe.

PROCEEDINGS

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR MORAN called the meeting to order and began with a roll call. She stated there was a quorum and moved to the announcements. There being none, she moved to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: A motion to approve the agenda was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE FIMON.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

ETHICS DISCLOSURE

CHAIR MORAN asked for any ethics disclosures. There being none, she moved to the minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: A motion to approve the minutes of October 15, 2025, was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE FIMON.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

CEO UPDATE

CHAIR MORAN moved to the CEO update, and recognized Mary Wilson.

CEO WILSON stated that the strategic plan was approved, and that it was being operationalized. It coordinates the work in the strategy a bit differently to try to operationalize that over the next few months, working with consultants to make sure that the activities are being done for them to have the most impact in the new strategy. She continued that the Legislature opened and she and Ms. Biastock were meeting with legislators to explain and talk about how to understand the new strategic goals and their impact. She went through her update and talked about the Rural Health Transformation. Three of the staff attended, and they are organizing three or four main functions led by the Health Department. She stated that they were going to Kodiak in the spring for the spring Board meeting. The team is trying to revisit Kotzebue for April and will be visiting the Maniilaq Clinic. It will be a great trip.

CHAIR MORAN asked for any questions. There being none, she moved to the Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIR MORAN asked for any items on the consent agenda that folks would like to pull out.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked for a bit more background on Item No. 3, Project Grad Kenai Peninsula, Rural School Counselor Program, and No. 4, Choosing Our Roots.

CHAIR MORAN asked to pull out No. 1, Alaska Jewish Campus, “all-inclusive early childhood indoor play center.”

TRUSTEE FEIGE also asked for No. 7, REACH 907.

TRUSTEE FIMON stated that they identified four that they would like to do separately. The way to do the requested motion is to leave those four out of the original motion.

CHAIR MORAN asked to move forward with a motion.

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the following Authority Grants as outlined below, to include:
Alzheimer’s Resource of Alaska, “Living Better with Dementia,” for \$135,085;
Palmer Senior Citizens,’ Inc., “MSSS ADS Transportation,” \$50,000;
Hope Community Resources, “Exterior Siding Replacement for Assisted Living Home in Kenai,” \$50,000;
Sitka Homeless Coalition, “Sitka Emergency Winter Shelter,” \$40,710;
Cook Inlet Native Head Start, “Expanding Mental Health Counseling for Students and Families,” \$25,000;
BFIT & Well Annex, “Expanding Access to Brain and Body Health For Alaskans: Scholarships and Training for Evidence-Based Programs,” \$24,750;
Carry the Cure Inc., “Commit to Life Mat-Su,” \$20,000.
The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FIEGE.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Fiege, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

CHAIR MORAN began with the Alaska Jewish Campus.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN suggested moving forward with a new motion and a discussion on the ones with questions.

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$150,000 Authority Grant to the Alaska Jewish Campus for the Alaska Friendship Circle “all-inclusive early childhood indoor play center” grant. These funds will come from the Partnership/Designated Grants line of the Fiscal Year ’26 budget.
The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

CHAIR MORAN stated that she had questions on the timeline for this. She was a bit concerned that the fundraising had not been complete, with no schedule for implementation. She added that she was not opposed to the grant, but the timing concerned her.

DR. VOELKER-ROSS introduced Sue Perlis, the fundraising person.

MS. PERLIS stated that she was helping the Alaska Jewish Campus with this effort and appreciated the opportunity to be here and to answer any and all questions. She continued that, since this grant was submitted, they received a \$350,000 grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, plus several other family foundation grants that have been generous and are committed to this project. She added that they are committed to fully funding this project. She stated that the optimistic timeline was to have all the funding in hand or committed over the winter months so construction can begin in the spring, with construction completed in the course of the summer.

She explained that this is a two-phase project. Phase 1, the outdoor play center, which is fully funded and in place, was done on a similar timeline 12 months ago. She encouraged all to come by and visit. The outdoor play center will have an official opening in the spring as the snow melts. She stated that the harshness of this past winter really emphasized the need to have an indoor component where parents and caregivers can go. There will be an event room which will be great for family birthday parties and also volunteer gatherings and event meetings. There will be a small kitchen and some wonderful play facilities for children, even on days that are 20 below.

CHAIR MORAN stated that was her concern, and asked if the plan was to break ground in the spring of 2026.

MS. PERLIS replied yes.

TRUSTEE FIMON stated that it is an incredible project and presentation. He continued that there are many moving parts, and they are already further with the grants than the presentation shows. He asked if the \$150,000 was not there, would the project continue.

MS. PERLIS replied that it absolutely would. However, that funding would be put to very good use and we are happy to have the financial involvement, but also the expertise that staff brought to this project.

CHAIR MORAN asked for any other questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$134,100 Authority Grant to Project Grad Kenai Peninsula for their rural school counselor program. These funds will come from the Partnerships/Designated Grants line of the Fiscal Year '26 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

TRUSTEE FEIGE stated that, in reviewing this, she was unclear on the number of students actually impacted in the four selected communities. She was also thinking about the metrics for success and how that would be tracked. She also asked if this would be something that could be emulated in other places in the state if it is successful.

MS. PONTS invited Kenneth Schneider to speak about their data platform. They use HourGlass and do provide services in schools now.

MR. SCHNEIDER stated that he is the deputy director at Project Grad. As far as the students served, it will be the entire student population of all four of the schools which this year stands at 206. He continued that they use HourGlass software for the data collection which was used for the large Alaska Native education grants which was built for them. It is a way to track all of the different services in the schools whether academic coaching, a field trip, conferences, or counseling services.

TRUSTEE FEIGE stated that her question is more focused on how to know if those students are being impacted positively and how the improvement is tracked especially as it relates to mental health connectedness, community integration, and things like that.

MR. SCHNEIDER replied that they administer some surveys at the beginning of the year and then at the end of the year, which track the project. He stated that there are specific targets written in the grant, and he went through most of their success indicators.

TRUSTEE FEIGE noted that that was the meat of what she was looking for.

MS. PONTS mentioned that they also included the memorandum of agreement with the school district that they have in place.

CHAIR MORAN stated concern about the duration of one year for this grant with no secure follow-on funding. She asked about a sustainability plan.

MR. SCHNEIDER replied that they have some different things in the works right now. He stated that they have an NYCP project, communities project, and are moving forward with the school district that would include another five years of counseling services. It is a grant proposal. He continued that they are talking with the tribes they work with to see if there are ways to integrate a service more closely with them. The goal is to add on to the services rather than to ask things of the tribes. Another important part of the Source of Strength curriculum is that it works to focus on a peer educator, so not just adults helping other students to identify those protective factors.

TRUSTEE HICKEL stated that she is a shareholder of the Chugach Alaska Regional Corporation program in Nanwalek. The very remote small communities are not accessed by the road system in Alaska, and she spoke on behalf of the importance of providing these types of services to the students in those small rural communities. It is a huge need. She also mentioned that Chugachmiut provides the health services in those communities. This is not consistent because health workers fly in on occasion, and having more support more frequently will be very helpful to the community.

TRUSTEE FISHER stated that, if this was approved, he would like a bit more information. He would like to understand what the curriculum is that will be taught with regard to mental health. He would also like to understand what the policies would be with regard to parent interaction when staff are surveying or counseling with the students. He also would like to understand the assessment tools being used. He continued that it was said they would be approved by the school district, which does not give him comfort because there are a lot of examples. He added that in the Lower 48 there are many examples of where the school mental health counselors and school districts are not providing good oversight as to the survey tools being used. The other concern is that these school mental health counselors are not following professional protocols that a psychologist or psychiatrist are required to follow. He stated that he would like to better understand what the job description really is with regard to the counseling, mental health counseling services, assessment tools, examples of those, as well as policies on parent interaction, and then what is actually being taught in the curriculum.

MR. SCHNEIDER asked if he could send an outline of a curriculum and an example of some

surveys that had been done in the past on what they do for this program.

TRUSTEE FISHER stated that it would be great.

CHAIR MORAN stated, through personal experience, that it is difficult to hire school counselors and school mental health professionals. She asked if they had folks on staff.

MR. SCHNEIDER replied that they had a counselor on staff, Lena Mack, that works under one of the Alaska Native ed grants. Her resume was included in the materials provided. She is a wonderful counselor with fantastic relationships with a lot of these communities. They have requested having her stay on, and the plan is to keep her employed.

TRUSTEE FIMON asked where the Project Grad funding comes from.

MR. SCHNEIDER replied that, historically, most has come from the Alaska Native Educational program, which is Federal funds.

CHAIR MORAN stated that it was her inclination to move this forward to the Full Board meeting, and to have a deeper discussion at that time. She called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$125,000 Authority Grant to Choosing Our Roots for the “Choosing Our Roots Rapid Rehousing Assistance Program Grant.” These funds will come from the Beneficiary Housing Project and Related Services lines of the Fiscal Year ’26 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

TRUSTEE FEIGE stated this was an interesting program and asked about how many folks were involved, the length of time they are housed, and if there is a framework within it to help guide them through the process, and the steps to insure some stability and if there was a pathway to success.

MS. BARSTAD replied that this project operates in a way that is more typical of a transitional housing program. The terminology “rapid rehousing” and “transitional rehousing” are used interchangeably throughout this memo. She clarified that youth will have transitional housing with a stay of six to 12 months, which will vary upon the youth needs and the services they need to fully stabilize. Choosing Our Roots has a life skills development program, which is very difficult for this age group. This talks about financial literacy and budgeting, how to get employment, and when to know that it is time to change employment. How to engage in education so that skills are leveled up to get a good-paying job with the ability to pay the rent. It is a very holistic program. She continued that the last piece of that is transitioning to independent housing. Since it is a transitional housing program, it is not intended to be permanent. Most of the cost of this program goes to the youth to establish some independent apartments. They have a package of items ready to go so the youth feel like it is truly a new home for them.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN asked how many of the 12 individuals are within the group transitioning out of foster care without support services.

MS. BARSTAD replied that all that are participating in this program do not have an informal support system that is strong enough to be able to support them. She asked Laura Reijns, the co-executive director of Choosing Our Roots, to reply to the question about foster care.

MS. REIJNS stated that she did not know which participants were coming out of foster care, but there were 157 applications or requests for service in the past year, and they were only able to help 57 individuals.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN requested staff to add a question to the grant review about whether or not people could volunteer that information, which is a sensitive topic.

MS. REIJNS added that this is also crisis for LBGTQ youth who are significantly in need and intersect that crisis.

CHAIR MORAN thanked Ms. Reijns, and asked for any other questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$48,960 Authority Grant to REACH 907 for the “Strengthening Strategic Infrastructure” grant. These funds will come from the Partnerships/Designated Grants line of the Fiscal Year ’26 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

TRUSTEE FEIGE stated that she was a bit confused with the billing consultation. She wanted to know if the work was complete and if it was out of sequence with this grant.

DR. VOELKER-ROSS stated that REACH 907 has been in this process for quite some time. She asked Rachel Olson, the executive director, to speak to the question.

MS. OLSON stated that they had asked the Trust for a grant for a billing consultant support about two years ago. That project completed, and we were able to continue the work and sustain it on our own. She thanked trustees for their support. She was able to bridge the gap between the billing and accounting team, and made that process smooth. They have grown 70 percent annually over the past four years, and the behavioral health services with the 1115 waiver and the State plan indicates the need in the community. She continued that they are continuing with this grant, and it is their team of 37 staff that are doing wonderful daily work with the families to stabilize the children that are at risk and the families that are not stable. The goal is to get every family stable. However, staff needs supports, and she does not know HR. She added that she does not have the clinical licensure, expertise, and supervision that they need. With this grant, she wants to bring in the HR expertise, the clinical license, or supervision expertise that the master-level clinicians will bring.

TRUSTEE FEIGE stated appreciation for the emphasis being placed on supporting staff to make sure all of the compliance mechanisms are in place, because that can be lost.

CHAIR MORAN asked for any other questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

CHAIR MORAN called a break.

(Break.)

CHAIR MORAN reconvened the meeting and moved forward with the nonconsent agenda, which are grant requests of at least \$200,000, and/or requests that have a term of more than 12 months.

NONCONSENT AGENDA – GRANT REQUESTS OF AT LEAST \$200K AND/OR REQUESTS THAT HAVE A TERM OF MORE THAN 12 MONTHS

SOUTHCENTRAL FOUNDATION, TRAUMATIC AND ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$200,000 Authority Grant to Southcentral Foundation for the “traumatic and acquired brain injury, TABI, basic implementation plan for identification, intervention, and enhanced community infrastructure” grant. These funds will come from the Trust Focus Area Strategy Implementation line of the Fiscal Year ’26 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

MS. BARSTAD stated that it was her pleasure to bring Year 5 of a five-year system change implementation grant. This funding peaked a few years ago, and is in a wind-down phase for funding from the Mental Health Trust. After the completion of this year, Southcentral Foundation will carry this work forward. She added that it was an incredible journey. This project covers a good part of the state for adults with brain injury. Southcentral Foundation is now serving the Anchorage Municipality, as well as the Valley, and then statewide for children and people that have acute or lasting symptoms from a brain injury. She added that Dr. Dan Hartman, medical director, and Katie Jacques, clinical director, were present.

DR. HARTMAN stated that he is a division medical director at Alaska Native Medical Center, Special Division. Ms. Jacques serves as clinical director for therapies. He began by covering the progress years to date and added that they are dedicated for traumatic prior brain injury care. He continued that in Year 5 they hope to expand child and family developmental services, PT, PT speech, developmental pediatrics, and testing psychology to population scale statewide. They hope to expand care coordination around the continuum of care. He added that in calendar year 2025 they identified 836 unique persons that were treated for traumatic and acquired brain injury in their system. Those folks completed over 25,000 encounters in a calendar year, which is an average of 30 encounters per person. Those encounters show how important specialized care and care coordination are for this area of care. He quickly went through system impacts on persons with traumatic and acquired brain injury. He stated that the funding from the Trust has indirectly supported integration of inpatient and outpatient care planning for persons with

traumatic and acquired brain injury. He explained that there are five departments directly tied to this project, and Southcentral Foundation helps to sustain this project. The plan is to sustain this project indefinitely, and their board has required annual performance in support of all positions beyond grant funding. TABI is now an established care center at ANMC.

CHAIR MORAN asked for any further comments or questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

COVENANT HOUSE ALASKA, MEETING YOUTH WHERE THEY ARE

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$310,000 Authority Grant to Covenant House Alaska for the “Meeting youth where they are: Expanding behavioral health, substance use, and recovery services across CHA” grant. These funds will come from the Trust Focus Area Strategy Implementation line for the Fiscal Year ’26 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

MS. BARSTAD stated that this project started last year. Covenant House Alaska is the youth shelter for the Municipality of Anchorage area, and it serves youths ages 13 up to 24. Because of the ages, 18 – 24 has been a more recent development in high volume. With that addition, there have been different services needed to be put in place to support this group. This slightly older age group has seen youth in more crisis, youth with higher rates of behavioral health conditions, whether that be a mental health condition or substance use. Covenant House worked with Volunteers of America to implement immediate services for youth staying at the shelter. That partnership led to a dramatic reduction in crises on campus for Covenant House Alaska. Building on that success, they are looking at a second year where the Mental Health interventions have been incredibly successful. Covenant House is looking at partnering with VOA and another provider to give options for services for youth. She continued that having on-site services is a huge advantage to the population, of which over 50 percent have a behavioral health condition. She added that the first year was incredibly successful, and Covenant House Alaska has come back to us to partner for a second year to build on that success, and to see how some of these services can be more institutionalized to then branch out to offer those treatment services for substance use.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN asked about who was providing the other services. She also asked how many clients between the age of 18 to 24 have cycled through.

MR. HAHN replied that they were in talks with True North Recovery Services and Alaska Behavioral Health. Their understanding is that True North is a bit more Valley-based, but are looking at doing some more expansive services in Anchorage. They have a great program, a very peer-led kind of approach, which would be a good fit for the young people, very relationship-based. He added that about 50 percent of young people seen on an annual basis have come through OCS.

TRUSTEE FIMON asked if they were the sole funder on this.

MS. BARSTAD replied that, through other fundraising efforts, Covenant House Alaska is also contributing to it.

CHAIR MORAN asked for any other questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

ALL ALASKA PEDIATRIC PARTNERSHIP, HELP ME GROW ALASKA

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$300,000 Authority Grant to the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership for the “Help Me Grow Alaska: Community Outreach, Care Coordination, and Developmental Screening” grant. These funds will come from the Trust Focus Area Strategy Implementation line of the Fiscal Year ’27 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

DR. VOELKER-ROSS stated that this project will support the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership in implementing “Help Me Grow Alaska” to connect families to care navigation, developmental and social/emotional screening, and timely referrals to community providers through their centralized access point. The program enhances early identification and coordinated access to developmental, behavioral, and mental health services for Alaska families, particularly for Mental Health Trust beneficiaries experiencing developmental disabilities, mental illness, or cognitive impairments. “Help Me Grow Alaska” continues to experience significant statewide growth with more families seeking support for behavioral and mental needs. “Help Me Grow” case counts have grown every year with a 53 percent increase from FY24 to FY25. She added that the reach of the program has expanded considerably since FY19. This is a two-year project to continue to serve Alaska families who are in need of care navigation, developmental screening, resources and support. She stated that Executive Director Tamara Ben-Yosef, and Director of Programs Carmen Wenger, were there to answer questions.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked about sustainability and how the future looked.

MS. WENGER stated that there were three components to her answer: First is that they continue to scale the program to make sure it is available and accessible to Alaskans all across the state. The second, in regard to sustainability, is that they are navigating a time where the landscape funding is changing. The project was originally initiated by the State of Alaska before A2P2 was identified as the best home for it. She talked about certain funding sources that were part of that initial plan. The third component is work that they are planning to leverage over the next few years as part of the Rural Health Transformation project, the ability to be planning grants, and we are hoping to do some cost modeling and planning to pursue the potential for Medicaid administrative billing or, potentially, something comparable with private insurers, as well.

MS. BEN-YOSEF added that one of the ways the Rural Health Transformation program is a great opportunity is to utilize some of those funds for planning and long-term sustainability, including some work that we have already been communicating with the Department on wanting to build into scaling through integration into State systems and opportunities around supporting Department of Health priorities, especially around behavioral health. This is giving the opportunity to do some of that planning work. We also continuously work with partners around

the state to identify opportunities for partnerships through foundations. She added that they feel very encouraged by the response and appetite for these partnerships as everyone is trying to build out a more centralized, comprehensive system of care for families in the state.

CHAIR MORAN thinks that this has been a very successful partnership between the Trust and them. She stated that she would like to see a presentation showing where they started, how they developed, and where they are now.

TRUSTEE FIMON echoed that, and stated that he was impressed by their presentations, the implementation of the program, and how they are almost constantly looking for that next opportunity.

CHAIR MORAN asked for any other questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

RECOVER ALASKA, AURORA – ALASKA’S UNIFIED RESPONSE ON REDUCING ALCOHOL HARM

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$300,000 Authority Grant to Recover Alaska for the “AURORA – Alaska’s Unified Response on Reducing Alcohol-Harm” grant. These funds will come from the Trust Focus Area Strategy Implementation line of the Fiscal Year ’27 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

MS. PONTS stated that Recover Alaska’s AURORA project proposes a three-year project that is a statewide coordinated strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms. She continued that this project aligns with Trust strategic priority, prevention, and early intervention by focusing upstream on reducing alcohol exposure, strengthening protective factors, and improving community conditions for children and families. She added that it will bring together State agencies, tribal organizations, community leaders, people with lived experience and data partners to develop a shared evidence-informed strategy. She explained that there were three phases of this project beginning with a statewide setting of harm assessment and then progressing to community-led programs and engagement and pilots. She added that Tiffany Hall, executive director of Recover Alaska, was also present.

MS. HALL was happy to talk through the project and added that she was also a person in long-term recovery from co-occurring alcohol use and mental health disorders, and is a beneficiary, as well. She stated that Recover Alaska is an organization that works at the system level and does not provide direct services. We work to try to create safer environments that can bring down levels of harm, which we do through looking at policies and regulations that can be changed. She continued that, last year, we did an alcohol policy needs assessment of the state through their prevention alliance and saw the outcomes. Alcohol is one of the biggest problems that the state faces, and they do not have a coordinated plan around it. The community is telling them that they want a coordinated plan, a leader, they want trust in knowing what they are doing and support to get them there. The AURORA project was built to do some more of the data mapping around what was already done, and also investigating the lower level of harm where it is happening.

CHAIR MORAN stated that when this comes before the Full Board, she would like the community engagement plan fleshed out and the plan to sustain that. She continued that she would support this going forward, but she had a lot of hesitation because she is concerned about them being ready, that all the pieces are really there, and that they really understand what they are doing going forward. She added that it did warrant a Full Board discussion, and she would vote for it going forward. She stated that she would like to see a lot more depth to this as far as not bullet points, but how this will actually be supported. She also asked for a model for what it will look like. She added that she thought that there is still a lot of ground work that needs to be done before she would be comfortable committing to a three-year \$310,000 grant. She asked for any further questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

PETERSBURG BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, THRIVING TOGETHER

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$114,082 Authority Grant to the Petersburg School District for the “Thriving Together: Collaborative Student Wellness” grant. These funds will come from the Trust Focus Area Strategy Implementation line of the fiscal year ’26 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

DR. VOELKER-ROSS stated that this 16-month grant project will support expansion of access to mental health supports, professional counseling, and social/emotional learning for students within the Petersburg Borough School District. It builds on initiatives that the Petersburg School District has been prioritizing and developing for several years. The project focus is universal for all students who will benefit from prevention, as well as more specialized and direct support services and interventions for students with higher needs. She continued that these are Trust beneficiaries or those at risk for becoming a Trust beneficiary. The project is well supported by the Petersburg Youth Behavioral Risk Survey that identifies that 34.2 percent of Petersburg High School students reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks that they stopped participating in usual activities. 18.5 percent reported attempting suicide at least once in the past year. 31.5 percent reported being bullied. Plus, during the ’24-’25 school year, crisis intervention services were provided in over 96 emergency encounters involving students experiencing suicidal ideation or immediate behavioral health crisis. She added that these numbers underscore the urgent need for the project which supports proactive school-based interventions that build belonging, resilience, and access to care. She stated that Petersburg School District Finance Director Shannon Baird was online to answer any questions about this project.

TRUSTEE FEIGE asked if the Petersburg Borough helps support these programs, and helps to fund things like this.

MS. BAIRD replied that their main operating budget, which is included in other funding, is supported by the Borough. About two-thirds of the operating revenue comes from the State, and about a third from the Borough.

CHAIR MORAN asked if the Borough was currently funding them to the cap.

MS. BAIRD replied that they were funded to the cap in fiscal year '25. This current school year they are just a little under the cap. She added that the district is working on the budgets for next year, and it sounds like they will be funding them near the cap, which is pending.

(Technical difficulties.)

CHAIR MORAN stated that it disturbed her that there was no acknowledgement or letter of support from the Borough recognizing that the Trust does bring value to their community.

MS. BAIRD apologized for overlooking that partnership and will absolutely work on a letter of support from the Borough.

CHAIR MORAN stated that this is a 15-month grant project, and she would like to hear more about sustainability when this comes forward again.

MS. BAIRD spoke to their sustainability. They chose the name Thriving Together Collaborative Student Wellness because they are collaborating in their community with peers and two other contracted social workers and counselors within the community. This has always been support for the supports. The community has prioritized student well-being and mental health. The Petersburg Medical Center has been collaborating with us for over ten years, and we have applied for student health services within school grants and are usually able to find enough funding to fund the services they are receiving. She added that regarding the two other funding sources, one is funded, and the other is only in draft mode.

CHAIR MORAN stated that she would vote this forward to the Full Board. But knowing that the Borough is the major funder of this school district, it would go a long way for her to see that the Borough supports this grant application. She called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

SOUTHEAST ALASKA INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.

MOTION: The Program & Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$116,200 Authority Grant to Southeast Alaska Independent Living, Inc., for the “Evaluating Access to Environmental Modifications” Grant. These funds will come from the Beneficiary Housing Project & Related Services line of the fiscal year '26 budget. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

MS. BARSTAD stated that this is a technically complex area of the home- and community-based service system and provided a bit of history to where this intervention is going to be taking place. She continued that the purpose of the whole home- and community-based waiver system is to give people an option to live in their home and community as long as they would like to without having to use a skilled nursing facility. The skilled nursing facility service is a mandatory Medicaid service, and the State is compelled to provide that should a person need it. However, it is not the preferred setting for most people. She explained that this project works to improve the Medicaid waiver service for environmental modifications. It is a project that they are working with the State on and Senior and Disability Services is the Division that administers the

Medicaid waivers. They are aware of their work in the area and support the nonprofit agencies involved in continuing to work around it. She added that the State does acknowledge that there is still work to do to improve the environmental modification program through advocacy, through the Trust and other partners. The cap on environmental modifications was increased to \$40,000, and allowing an additional allowance for shipping to a rural area. One of the barriers identified by the State and others is that the system is structured so that the construction company has to be enrolled as a Medicaid provider. The waivers do not allow for subcontracting, but do have a provision for an organized healthcare delivery system which allows a Medicaid provider to become that umbrella agency to monitor and subcontract. She explained that this pilot project is going to propose leveraging the use of the Medicaid system. It would still be operating within waiver services and using individuals who are qualified for Medicaid waivers. The Southeast Alaska Independent Living Center has been a huge advocate for access to the environmental modification programs and have been very active in the work. They are going to be the coordinating agency and fiscal agent for this component. Joan O'Keefe is the executive director, and she is online. She stated that this is a very doable thing to fix. It is just a lot of work to do. That environmental modification feels like it is overwhelming and complex. It is a difficult service to implement.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN thanked them for kicking this off, noting that it is long overdue. She shared that she wanted some information to help with the Board decision-making: some insight from the new Department of Health on the rate-setting review; the SDS's commitment to this grant request; to hear from the adviser on this particular request because it directly impacts Senior and Disability Services. She wants some assurances from the partners that they are ready and eager to support this kind of project because it does match up to where they are at their end of things.

MS. BARSTAD replied to some of the questions and was sure the grants team can look around to see how the questions could be answered. She continued that SDS is on board with improving this particular service line item.

CHAIR MORAN talked about the estimated number of beneficiaries, and that she would like to see those narrowed down to the actual benefits for this grant.

MS. O'KEEFE stated that the numbers were projected statewide for the benefits of this program; not Southeast and not SAIL consumers. They were an estimate of the impact of this over the long term to be able to fix this broken Medicaid waiver service.

CHAIR MORAN stated that she would like to see that broken out long-term and immediate impact. The other question is if this gives the capacity to work with landlords to make modifications. A lot of the population do not own their home.

MS. O'KEEFE replied that it was her understanding that it is similar to the Home Modification Grant that the Trust used to fund.

CHAIR MORAN asked for any other questions. There being none, she called the vote.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

MOTION: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by TRUSTEE FEIGE; seconded by TRUSTEE FIMON.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Chair Moran, yes.)

TRUSTEE MORAN adjourned the meeting.

(Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Program & Planning Committee meeting adjourned at 12:12 p.m.)