



# **NORTH COUNTRY**

## **COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH**

### **MINUTES OF THE BOARD**

**November 20, 2025 2:30 PM**

**North Country Community Mental Health**

**1420 Plaza Drive, Petoskey, Board Room**

Mr. Ginop called the meeting to order at 2:36 PM

### **ROLL CALL:**

#### **BOARD MEMBERS ATTENDING:**

Michael Newman, Ron Iseler, Jarris Rubingh, David White, Caroline Loper, Daniel CasaSanta, Annemarie Conway, Bob Baldwin, Ed Ginop,

**MEMBERS ATTENDING VIRTUALLY:** Ed Belitz, Bob Boyd

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Dana Wingo

**STAFF:** Brian Babbitt, Nancy Rhue, Tim Stapp Jr., Brandy Marvin, Deb Freed, Kim Rappleyea

**GUESTS:** William, Ann Steiner, Micah Haven, GTI Mancelona, Amy Carter, Cindy Evans

Mr. Ginop welcomed board members and staff to the meeting. There is a quorum present.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** No board members expressed a conflict with any agenda item.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** William read the following statement: Hi, My name is William. I have been at GTI for over 20 years. Sometimes I do janitorial work by cleaning tables at GTI and doing hardware. This is how I earn my paycheck. I enjoy socializing with my peers. We go bowling, to the movies, shopping, and to the park in the community. At GTI we play cards, bingo, make crafts, have parties, and a lot of different activities. I am a member of action club. We buy Christmas gifts for families, put on dinners and yard sales to help raise money. I really love being at GTI. I feel safe and supported. I need GTI in my life.

Micah Haven read the following statement: I am so glad you got to hear from Willy. This man is living his best life, and that didn't happen accidentally. Willy's success is the result of consistent support from well-trained staff who care, and opportunities that fit his strengths and needs. I want to speak to the heart of this issue, choice. North Country states in their values that client-centered means "Care is delivered by respecting individual preferences. Every decision will consider the value it adds to the people we serve" This is a wonderful approach, but right now, the funding and the directives we've received tell a very different story. Over the last several years, GTI has been significantly underfunded. This past year alone, we ended \$30,000 in the red. We froze our staff's wages while North Country increased theirs. We

tightened budgets and stretched every dollar to continue providing the supports that Willy and 55 others depend on. Further undermining our ability to serve our mutual clients is the directive from North Country that all programming must move exclusively to community-based models, even for individuals who do not want that and do not benefit from that. Does this sound client-centered? Some individuals thrive in community-based settings. Others thrive in structured, predictable environments. And many need both. The danger is when a system chooses a model over a person. GTI has never argued against community integration. We have expanded it, invested in it, and celebrated its successes. What we oppose is the removal of choice, especially from the people who have the least power at the table. If North Country truly believes in client-centered care, then both models must remain available. Not because GTI wants them, but because your clients want them. Their IPOS plans reflect them. Their families rely on them. Their progress, stability, safety, and dignity depend on their power to choose. I ask this board to align North Country's actions with its values. Fund the services your members choose. Honor the settings where they thrive. And recognize GTI as the long-standing partner that has upheld these values for over 50 years, often without the financial support to sustain them. Thank you.

Ann Steiner handed out invitations to the Todd Steiner Memorial Christmas Party at GTI on December 11. She stated that she was buying gifts for 80 people and that they had 70 plus supporters in the community. Dayton Lamina heard about the party and gave a donation to support it. She states that one donation of support came from a company in Japan and another from Kalamazoo. She states that she went shopping at Sam's Club and was approached by a staff member who ended up donating all the items in the carts. She states that there will be games, crafts, and Mr. and Mrs. Claus. Clients can earn buttons by playing the games and then can shop at the "grocery store" for food items for their lunch boxes.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

The consent agenda includes the agenda overview, minutes of the previous meeting, privileging recommendations and contracts signed in the past month. Items requiring approval will be placed on the meeting agenda. The motion for TBD solutions will be removed from the agenda.

**MOTION BY JARRIS RUBINGH TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS AMMENDED;  
SUPPORT BY DAVID WHITE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – BOARD ACTION\*:**

**Personnel Committee:** Mr. CasaSanta reviewed the minutes of the November 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Agenda items included the updated Social Media Policy, updated Clinical Privileging Policy, Employee Benefits for 2026, and the regional CEO Compensation Comparison.

**MOTION BY DAN CASASANTA TO APPROVE THE UPDATED SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY; SUPPORT BY CAROLINE LOPER:**

**MOTION CARRIES**

**MOTION BY DAN CASASANTA TO APPROVE THE UPDATED CLINICAL PRIVILEGING POLICY; SUPPORT BY ANNEMARIE CONWAY:**

**MOTION CARRIES**

**Program Committee:** Mr. Iseler reviewed the minutes of the November 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. Agenda Items included information on the Transitional Support Program Eligibility, and Provider Network budget.

**Finance Committee Report:** Mr. White reviewed the Statement of Cash on Deposit and Disbursements through October 31, 2025; Interim Financial Statements as of September 30, 2025 Revenue and Expense by Fund Source; Trending Revenue and Expenses as of September 30, 2025, the NMRE interim financial report, CMHA Dues, and a proposal for interim payroll support from TBD solutions.

**MOTION BY DAVE WHITE TO APPROVE THE PAYMENT OF THE CMHA DUES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$19,716.00 (NINETEEN THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED SIXTEEN DOLLARS); SUPPORT BY CAROLINE LOPER:**

**MOTION CARRIES**

Mr. Ginop requested the financial reports be placed on file for audit.

**PRESENTATION – Descript AI tool and Orientation Videos- Deb Freed-** Ms. Freed explained the AI tool Descript that she has been using to create orientation videos. This tool is being paid for with the Technology-Based Recovery Grant. Descript is a cloud-based video and audio editor that utilizes AI to streamline editing. Currently, Accessing Services and The Client Portal videos are live on the NCCMH website and increase the accessibility for clients. The videos were shown to the board.

**ACTION ITEMS WITHOUT COMMITTEE REVIEW:** None

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT/COMMUNICATIONS:** Mr. Babbitt referred to several items in his report. He drew attention to the Office of Recipient Rights compliance letter included in the packet. On October 22-24 NCCMH underwent CARF accreditation. There were

three surveyors on site. The exit interview was very complimentary of staff and clients. A parent stated that NCCMH saved her daughter's life. Recommendations were received. Once the full report is received, there will be a corrective action plan made, and a quality improvement plan will be made as well. No accreditation issues are expected. Mr. Babbitt attended the CMHA Fall Conference October 27-28, He stated Alan Bolter, the new director, had more presence at the conference, and that it was very lightly attended by MDHHS staff. On November 5 Mr. Babbitt attended the MMRMA Healthcare Risk Advisory Committee meeting. This is a new committee within MMRMA, the agency's insurance provider, and Mr. Babbitt was asked to be on the committee due to his experience. He drew attention to a document from the CMHA regarding the components of redesigning the public mental health system framework if the PIHP RFP is stopped. Mr. Babbitt stated that legislatively there is not a lot going on.

Mr. Rubingh asked Mr. Babbitt if there had been any further discussions with GTI regarding funding and services, he mentioned the resolution supporting GTI that Antrim County passed.

Mr. Babbitt stated that he has not personally had any further meetings or discussions with GTI. He then explained that he has never said that all programing needed to move exclusively to outside the facility as has been stated. No clients have lost services and there is no plan for clients to have services discontinued. He said that he has stated this to the GTI board trustees and to leadership at GTI. He stated that the goal has always been to have a robust array of services and for clients to have a choice, and while working with Medicaid dollars, it is important to make sure that you are doing things correctly. He stated that there was continued misinformation about NCCMH requiring all services to be outside the facility and at this point the intent of the information. He states that the agency's obligation is to pay for the services that are allowable by Medicaid and that all NCCMH has currently done is pay more for the same services being delivered. He stated that he is still waiting on direction from the state on some things and has also asked for rural leeway in interpretation of the final CMS rule.

#### **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT UPDATE – None**

**NORTHERN MICHIGAN REGIONAL ENTITY-** The minutes of the September Operations Committee meeting, draft minutes of the October Board meeting, and September interim financial report were included in the packet.

**OLD BUSINESS** – The court of claims Judge Yates is joining the 2 lawsuits together and a hearing will take place December 8 and 9. Currently they are deposing witnesses from the 1<sup>st</sup> lawsuit. It is being said that depositions from department staff supports NCCMH's position that the RFP is unlawful. A FOIA request was made on bidding through CMHA.

**NEW BUSINESS** – The Board and Committee Calendar for 2026 was included in the packet

Board Holiday Party- Mr. Babbitt suggested going back to a dinner party rather than a lunch like has been done the last 2 years. He stated that he was open to having it done on the same day as the board meeting or whatever would work for the board members. Ms. Rhue will send out an email to get feedback from board members for planning.

**BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS** – Jarris Rubingh asked why we don't have public comment at the beginning and end of the meeting.

Mr. Babbitt stated that the agenda is set in the bylaws, but he has no issue with adding public comment at the end of the meeting as well. The bylaws will be updated and brought forward to the board at the next meeting for approval of the board.

Mr. Baldwin stated that it is hard to get anyone to come to any meeting. He states that it's a shame that people don't see what we do and only show up to be a "bee in the bonnet". He states that he has no issue with more public comment.

Mr. Ginop stated there is not much public comment in most board meetings and he has no problem with adding more.

Mr. White and Mr. Newman both stated that they have no issue adding public comment at the end of the meeting as well.

Mr. Babbitt wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mr. Iseler wanted to thank everyone for their expressions of sympathy for the death of his son. In happier news he has another grandchild and great grandchild on the way.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 PM by Board Chair Edward Ginop

  
Ed Ginop, Board Chair