

**WESTERN HIGHLANDS AREA AUTHORITY
MAY 18, 2007, REGULAR MEETING**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Carey; Phil Castro; John W. Condrey (via telephone); William J. Cook, Jr.; Minnie Jones; Abigail Karroubi; Michele Lawhern; Mandy Stone; and Arthur C. Wilson, Jr.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Patricia Franklin; Susan Hendrick; Vernon Ponder; Robert Ratcliffe; Steve Smith; Ryan Whitson; and Steve Wyatt.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT: Bob Carey; Judy Dunn, Families Together; Jerry Rice; Paul Tax, ARP Phoenix; Larry Thompson, Blue Ridge Homes; Curtis Venable; and Dan Zorn, Families Together.

ALSO PRESENT: Arthur D. Carder, Jr., Chief Executive Officer; Sharon Lentz, Chief Financial Officer; Kris Booker, Quality Management; Rhonda McKee, HR Director; Marsha Ring, Access & Services Management; Lynn Trotter, Provider & Consumer Relations; Charlie Schoenheit, Chief Operations Officer; Victor W. Buchanan, Legal Counsel; and Beverly Atkins, Clerk to the Board.

CALL TO ORDER: The area board ("Board") of the Western Highlands Area Authority met on Friday, May 18, 2007, at 9:35 a.m. in the second-floor Conference Room (Room 312/315) of 356 Biltmore Avenue, Asheville, North Carolina. The Vice-Chair Ms. Mandy Stone called the meeting to order.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mr. Zorn made comments relative to the CS rates issue. He thanked Arthur and the Board members for all their efforts. He reported that the rate was raised to \$51.00. This will be very painful but it is possible to work with this rate. He asked if there were any way to have input regarding decisions that are made about policy and rates, whether it be at the local, regional or even state levels. This would serve this board, WHN staff and providers. A good example is what Mr. Carder and his staff are doing around some of the state fund activity. It is very refreshing to go into a meeting with him and his staff and other providers and actually talking about what would work.

Mr. Rice made comments relative to hospital admissions and deaths reflected on the monthly management report. He also, made comments relative to the Crisis Stabilization Center and issues relating to children. It would appear that with the cut in rates clients are being pushed to the County, DSS and Health Departments to get help. This defeats the purpose of consumer choice.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Ms. Carey made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Jones seconded the motion, and it carried. (A copy of the agenda is included in the minute book with these minutes.)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes for the April 13, 2007, Special Meeting and April 20, 2007, Regular Meeting as presented. Mr. Cook seconded the motion, and it carried by a unanimous vote.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT: Ms. Stone reported that items #3 and #4 are information that the Board requested. Item #3 details the use of MOE funds by individual Counties. Item #4 gives an accounting of the dissolution funds. Ms. Carey stated that the MOE and dissolution funds accounting indicates only to which provider the funds went. She would like to see the number of people served along with the type of services provided. Ms. Lawhern stated that the Yancey dissolution funds have been allocated and she had previously given a formal accounting. However, she will provide another copy to Ms. Lentz and the Board. Mr. Cook stated that WHN returned dissolution funds to Mitchell County for a special deputy. Mr. McKinney will be checking with the Sheriff to get an accounting of how the funds are being used.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT: Mr. Carder stated that there would be several individual items in his report. Mr. Carder stated that in discussion with Ms. Hendrick regarding the Board's annual meeting they decided that it would be appropriate to have a dinner meeting with a guest speaker. Ms. Hendrick asked that he present the members of an Ad-hoc Committee to work on arrangements. The members are as follows:

Susan Hendrick
Abigail Karroubi
Steve Smith
Mandy Stone

Mr. Carder will appoint WHN staff to serve on the committee. He reported that a Board retreat would be held late September or October. WHN will be closed for an all staff retreat on June 27 and 28. It should be a productive event.

Mr. Carder presented item #6, which reflects a summary of the grants awarded to WHN for FY 2007-2008. Ms. Booker will be coordinating all the grant activities so that special grants and programs can be tracked in an ongoing basis.

Ms. McKee presented an update on the eleven new positions approved by the Board. Ms. McKee went over the color coded organizational chart distributed which indicated the new positions, vacant positions, and other changes. She reported that turnover is low as there have been only three resignations since November.

Mr. Carder presented item #5, which is a draft Board policies. The proposed Board policies are for review and consideration at the June meeting. The proposed policies are a combination of Board actions and clarifications of items raised by different Board members. He encouraged Board members to review these policies and e-mail or call him with questions/comments because the goal is to approve the By-laws and policies at the June meeting.

Mr. Carder reported that he spent the week in Raleigh. His first day was spent meeting with Leza Wainwright and Dick Oliver from the Division of MH/DD/SA Service. He shared with Ms. Wainwright his concern that the cost model is based strictly on population and does not consider the number of providers. WHN has 321 providers for which staff is responsible for such items as contracts, oversight, and reviews. Other LMEs get the same amount of funding for far less providers. Some ways to streamline the state funding process, as mentioned by Mr. Zorn, are being considered. A plan to establish a standard criteria for providers to perform in a role as "core" providers is being developed with a group of providers. Funds will be changed to a non-UCR category. One of our problems is that there are not enough available slots to meet consumers' needs for intake. Ms. Wainwright felt that this was a reasonable solution and indicated that she would help facilitate the moving of funds. Mr. Carder also discussed with her the ongoing CS audits and the fact that WHN is having to do post payment reviews of Medicaid providers who have provided large numbers of CS units. He suggested that she allow WHN to establish a set of standards by which WHN would do reviews at 90-day intervals. Another topic discussed was the hospital services.

Mr. Carder reported that in his role as Co-Chair of the NC Council Rules Committee he met with the Mental Health Commission. They reviewed a number of issues around rules expectation. In the afternoon, he spoke to the Commission about CFAC's role with the Board and their strengths and weaknesses .

Mr. Carder reported that after Senators Berger, Purcell, Nesbitt, Garrou, Rand, Hagan, Dalton and Dannelly met with Secretary Hooker-Odom they asked to meet with five LME directors along with some of the Governor's staff. He felt that it was a very helpful dialogue.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT: Ms. Lentz presented the March, 2007 financial statements.

Ms. Lentz stated the financial statements continue the same trend as the previous several months. Income statement shows a surplus of \$2,914,686 which represents MOE funds and dissolution funds received but not yet expended and LME system management funds which continue to be under spent. In addition, March statements recognize the return of the insurance tail coverage from New Vistas. With the approval of the 11 new positions (for which most have been filled), she expects to spend more of the LME funds by the end of the fiscal year. (A copy of the March, 2007 financial report is included in the minute book with these minutes.)

Ms. Lentz presented the proposed FY2008 budget and narrative for review to consider for adoption at the June 15, 2007 Board meeting. There will be a public hearing prior to the start of the June meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Ms. Carey reported that the Human Rights Committee met on May 1. The committee learned that there has been improvement in the number of Level 1 reports being turned in by providers. Level 2 and 3 Quarterly incident reports which include deaths and other serious incidents are not being turned in as they should. While WHN contracts with 321 providers, only 59 of these reports were received. As previously reported, the committee requested a couple of years ago that a letter be sent to providers who consistently fail to report these Level 2 and Level 3 Quarterly Incident Reports. Some of these providers may be in other LME areas of responsibility, but most are located within WHN's catchment area. How can WHN sufficiently monitor (and have staff to adequately investigate) without knowing exactly how many deaths and other serious incidents have occurred? Other items discussed included the appeals process for state-funded clients. Ms. Carey encouraged board members to review the Human Rights quarterly report prepared by the Human Rights Coordinator Ms. Trotter. Ms. Stone stated that the Human Rights Report will be on the agenda for action at the June meeting.

CFAC: Ms. Huntley distributed a written report. She expressed CFAC's concern regarding a neighboring Board of County Commissioners voting to leave the LME with which they were associated and join with another County. This left the remaining smaller counties without sufficient population for the LME, which can result in serious funding issues. CFAC wants to know "What are we doing to protect the integrity of this LME?" The second concern relates to the proposed Board Policies. (A copy of the CFAC report plus attachments is included in the minute book with these minutes.)

LOC REPORT: Mr. Thompson presented an update of the 2007 General Assembly Legislative proposals. The information includes FY 2008 Budget proposal passed by the House. (A copy of the 2007 G.S. Legislative Proposals is included in the minute book with these minutes.)

BOARD COMMENTS: Ms. Karroubi state that she attended a meeting of the Southern Mountain Behavioral Alliance. She learned that Rutherford Hospital had just stopped their 23-hour beds because there is no resource in the community to take patients being discharged. She asked about paying hospitals to take indigent patients with the underspent funds? Mr. Schoenheit stated that he has a couple of proposals for this purpose. Some of the crisis money that WHN received from the state recently included in the proposals is to authorize a three-day stay paying the Medicaid rate. WHN is working on the contract process and intends to offer this to all hospitals that have psychiatric units in the catchment area. Ms. Carey stated that she also heard that Spruce Pine hospital probably will not have beds. She is grateful for what Buncombe is doing but she does not see 16 beds being enough for both substance abuse and mental health clients for years to come.

Ms. Lawhern stated that the Department of Social Service and the Sheriff Departments of Yancey Countt are very frustrated about the delivery of mental health services. She asked about having a meeting with providers to discuss these issues. She asked that there be a specialized group could get together and discuss how to make things better. Ms. Stone asked Mr. Carder for suggestions about a format where LME board and staff could hear from this group. Mr. Carder stated that QIAC has been the vehicle used most consistently for groups to meet with board and community members about the issues. Then policy or program issues can be formulated by the board or staff. Mr. Carder stated that he could coordinate a meeting of the three northern counties and include Alpha-Omega to see what other issues can or can not be addressed. He will first hold a fact finding meeting to

see what the concerns are. Ms. Stone asked if regional meetings should be scheduled or go through QIAC and invite these two groups (Law Enforcement and Social Services). Mr. Cook stated that recently a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between Buncombe County Sheriff Department, Asheville City Police, Asheville Buncombe Technical College, Western Highlands, Mission Hospitals, NAMI, Western Carolina Affiliate, City of Asheville, and Buncombe County regarding the implementation of crisis intervention team training in Buncombe. He understands that the city of Memphis will be doing the training. He suggested that the northern counties and the other counties could maybe be included in this crisis intervention training. Ms. Stone stated that a limited number of folks will be going to Memphis for two or three days of training. Her understanding is that the intent has always been that AB Tech would reach out to the other community colleges and Sheriff would reach out to other law enforcement to offer technical assistance to communities who want to do crisis intervention training. Ms. Lawhern asked if QIAC would be willing to have regional meetings. She feels that there would be better participation from the two groups. Mr. Wilson suggested that Mr. Carder look at the issue and bring a recommendation to the June meeting for the best way to proceed.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to postpone the Closed Session until the June meeting. Ms. Karroubi seconded the motion, and it carried.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Wilson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Jones seconded the motion, which carried by a unanimous vote; and the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Atkins
Clerk to the Board