

**MINUTES FOR:  
CASS COUNTY MEDICAL CARE FACILITY BOARD MEETING**

**September 30th, 2025**

In attendance: Dr. James Wierman (Board Chairperson), Vicki Vaughn (Board Member), Jeff Carmen (Board Co-Chair), (Mercedes Schirripa (Administrator), Jennifer Bennett (Recording Minutes).

Meeting called to order at 9:36 a.m.

Guests: Rie Shimada, Lynda Newton, Austin Morgan, Jodi Nestich, Jennifer Rentfrow

No Public Comment.

Additions/deletions to Agenda:

Jeff Carmen would like to add County Facilities to the agenda.

Vicki Vaughn would like to add a story pertaining to Cass County Medical Care Facility after Lynda Newton's report.

Additions to the agenda approved.

Dr. James Wierman made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Jeff Carmen supported the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Lynda Newton reported her story.

Lynda Newton reports there were recently guests in the facility doing OBRA reviews. They stated to Lynda that this facility is one of the nicest they had been in with pleasant staff and happy residents.

Jeff Carmen asks what an OBRA review is for.

Lynda Newton explains that these reviews are done to assess that services and care offered meet criteria for long-term care. Specifically for residents with physical and mental disabilities to ensure they are receiving adequate services.

Mercedes Schirripa adds to this topic stating that the facility currently has a resident in their mid-20's with disabilities that admitted in early September who has stated this facility helps them to feel independent and that their concerns and requests are heard.

Jeff Carmen asks who would provide services needed outside of what facility can provide if decided it's needed. Lynda Newton states that OBRA assists in providing needed services or in finding a separate option that can do so.

Jeff Carmen asks if these reviews are done face to face or through paperwork as well as if it is only for Medicaid paid residents.

Mercedes Schirripa and Lynda Newton both state the reviews are done face to face for Medicaid paid residents. The facility assesses private pay residents on its own.

Jeff Carmen asks who assesses new admissions to the facility.

Mercedes Schirripa states our social worker Allison Mast does so, doing face to face visits prior to admission if necessary to confirm notes in paperwork.

Vicki Vaughn presents her story.

Recently a resident at the facility passed away and Vicki Vaughn attended the funeral. She states she saw the facility bus there that brought residents to attend with employees to assist as well as employees off duty present. CNA's spoke at the funeral and Vicki Vaughn became emotional stating how this shows that residents are family to staff as well, and the public shouldn't be complaining of overpaying workers when family members are cared for in such a manner.

Cass County Medical Care Facility recently hosted Eden Alternative training for some of the staff members. Lynda Newton explained that this program is training for a facility culture shift towards more of a home environment for resident's needs and requests vs an institutional model. Lynda Newton, Jenna Badner, and Mercedes Schirripa are all trained as associates and Lynda taught the course in the facility. This is a goal to continue training more staff and implement this program facility wide.

For Poly Pharmacy, currently 58% of residents are taking 8 or less medications. Lynda Newton states Dr. Wetzel and our pharmacist Kayla continue assisting in lowering prescription numbers for residents.

Dr. James Wierman states he plans to present at next months Board meeting with documentation from the American College of Physicians on prescriptions.

The check register was reviewed.

Vicki Vaughn asks about Leaderstat LTD. Mercedes Schirripa states that is hiring for agency nursing along with Shiftkey.

Jeff Carmen asks about I&M and Lawn service. Mercedes Schirripa states that is electric and lawn services respectively, the facility is still receiving bids on a new lawn service provider for better cost.

Jeff Carmen asks if agency contracted employees ever become facility employees and Mercedes Schirripa states that they can once their contract ends if they choose to stay on.

Jeff Carmen asks about waste management charges. Mercedes Schirripa states the expense might be higher as large items needed to be disposed of last month and that is an extra charge.

Jeff Carmen asks about village of Cassopolis. Mercedes Schirripa states that is for utilities and sewer services.

Recent census was reviewed:

Facility census is currently 74. Jeff Carmen asks how many private pay residents there are as opposed to Medicaid. Mercedes Schirripa states not many and most are in process of applying for Medicaid if they are private pay and expected to stay long-term.

Cash position was reviewed.

There are currently 2.2 million cash on hand as opposed to 774 thousand at this time last year.

Dr. James Wierman asks about the ongoing lawsuit related to Employee Retention Credit. Mercedes Schirripa declines to refer to it as a lawsuit as it is still in process. She states there is a hearing in November, and she feels confident the facility won't be forced to pay those funds back as we can prove they were needed and used properly.

Mercedes Schirripa also states in the event of having to pay back those funds, it would be a percentage and not the whole amount. Also adding that county medical care facilities are subject to this and not for profit facilities.

Lynda Newton stated that while there were no covid positive staff or residents in August, there have been 7 positive staff in September. No residents have tested positive and the staff twice weekly testing times out tomorrow October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Lynda Newton also states that there will be a facility immunization clinic on October 9<sup>th</sup>.

Austin Morgan provided the maintenance report:

Facility is still working with Lapine on the HVAC system, Austin Morgan states that most of the wiring and plumbing work is finished and they are currently fine tuning the heating and cooling systems. The reimbursement for phase one of this process has been sent to State for processing.

Adding outlets to resident rooms is not feasible at this point due to cost. There are currently 2 plugs per bed available with 4 preferred.

The re-caulking and re-painting of resident rooms is near completion on A hall.

Austin Morgan states he is personally reinforcing the fire wall.

Jeff Carmen asks if Austin Morgan is working with the county on any projects, Austin Morgan states yes, currently with plumbing.

Vicki Vaughn asks if the building is finished being repainted, Austin Morgan states no the back half is not finished.

Both Vicki Vaughn and Jeff Carmen ask about the parking lot being resurfaced to which Mercedes Schirripa and Austin Morgan state that it is still in discussion and finding quotes for service.

Interim County Administrator Jennifer Rentfrow states she is aware of a positive work relationship between Austin Morgan and Dave Reiff and is happy to hear of it.

She states that Dave handles the parking lot at the sheriff's offices with the road commission and would most likely be willing to help the facility with this. Ben Thompson is also a contact with the road commission who could be of assistance.

Jeff Carmen states that the county should be expected to handle more of these types of issues such as paving and landscaping so administrators can focus on their duties within the facility.

The county administrator as well as IT agree that communication breakdown is an issue to address, as problems can be solved faster with support and teamwork. Jeff Carmen states such issues should be included in the county budget so moving forward and with better communication between county buildings such issues are easier to accomplish.

Mercedes Schirripa provided an administrator's report:

The facility is planning a trunk or treat on October 25<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. Staff, residents, families, and community members are all welcome.

Mercedes Schirripa states she is interviewing for a unit manager as well as infection prevention position. She is also interviewing a new pharmacy provider; the facility is continuing to have issues with current provider.

Jeff Carmen and Dr. James Wierman questioned whether administrator of the facility has full authority to enter new contracts with providers, both state they as board members would prefer to be present for such decisions.

Mercedes Schirripa states a contract agreement and recommendations as well as a pharmacy representative can be present at the next board meeting.

Mercedes Schirripa states the Medicare reevaluation survey is in process. It usually takes multiple attempts and once approved allows the facility to be able to provide care through Medicare.

The facility is in process of renewing contract with Southwestern Michigan College to host nursing students for clinicals. This is a shared agreement and not for profit, the facility also hosts Back to Basics students for CNA clinicals.

Mercedes Schirripa would like to note that admission screenings are currently up to date. The medical director is supposed to complete within 30 days of admission and with Theoria some were up to 90 days past compliance. Dr. Wetzel has gotten all up to date.

Mercedes Schirripa states there has been an issue with the current facility legal advisor. A new overtime policy was enacted beginning June, Karl Butterer was consulted on legality and approved of the policy. CCMCF offers 8- or 12-hour shifts with overtime previously being anything over 8 hours, this was proving to be not cost effective for the 12-hour shifts. Karl Butterer approved a policy of anything over 80 hours per pay period being considered overtime, this was incorrect though as it must be anything over 40 hours per week as considered overtime.

The incorrect policy was enacted with Karl Butterers' approval and once the mistake was discovered the facility corrected the policy and paid out all previously unpaid overtime to employees for the months of June, July, and August of this year.

Jeff Carmen made a motion that Cass County Medical Care Facility Administrator Mercedes Schirripa and county interim Administrator Jennifer Renfrow meet to discuss the policy issue to determine who is at fault for this. \$150 thousand had to be paid in back wages due to this policy being incorrect. If determination shows Karl Butterer is at fault then a claim against Foster Swifts liability insurance needs to be filed.

Relevant attachments:

There are no questions about the employee roster or resident council minutes.

Public comment.

Jennifer Renfrow stated that the mobile clinic partners local facilities and that opioid settlement funds could be useful for assistance to the facility if needed.

Jennifer Renfrow also questioned wording on the millage signs stating to "vote yes" asking how they were funded as government funded signage cannot request a response in that way. Mercedes Schirripa notified her that the millage signs are paid for by the millage committee with donations.

Final thoughts from the board, Vicki Vaughns story was very touching, all in agreement that the community should also hear such stories from the facility. Moving forward it is suggested that they be shared at county meetings as well.

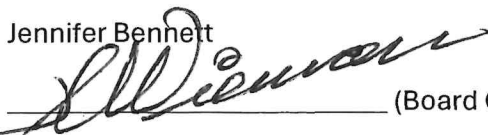
Next board meeting to take place October 27th. All present in agreement.

Dr. James Wierman moves to recess. Vicki Vaughn seconded the motion.

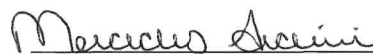
Recess started at 11:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Bennett



(Board Chairperson)

 (Administrator)