

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

November 24th, 2025

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

Meeting called to order at 9:44 a.m.

Guests: Rie Shimada, Lynda Newton (DON), Austin Morgan (Director of Maintenance), Jennifer Rentfrow (County Administrator), Jodi Nestich (IT)

No Public Comment.

Additions/deletions to Agenda:

Jeff Carmen moved to accept the agenda, Dr. James Wierman seconded. The motion carried.

Dr. James Wierman made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Jeff Carmen seconded, the motion carried.

Lynda Newton reported her story.

During care conferences recently with unit managers and residents and family, at least 2 residents wanted to state how grateful and happy they are with their care at the facility. Care conferences are to voice concerns and update on care and needs so it's very nice that residents wanted to add how pleased they were overall. Lynda Newton also states regarding care conferences that while in the past concerns that were brought up were large facility wide issues, more recently the issues brought up are smaller and more specific to the residents, possibly showing the largest issues of the past have been improved upon and are no longer such pressing concerns.

Per QAPI, there were 11 falls in October with none repeating to single residents.

For Poly pharmacy, Lynda Newton states that by State of Michigan standards of 9 or less medications per resident the facility is at 65% currently, down from 52% in October. These numbers are also for long-term residents only, and do not include PRN medications. These numbers are expected to fluctuate as the facility continues to strive for less medications prescribed as well as long-term residents changing and being added.

Dr. James Wierman states that 8 or less medications are also acceptable to aim for and cautions strictly following State suggestions as they can often be behind in current recommendations due to constraints in updating information.

Dr. James Wierman also inquires about the integration in PCC of tracking medications and notifications to staff of issues with medications. Mercedes Schirripa states that with new pharmacy Aurora, that is soon to be in effect.

Pharmacy contract, having been reviewed by the attorney, is approved. Aurora will go into effect on December 22nd this year as Remedi contract ends.

Dr. James Wierman asks if the pharmacy will be billing for medications. Mercedes Schirripa states that yes, Aurora has their own biller, with Lynda Newton adding that some over the counter medications the facility does purchase. Mercedes Schirripa also adds that some high-cost medications need review as the facility absorbs that cost.

Lynda Newton also adds that there is differentiation between long-term and short-term stays, as it is more of a loss to the facility for a short-term resident to have a high-cost medication. There can be case by case instances where a short-term resident may bring their own medication if applicable.

Dr. James Wierman asks what facility a resident would go to if refused at Cass County Medical Care Facility due to medication costs and Lynda Newton responds that it is most likely to a facility that is larger or more concerned with census than costs. For profit and corporate owned facilities often have multiple buildings and can therefore absorb more costly medications easier than one county nonprofit building can.

Dr. James Wierman states that a Cass county resident should never be turned away from the facility due to cost and Jeff Carmen asks for specification on whether there is a difference in cost for a private pay versus Medicaid or Medicare covered resident. Mercedes Schirripa states that depending on coverage a resident's plan may cover some of the medication cost. Lynda Newton states that while she does not focus on medication costs when approving new admissions, it is a point of notice when they are high and notes that most hospitals also consider medication costs with patients and may not administer high-cost medications during short admissions.

Jeff Carmen asks if CCMCF ever rejects a resident due to medication cost, Mercedes Schirripa begins to answer that it depends and Jeff Carmen shouts at her, demanding only a yes or no answer to the question to which Mercedes Schirripa states that yes, Berrien and surrounding county residents may be refused for high cost medications, but never Cass county residents for that alone.

The check register was reviewed.

Jeff Carmen notes Phil Altman on the register and asks if there is an end date planned for his consultancy. Jenna Badner states it is ongoing but decreasing and meetings are more often over zoom rather than in-person which is a lesser cost.

Jeff Carmen moves to approve the check register, all in favor.

Recent census was reviewed:

Jenna Badner states that October averaged out at the end of the month with over 85% occupancy. Dr. James Wierman notes that there are only 3 private-pay residents with the rest having coverage of some type and Mercedes Schirripa responds that that is correct, not many can afford to pay out

of pocket. Dr. James Wierman asks what other facilities charge for private-pay daily rates and are they applicable to ours. Mercedes Schirripa states as she is aware at least two local facilities are close in price. Jeff Carmen and Dr. James Wierman express concern with private pay costs and availability of coverage for area residents. Mercedes Schirripa states that there are spousal allowances with Medicaid that allow residents to keep certain assets over single coverage. Lynda Newton states that there is a difference between for-profit facilities and our county facility with costs related to sufficient staffing and supplies. For profit facilities may charge less daily but generally run much tighter regarding staffing and supplies.

Cash position and budget were reviewed.

Jeff Carmen requests a work session on the budget. He suggests ongoing education for the community on protecting assets when entering a skilled nursing facility. He would like to discuss this and the budget in a scheduled work session including the board, attorneys, county officials, etc. to be included. Mercedes Schirripa suggests an elder law attorney as well.

Jeff Carmen states he would like to schedule a meeting with the County Director to coordinate a discussion on this issue.

Jenna Badner states that there are graphs in the Board packet presenting the net position and cash flow. Dr. James Wierman expresses confusion to which Jenna Badner offers to explain. Jeff Carmen states that now is not the time for in-depth explanation and would like to schedule a work session for that.

Jenna Badner noted the year end losses have greatly improved by 2.2 million since this time last year, and \$195,696 ahead of budget. Jenna Badner also notes improvement in the A/R, with gross days of debt in accounts receivable going from on average 93 days down to 67, net at 46 days with the goal being 45 days.

Covid/Influenza update.

Lynda Newton states that there have been no positive cases since September for staff or residents.

There was a vaccination clinic recently and vaccines continue to be offered, even, if need be, after discharge if a resident had requested one while admitted. All staff and residents are offered vaccinations upon admitting/hiring as well as facility wide every fall. Education on vaccines continues as well for any staff or resident that requests it.

Lynda Newton also mentions that cost is a slight issue, with the facilities current pharmacy charging \$1000 for a pack of 10 vaccines. Once the pharmacy switches to Aurora, purchasing single doses will be available and less costly.

Austin Morgan provided the maintenance report:

Work with Lapine on the updated HVAC system is almost complete. With the help of Jodi Nestich a computer has been installed in the Maintenance office for monitoring and control of the heating program. This is connected to the HVAC system and controls and monitors the heating. It can help with the cooling but does not fully run that system.

All resident bathrooms have been painted and the baskets for toiletries are all mounted as well. Maintenance is moving on to the vinyl behind resident beds and general building maintenance issues as they arise.

Camera Contract Approval.

Per Jeff Carmen's request, Jodi Nestich from IT is present for her recommendation on the camera contract quotes. Jodi Nestich states that her recommendation is for the communications company as they are already in use throughout most other county buildings and as an added plus AI monitoring is also included in that service. The panic button as requested has been removed from the quote and replaced with the panic button type already in use in other county buildings.

Jeff Carmen asks for more information on the AI aspect of the quote. Jodi Nestich states it is built into the camera system. As the AI "learns" the facility it will notify management of safety issues such as resident falls and wandering into unmonitored areas of the facility.

Jeff Carmen moves to approve the proposal subject to attorney review.

Mercedes Schirripa mentions that with this contract there is also the possibility of 2 grants that may offset some of the cost.

Dr. James Wierman questions the intercom system update in the quote. Jodi Nestich states that she had James fix the paging through the phone system and it is working that way except for 1 hallway, which they are in process of fixing. The speaker paging system has unshielded and outdated wiring that would need to be replaced for paging to be operational that way.

Jeff Carmen moves to approve proposal per review again, Dr. James Wierman seconds and the motion passes.

Mowing and Plowing Contract Approval.

Mercedes Schirripa states that the attorney has reviewed the plowing and mowing contract with and said contract has been signed. Liability insurance proofs are also available.

She also states that the pharmacy contract has been reviewed by the attorney as well and Jeff Carmen states that it is not needed to be discussed further as the pharmacy contract was approved barring that review at last month's meeting.

Dr. James Wierman notes that the plowing cost is not stated in the signed contract. Mercedes Schirripa states that the cost is \$2,700 monthly with \$2000 per month for the mowing season,

equaling \$500 weekly and \$700 monthly for the plowing season, not the full \$2,700 every month all year. The plowing services include salting the walkways and parking lot as well.

Jeff Carmen states contract approval subject to attorney review and costs on contract updated.

MCMCF council meeting.

Dr. James Wierman states to aim for December for this meeting with Jeff Carmen in agreement and wants to add this to the work session. Dr. James Wierman asks if this should be discussed during a board meeting or have a separate meeting for the topic. Jeff Carmen responds that Vicki Vaughn should be included as she is absent from this meeting and asks Mercedes Schirripa to schedule a work session ahead of the January Board meeting. Dr. James Wierman states that he will be traveling in January and could the work session be scheduled for near the December Board meeting, all in agreement with that course of action.

Market Study.

Mercedes Schirripa states she has no quotes for this currently as she has not received responses yet. She asks if the Board wants to vote to move forward with the study or receive quotes first. Jeff Carmen states that he would like to authorize the administrator to procure a proposal to update the market study as well as including Area Agency on Aging and confirming what entity pays costs.

Foster and Swift Overtime Policy Recoupment of Funds.

Mercedes Schirripa states that herself, Jennifer Rentfrow and Karl Butterer had a discussion via zoom. There ultimately was no extra cost to the facility, it was overtime income that would have been in payroll. Karl's verbiage proved confusing resulting in this situation.

Jennifer Rentfrow agrees and confirms that the verbiage is confusing, adding that the wording of the law itself is also confusing. The law states two separate triggers for overtime payment, stating any hours over 8 daily as well as 80 per pay period, both resulting in overtime payment, which added to the confusion overall.

Dr. James Wierman asks if anyone working a 12-hour shift receives 4 hours of overtime then and the answer is yes.

Jeff Carmen confirms that there is no claim to be filed in this circumstance and that is accurate.

Working packet.

Dr. James Wierman states that he would like to pick up a physical packet for board meetings at the facility moving forward and Jeff Carmen agrees. This is rather than receiving the packets via email.

Mercedes Schirripa provided an administrator's report:

There is currently 1 open FRI, facility related incident, in regard to a fall that resulted in a fracture. State has concluded their survey on this incident. There are 2 revisions to be made going forward with State also stating that this fall was unpreventable. The plan of correction is in process.

The facility has a Holiday party upcoming scheduled for December 11th from 6-8pm. Residents voted on a theme and The Grinch was chosen.

Mercedes Schirripa asks the board for approval of an amount per employee for Christmas gifts. Last year's limit was \$20 per employee; there are currently 152 staff members. Jeff Carmen asks what amount Mercedes would recommend and she responds that an increased cost of \$30 per staff member should be sufficient. Like last year's process, 5-6 different gift items in that price range would be purchased for employees to choose which suits them.

Jeff carmen moves to approve the budget of \$30 gift expense per employee. Dr. James Wierman seconds and the motion passed.

Relevant attachments:

Questions per the employee roster.

It is noted that RN employment is increasing as well as administrative staff. Mercedes Schirripa agrees while noting that there is still less administrative than previously with Lynda Newton adding that nursing management is included in those totals.

Jeff Carmen asks if terminations are high, Mercedes Schirripa and Lynda Newton both state yes, but due to non-compliance and standards being met with terminated staff.

Dr. James Wierman asks about vacant positions. Mercedes Schirripa states there are 2 openings for RN, 1 for LPN, and that CNA positions are always available. Dr. James Wierman asks who offers training for CNA's and is that something the facility could provide. Mercedes Schirripa states that most common locally for training is either Back to Basics or Southwestern Michigan College and that the facility does offer reimbursement of training costs upon hire. Jeff Carmen asks if training costs could be paid by the facility upfront for those who would like it but cannot afford it. Mercedes Schirripa states that she can have the attorney produce a contract offering payment of training contingent on at least 6 months of employment with the facility. Dr. James Wierman and Jeff Carmen would both like this done.

Lynda Newton adds that CNA training is currently 4-8 hours a day or evening for 4-8 weeks depending on who is training and that trainees must also pass a state certification test.

There are no questions on the resident council minutes or newsletter.

Next board meeting to take place December 15th. All present in agreement.

Mercedes Schirripa asks if we may move directly into the Outpatient meeting before entering the closed session. It was decided to hold off on the closed session until Vicki Vaughn could be

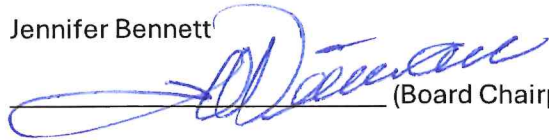
present as the Administrator's evaluation is very important and all board members should be present.

Dr. James Wierman is agreeable. Jeff makes a motion and Dr. Wierman seconds the motion.

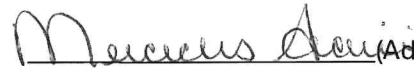
Recess started at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Bennett



(Board Chairperson)



(Administrator)