

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

December 15th, 2025

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

Meeting called to order: Dr. James Wierman called the meeting to order, Jeff Carmen seconds, meeting called to order at 9:46am.

Guests: Rie Shimada (Director of Rehabilitation), Lynda Newton (DON), Karen Marcath (Director of DHHS), Ambrosia Neldon (Cass County Marketing and Communications Manager)
Renee Beniak (Executive Director MCMCFC), Doug Phillips (Plante Moran)

No Public Comment.

Additions/deletions to Agenda:

Mercedes Schirripa asks that due to the time may we move immediately to the zoom presentation from Renee Beniak. All in agreement

Michigan County Medical Care Facilities (MCMCFC) meeting with Renee Beniak via zoom.

This council aims to educate and assist new administrators as well as board members with their overall duties and responsibilities with a county run facility. Renee Beniak has 20 years of experience with this council and explains how County run facilities differ from corporate or for-profit facilities. The mission of any County run facility is to provide care for the aged and infirm within the County regardless of ability to pay. County facilities are owned by the County they are in, land and building, but still licensed by the State. Most facilities are considered class 1 or 2 with County facilities alone being class 3. This classification allows for more returns from State profits in taxes, which are invested back into the facility.

County run facilities generally have higher staffing ratios in comparison to corporate or for-profit facilities. Michigan facilities 41% have a 5-star rating, overall.

County run facilities are overseen by a 3-member DHHS board. Board duties include policy development and approval, financial resources and budget planning for the facility as well as the Board itself, the scope and mission of the facility such as specified needs like dialysis or dementia specific units. The Board assesses its own performance as well as approval of medical director and administrator of facilities. The Board is also invited to attend any conferences the administrator does for knowledge and education purposes.

Renee Beniak asks if there are any questions.

Jeff Carmen states that he has questions for the team but not for Renee herself. Dr. James Wierman thanks Renee for her presentation and states that he sees this as a challenge for the board members as a team to do a better job overall.

Due to timing and agenda being altered, Doug Phillips presents for Plante Moran next.

Doug Phillips is presenting for Plante Moran Real Point, a branch of the firm that focuses on capital projects consulting and tax audit specifically for senior living in areas to help with concept planning for projects that may benefit seniors. He states there was an audit at Cass County 4 years ago which showed a need in the community for senior living but as this is now old data and nothing has moved forward, it is requested that a restudy be done. Doug Phillips states that while a market study would normally be the first step in this process the rural area of the County does not affect those results the way a larger city area would and so that step could be done concurrently with the restudy or skipped altogether.

A flow chart is presented showing the steps in the process from studying need in the community to deciding on a project that will address that need, to completion of said project.

Jeff Carmen states in relation to this, local hospitals and clinics may be closing or changing ownership and how that will affect their operations regarding the community needs as well as competition with our own facility depending on what new or different services could be offered with these changes.

Doug Phillips states that per the proposal, a task order agreement would be completed that would employ the Board with this process and begin the process with the first step being the market study. The study is a roughly 8-week time frame to collect and process community data at a cost of \$20 thousand. This first step in the process can begin immediately with Board approval and be completed by early March of 2026. Doug Phillips stresses flexibility within the entire process including how involved Plante Moran is and how far to proceed or stop with any step.

Vicki Vaughn asks how involved the facility administrator would be in this process in that would it distract from her duties. Mercedes Schirripa states that her role would mostly be facilitating between parties as opposed to direct involvement.

Dr. James Wierman asks if this study should begin before or after the upcoming work session. Both Jeff Carmen and Doug Phillips agree it can be prior to or concurrent with the work session as the county will eventually be involved with any possible projects.

Jeff Carmen moves to authorize the administrator to accept the task order agreement to update the 2021 market study. Dr. James Wierman seconds. All are in favor and the motion passes.

Approval of the agenda, additions and deletions to the agenda. Vicki Vaughn accepts the agenda. Jeff Carmen seconds. Additions and deletions to the agenda accepted.

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

Lynda Newton reported her story.

A long-term resident of the facility recently passed. This residents' family met with Lynda Newton and Mercedes Schirripa stating they wanted to provide a meal to staff in thanks for the care their family member received as well as donate all funeral proceeds to the facility and activities department.

Mercedes Schirripa adds that the family had expressed guilt on initial admission but stated that guilt was quickly eased in seeing the level of care provided by the facility and staff. Family states they would like to continue volunteering at the facility.

Jeff Carmen asks that Dr. James Weirman send family a letter from the Board expressing condolences as well as thanks for their generosity.

Jeff Carmen also asks if there is dementia care in the facility. Mercedes Schirripa states that yes there is depending on severity. CCMCF employs door alarms, constant checks, and camera surveillance, but when dementia behaviors increase to a level requiring a locked facility Cass County Medical Care Facility can no longer safely care for that resident. The State allows 3 minutes before a missing resident need to be reported as an elopement, and Mercedes Schirripa adds that this is why updating the security system is needed as there are currently blind spots with the cameras.

Per QAPI, there were 9 falls in November with 4 of those falls from the same 2 residents at 2 falls each. Lynda Newton states that falls do come with a risk of injury as shown with a recent fracture that is currently in cooperation and investigation with the State. Falls for the facility were less than 9% for November.

For Poly pharmacy, Lynda Newton states that for November 44% of residents were taking 8 or less medications, including PRN. Newly admitted residents whose medications have not been investigated yet as well as antibiotics for illnesses can skew these numbers higher.

The check register was reviewed.

Jenna Badner states that moving forward in addition to the normal check register papers in the packets she will be adding more description of charges. This initially may take time but as the process continues it will streamline and add pre-determined descriptors to known charges. This aims for clarity in charges to the facility. Vicki Vaughn is very appreciative, and the Board is in favor of this as a whole.

Jeff Carmen asks if a Mutual of Omaha charge is employment based. Mercedes Schirripa states it is liability and short-term disability insurance.

Vicki Vaughn asks how many nursing staff are hired by Leader as that is a large charge. Lynda Newton states that it is for traveler nurses who generally have a 3-month contract. Mercedes Schirripa adds that specific charge is most likely from replacing many night staff that were let go at a single time. She notes that it can be difficult to staff the night shift, but this has been improving recently.

Vicki Vaughn also questions a large amount attributed to Cass county-work services CCMCF. Jenna Badner explains that it is a charge from when county workers do any work at the facility including labor and materials. Jenna Badner agrees with Jeff Carmen that county partners are less costly than outside hires for such instances.

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

Recent census was reviewed:

Jenna Badner states that census for the month of November averaged to 70. Census is currently 78 at almost full capacity.

Jeff Carmen asks about dementia stating that if residents with dementia stay is relevant to severity how often do they need to be placed elsewhere. Mercedes Schirripa states that it is not often and mostly depends on level of aggression expressed and how easily they are redirected. Staff work very hard to work with varying levels of need. Dr. James Wierman adds that studies have shown for patients with dementia that a pleasant start to their day can carry through the rest of the day regardless of remembering the pleasant beginning or not.

Vicki Vaughn asks per finance when the last time a cost-of-living assessment was done at the facility. Mercedes Schirripa responds that she is unsure but reminds the Board they have recently approved to have another done at the beginning of January 2026, and it will take 90 days to complete.

Jeff Carmen asks about employee wages regarding covid funding. Mercedes Schirripa and Jenna Badner state it is continuing another year and that direct care staff such as CNA's and nursing receive an additional \$3.40 an hour and indirect care staff such as dietary and housekeeping receive an additional 85 cents an hour.

Vicki Vaughn asks if there are ever any PTO mistakes and if so, how is that remedied. Mercedes Schirripa states that it happens and usually the employee brings it to their attention. If proven legitimate the missed PTO amount is paid by check immediately. Mercedes Schirripa adds that Kronos, the current program that tracks hours does not always calculate PTO time accurately. She would like to in the future switch to a different system, such as ADP which she has used in the past with better results.

Cash position was reviewed.

Jeff Carmen asks if the facility has been at full capacity any time recently. Jenna Badner and Mercedes Schirripa both agree that it has been some time but mention that at least 1 private room is often left empty for grieving families in the event a resident is actively passing in the facility.

Jenna Badner states that a cash settlement from the State was recently received by the facility explaining the increase from October to November. She also clarified that the CCMCF services charge Vicki Vaughn had questions about were specifically for an ice and water dispenser that needed replacement.

Covid/Influenza update.

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

Maintenance report:

Reported per Mercedes Schirripa for Austin Morgan, the HVAC project with Lapine is completed. The final charge will be present on the check register next month. CCMCF must pay the charges to then be reimbursed by the grant.

Mowing and Plowing Contract.

Mercedes Schirripa states that per the last Board meeting request she has updated the contract to reflect price agreements accurately but adds that in doing so she reevaluated the entire contract with an attorney. This was to fine tune the contract and add to the liability insurance. She also notes to avoid confusion on the check register, that there are technically 2 companies, both owned by the same person, who separately handle tasks. Mack cut does the mowing and Legend does the plowing and salting.

Vicki Vaughn asks if this adjustment has been going well with the new service, Mercedes Schirripa states it has been overall so far. Vicki Vaughn also asks if the County ever plows the driveway into the facility parking lot, with Jeff Carmen stating they could feasibly salt the area as they are already on Hospital Road. Mercedes Schirripa states that may be possible as the County has filled potholes on site quickly and at no cost before. She states that Austin Morgan is the main contact of communication between the facility and county road commission.

Jeff Carmen asks about the \$700 cost to plow. Mercedes Schirripa states she was previously incorrect in that it is not \$700 monthly to plow but \$500 per time needed. She adds that the previous company contracted for plowing services charged \$300 per plow but did not include sidewalks and walkways which are included now.

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. No claim exists and all overtime has been paid accordingly.

Mercedes Schirripa provided an administrator's report:

Plan of Correction for the fall resulting in a fracture is still out. It is due this month, December, and the facility will submit for a desk review in lieu of in person.

Mercedes Schirripa asks the Board to extend the current farmers lease for another year. The facility is currently receiving \$200 per acre unirrigated which is a competitive price. Jeff Carmen moves to approve this extension of the farmland lease; all are in favor and the motion passes.

Mercedes Schirripa states the facility received a \$60 thousand dollar bill for the special election, it is broken down into cost by township and will be present on next months check register.

Mercedes Schirripa states that due to the new HVAC systems monitoring capabilities it is noted that several residents' rooms are cold. Upon investigation maintenance discovered that the curtains were blocking the ventilation. Mercedes Schirripa asks the Board for approval to purchase blinds that would stick close to windows to keep cold and light out but not hang so low as to block the heat. This is at a cost of \$10 thousand and would be an easy switch out. Vicki Vaughn asks if the current curtains have pulls like the blinds would and is this a fire concern. Mercedes Schirripa states she will confirm safety with the fire marshal before installing.

Jeff Carmen makes the motion to approve the purchase of blinds for residents' rooms per fire marshal safety decision, Vicki Vaughn seconds and the motion passes.

Mercedes Schirripa states per billing department that the facility is paying \$6,500 monthly to Citrine Cooperman for billing services with Jennifer Bennett in house billing for private pay, hospice, and auto for both the facility as well as outpatient. Waystar, a billing program, would cost \$377 monthly with the initiation fee waived. Waystar in addition to Jennifer Bennett, would remove the need for Citrine Cooperman on a quicker timeline, moving billing fully in house. The program would handle claims, send statements, provide remittance advice with payments, personalize information to the residents, and allow electronic payments which the facility currently cannot accept.

Mercedes Schirripa states her plan is to move Medicaid billing in house possibly by February 2026 and Medicare and commercial insurance to follow with Waystar in use.

Jeff Carmen is concerned about cancelling a contract with Citrine and Cooperman, asking if it can be terminated at any time or is there a process to that. Vicki Vaughn also asks if there is an end date to this contract. Mercedes Schirripa states it has no specified end date; the contract is ongoing and requires written notification to end. She also notes that this would be an incremental process as responsibilities came from Citrine and Cooperman to Jennifer Bennett as well while Waystar is implemented.

Jeff Carmen states this is worth discussing at the work session as other buildings in the County could benefit from knowing about the Waystar program and how it could assist with billing.

Jeff Carmen makes the motion to approve, Vicki Vaughn seconds, all in favor, the motion passes.

Work session:

Per Dr. James Wierman to discuss who all should be involved and to set a date and time.

Jeff Carmen states that he appreciates the presentations that provide data information and outline how money is being spent on what services such as millage and grants, etc.

Mercedes Schirripa states that the facility is currently in a good position financially, which allows time to discuss what could be improved going forward. Dr. James Wierman suggests focusing on what needs to be improved or upgraded at the facility currently.

Jeff Carmen states he would like the work session to be scheduled in January 2026, close to the Board meeting date. Mercedes Schirripa states that she can provide a budget and list of current needs for the facility and asks Jeff who all will be included per the Board. Jeff Carmen states that the Board, Mercedes, and the facility's management team should all be present. The date is set for January 26th, 2026.

Relevant attachments:

Questions per the employee roster.

Dr. James Wierman asks how many in nursing administration is an RN, expressing concern that the administration staff is large. Mercedes Schirripa states that there are 4 RN's and 2 LPN's as nursing administration and herself and Lynda Newton both add that this is to take paperwork type tasks from the direct care nursing staff so they may focus directly on the residents.

Jeff Carmen asks if staffing numbers are lower in for-profit facilities, and if information comparing staffing numbers from for-profit to non-profit/County run facilities could be provided at the work session. Mercedes Schirripa states that yes, the staffing numbers are better in a county run facility with Lynda Newton adding that per the State survey it was noted that CCMCF night staff numbers were applicable to some facilities day staff numbers.

There are no questions on the newsletter.

Resident council minutes:

Dr. James Wierman notes complaints from residents about wait time for call lights being answered. Lynda Newton states that some residents require 2 staff members to assist them, pulling from the floor and causing slightly longer wait times. She also notes newer staff need reminding of facility policy in that Hoyer lift transfers need 2 staff but only 1 of them need to be nursing staff. This would make available a floor aid that might otherwise be supervising unnecessarily.

Dr. James Wierman requests the closed session on the agenda be rescheduled to Monday December 22nd. Mercedes Schirripa requests a morning timeframe. Jeff Carmen suggests 9am with

Vicki Vaughn in agreement. The Board agrees that after adjournment of today's meeting, the closed session will be rescheduled for 9am Monday December 22nd and a special meeting notice will be posted.

Public comment:

The Board asks about a guest that was present at a DHHS meeting in October and if there is any progress with their case. Karen Marcath states that DHHS has investigated home studies out of state but other than that, there is no progress currently.

Karen Marcath also requests a bigger room for Board meeting to be held in going forward, noting that the current location is not sufficient and not inviting for the public. Jeff Carmen suggests using the County commissioners' chambers if allowable.

Next board meeting to take place January 26th. All present in agreement.

Vicki Vaughn makes the motion to recess, all in agreement.


Recess started at 11:52 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Bennett



(Board Chairperson)



(Administrator)
