

Board Meeting
Monday, January 26, 2026
5:00 p.m., St. Vincent's Annex
MINUTES

1. CONVENE

a. Call to Order

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Wellvance Board of Directors was held on Monday, January 26, 2026, in the St. Vincent's Annex in West Branch. Chairperson D. Jay O'Farrell called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A virtual option via Microsoft TEAMS was also offered for public attendance.

b. Roll Call

Board members physically present: D. Jay O'Farrell, Bonnie Lixey, Mark Surbrook, Matt Jordan, Chuck Varner, Amy Knepp, Renee Diener, Rose Walsh, and Debbie Welsch

Board members present via video conference: Charles Wiltse

Board members excused: None

Board members absent: None

Staff present: Trish Otremba, Laura Zettel, Tyler Rood, and Joseph Chrivia

Staff present via video conference: Teresa McGee, Regina Demetrakeas, Jennifer Warner, Sydney Larsen, Jennifer Carr, Jennifer Verbeke, Coral Kujawski, Michon VanWormer, and Lori Enos.

Staff absent: None

Guests: Eric Kurtz, NMRE CEO; Gary Klacking

Guests via video conference: None

A quorum was present.

c. Approval of Board meeting minutes

It was moved by Ms. Walsh and seconded by Ms. Diener to approve the minutes of the November 24, 2025, Board meeting as presented. All ayes, motion passed.

d. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Mr. Surbrook and seconded by Ms. Welsch to approve the agenda as presented. All ayes, motion passed.

e. Correspondence

Ms. Otremba shared three newsletters with the Board: IT Download, Training Newsletter, and the Trauma Informed Newsletter. She reviewed each and highlighted several key points for the Board.

Additionally, Ms. Otremba shared an email from the Tawas City Police Chief complimenting the Agency's handling of a recent situation. Ms. Otremba shared her strong belief in



community partnership, and it is encouraging to receive positive feedback from local law enforcement.

f. Legislative Updates

Ms. Otremba shared three documents discussing the ruling from Judge Yates concerning the RFP lawsuits. She stated it was an honor to be present during the proceedings and participate in the process. Although the ruling favored the CMH's, she reminded everyone that the fight is far from over and we will continue the advocacy work on building a resilient system.

g. Announcements – Mr. O'Farrell delayed announcements until after Mr. Kurtz' presentation.

i. Public Comments -- None.

2. BOARD EDUCATION

Ms. Otremba introduced Eric Kurtz, Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Michigan Regional Entity and thanked him for traveling here tonight. Mr. Kurtz thanked the Board for the opportunity to address them and shared a presentation.

Mr. Kurtz began with a brief overview of the NMRE. He said it was formed in 2013 to serve as the PIHIP for the northern 21 Counties of the Lower Peninsula. He said they receive state funding for contracts and behavioral health services, ensure compliance with the state partial risk contract, ensure adequacy of provider network available services, and manages SUD funding. He said funding comes primarily from Medicaid (approximately \$235 million per fiscal year); but also receives approximately \$19 million in Medicaid SUD funding, \$7 million in SUD Block Grants, and \$1.9 million in Liquor Tax funding. Mr. Kurtz detailed the funding sources and restrictions for their use.

He stated the NMRE finances are in a state of constant discussion. Currently, they hold a reserve of approximately \$20 million; however, they believe they need to have double that amount to ensure needs are met.

Mr. Kurtz discussed the region's behavior health homes and SUD health homes, the participation rate and how they are utilized.

Looking to the future, Mr. Kurtz said revenue fluctuations, federal Medicaid threats, the State's desire to reduce PIHPs, the lack of inpatient beds, and conflict free access and planning are major concerns. He discussed each of these threats at length with the Board.

Regarding the State's efforts to reduce PIHPs, he discussed the plan to merge the NMRE with the U.P. to form Bridge Health PIHP. He explained the benefits of this alliance as the two PHIPs have worked together for years.

The Board asked if the judge gave the State a deadline to fix the issues with their RFP and reissue it; Mr. Kurtz said the judge did not. He explained he doesn't think the judge cares

when, or if, the State corrects the RFP as long as it is done before they reissue it. Meanwhile, the current process remains in place.

Mr. Kurtz urged the Board to continue to encourage local legislators to resist wholesale changes to the State's current behavioral health model and to do everything possible to comply with current standards to show that CMHs are meeting the needs of the citizens.

3. FAREWELL TO LONGTIME BOARD MEMBER

Ms. Otremba asked Gary Klacking to come forward. She thanked Mr. Klacking for his 15 years of service to the Agency. She outlined his accomplishments and stated he served the Board since 2011, worked with three different CEOs, chaired the E&F Committee, served on the Facilities Committee and the Human Resources Committee; he served as a Board officer as Treasurer and Vice-Chair. Additionally, he represented the Agency as a member and Chairman of the NMRE Board of Directors.

Ms. Otremba presented Mr. Klacking with a small token of appreciation from the Board of his years of service to the community.

Mr. Klacking shared a few thoughts with the direction of behavioral health in the State right now. He said it is difficult to retire due to the urgency to advocate for those who need our services; however, he knows it is the time in his life where he needs to retire.

He said he will miss the board and staff members he has worked with over the years and urged everyone to keep fighting the good fight to ensure those who need our services can get them.

Mr. Klacking and Mr. Kurtz departed.

4. REPORTS

a. Chairperson – None

b. Board Association – Mr. O'Farrell said the winter conference is next week in Kalamazoo.

c. NMRE – Next meeting on Wednesday.

d. Chief Executive Officer

Ms. Otremba said she's waived her normal report to give Mr. Kurtz additional time. However, she shared a few highlights. She said the Agency is forming a Wellvance Advisory Group of consumers, guardians, and staff. She said they will meet bi-monthly to get feedback. She announced the Iosco Opioid funding has initially approved two proposals from the Agency. She said a Grace and Empathy Committee has formed and she gave insights into their mission. She stated preparations for the CARF reaccreditation are ongoing. Finally, she shared recent community involvement.

e. Committee

(1) Recipient Rights Appeals – December 11, 2025

Committee chair Rose Walsh read the Committee meeting minutes.

There were no motions that required Board action.

(2) Human Resources – December 19, 2025

Committee chair Amy Knepp read the Committee meeting minutes.

It was moved by Ms. Knepp and seconded by Ms. Welsch that Agency Policy was followed in a recent employee termination. All ayes; motion passed.

(3) Human Resources – January 5, 2026

Committee chair Amy Knepp read the Committee meeting minutes.

It was moved by Ms. Knepp and seconded by Ms. Lixey to approve the Behavior Support Specialist Job Description. All ayes; motion passed.

It was moved by Ms. Knepp and seconded by Mr. Jordan to approve the Chief Operations Officer Job Description. All ayes; motion passed.

It was moved by Ms. Knepp and seconded by Ms. Welsch to approve the Health Services Supervisor Job Description. All ayes; motion passed.

(4) Program – January 8, 2026

Committee chair Debbie Welsch read the Committee meeting minutes.

It was moved by Ms. Welsch and seconded by Ms. Walsh to approve the Clinical Services Policy Manual. All ayes; motion passed.

(5) Facilities – January 8, 2026

Committee chair Mark Surbrook read the Committee meeting minutes.

It was moved by Mr. Surbrook and seconded by Mr. Varner to approve the plan to remove two vehicles from the fleet and place them for auction. All ayes; motion passed.

It was moved by Mr. Surbrook and seconded by Ms. Lixey to approve the purchase of two vehicles. All ayes; motion passed.

It was moved by Mr. Surbrook and seconded by Mr. Jordan to approve the three-month contract with Diamond Shine. All ayes; motion passed.

(6) Executive & Finance – January 20, 2026

Committee member Chuck Varner read the Committee meeting minutes.

It was moved by Mr. Varner and seconded by Mr. Surbrook to accept the November Financial reports. All ayes; motion passed.

It was moved by Mr. Varner and seconded by Mr. Surbrook to approve the following contracts: two new contracts (North Shores Bay City CRU and Diamond Shine).

Additionally, there was one single-service agreement (North Shores Bay City CRU) and two renewals without a rate change (Crystal Davis and Plainsfield Township Lease). All ayes; motion passed.

5. OLD BUSINESS – None.

6. NEW BUSINESS – Board Reorganization.

Ms. Otremba stated that due to Mr. Klacking's retirement, his position as a Board Officer needs to be filled. According to Board Policy, this is handled in the same manner as the annual reorganization.

Mr. O'Farrell turned control of the meeting over to Ms. Diener, Chair of the Nominating Committee.

a. Report of Nominating Committee

Ms. Diener read the Nominating Committee minutes.

Ms. Diener called for other nominations three times. No other nominations were offered.

b. Election of Officers

It was moved by Ms. Diener and seconded by Ms. Welsch that nominations be closed and that a unanimous vote be cast for the slate of officers designated by the Nominating Committee. All ayes; motion passed. Elected were:

- (1) Chairperson: D. Jay O'Farrell
- (2) Vice-Chairperson: Matt Jordan
- (3) Treasurer: Bonnie Lixey
- (4) Secretary: Charles Varner

Ms. Diener returned control of the meeting to Mr. O'Farrell, Board Chair.

7. COMMENTS

a. Board – None.

b. Public – None.

8. MEETING DATES

a. Board

- (1) Monday, February 23; 5:00 p.m.; St. Vincent's Annex

b. Committees

- (1) Human Resources – Monday, February 9; 4:00 p.m.; Microsoft TEAMS
- (2) Recipient Rights Advisory – Tuesday, February 10; 4:00 p.m.; Microsoft TEAMS
- (3) Recipient Rights Appeals – Tuesday, February 10; 4:30 p.m.; Microsoft TEAMS
- (4) Program – Thursday, February 12; 2:00 p.m.; Microsoft TEAMS
- (5) Facilities – Thursday, February 12; 3:00 p.m.; Microsoft TEAMS
- (6) Executive & Finance – Tuesday, February 17; 4:00 p.m.; Microsoft TEAMS

c. Other

- (1) CMHAM Winter Conference: February 2-4, Kalamazoo
- (2) CMHAM Summer Conference: June 8-10, Traverse City
- (3) CMHAM Fall Conference: October 26-27, Traverse City

9. ADJOURN

It was moved by Ms. Walsh and seconded by Ms. Welsch to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph L. Chrivia
Recording Secretary