

West Tennessee Legal Services Board of Directors
Minutes of July 26, 2021 Board Meeting, Held via Zoom and in-person

Present: Michael Tate, Sarah Johnston-Barnett, Cathy Clayton, Vanedda Webb, Charles Barnett, Karen Laird, Nhung Nguyen, Barbara Hudson, Cecil Giles, John Hamilton, Mary Jo Middlebrooks, Laura Keeton, Kortney Simmons

Meeting was called to order by Vanedda Webb at 5:30 PM

First Item of Business: Review and approval of April 26, 2021

Ms. Middlebrooks mentioned that she had asked a question in the April meeting that was not recorded in the minutes but encouraged that the minutes still be approved. Mr. Barnett moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Middlebrooks seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Second Item of Business: Program updates

COVID Update – Ms. Clayton explained that WTLS leadership are closely monitoring COVID. All visitors entering WTLS offices must wear masks, and many vaccinated WTLS staff are choosing to continue to wear masks as well. All unvaccinated staff members are required to wear masks in the office. Ms. Clayton said that there may be an increase in restrictions/COVID protocol because of the Delta variant, and that staff are meeting via Microsoft Teams from their own offices rather than meeting in-person in each other's offices for safety out of an abundance of caution.

Ms. Clayton also mentioned how, as a result of COVID, staff have been traveling less, which has resulted in more money left over from grants.

Website Update – Ms. Johnston-Barnett took the Board through some of the newly designed website, including the home page, the self-help page, and the Board page. She explained that at the bottom of the Board page, there is a button labeled "Board Documents" that is a password protected page for Board members to access the calendar of Board meetings, the Board Manual, and some of the most recent Board minutes. The password to access this area of the website is *WTLSboard*

Renters' Rights and Duties Booklets – Ms. Clayton explained that these booklets were produced and printed using a donation from BancorpSouth, and she went through the booklet that WTLS created for Madison County. Mr. Barnett said that these booklets would also be helpful for landlords, especially those with just own a couple of properties.

New Hire Updates – A new Housing Paralegal has been hired and will start next week. They will take the HUD Housing Counseling test. Elizabeth Duke, who has been a law clerk for WTLS for over a year, has been hired as a Generalist Attorney. She will also be helping with the Housing Team. Nhung Nguyen, Karen Laird, Ashley Holliday (General Counsel), and Laura Hilton (EEOC) have been interviewing for Assistant Controller position. They interviewed four people; a job offer was made to one, but they accepted a job offer elsewhere. They will continue interviewing.

Grant Updates – There is more TANF (formerly welfare) funding available, and WTLS is collaborating with the City of Jackson and United Way on a financial literacy and empowerment center. WTLS staff are beginning to work on the ESG grant, which allows WTLS to represent people who are at 30% of the median income; this has potential for expanding statewide. Other funding opportunities are coming up fast, including ones for eviction help and housing counseling, both of which WTLS is looking into. Leadership at WTLS want to make sure that we are focusing on our

mission and not spending more time on managing grants than we should – that is why we must be picky in the grants that we apply for sometimes.

Other Updates – Ms. Clayton explained that divorces are on the rise, landlord and tenant cases are on the rise, and consumer cases are on the rise.

The Summer Rural Law Clerk, under the supervision of Caitlin Hakim, has established vet clinics in General Sessions Courts. Judges are referring clients to us for counsel and advice and sometimes for representation. This started in Benton, Obion, and Crockett Counties. This law clerk is Cole Adams and comes from the University of Alabama; we pay for his time through a \$5000 grant.

Nhung Nguyen, Karen Laird, Ashley Holliday, and Cathy Clayton are attending SEBDA next week, and Ms. Clayton will be presenting on change management.

LSC OIG will be doing a remote fraud review. Ms. Nguyen and Ms. Laird are providing OIG with all of the information and documents that they need.

Third item of business: Proposed policies

Required Vacation – Ms. Clayton explained that LSC considers it “best practices” to have a policy that requires Accounting and IT staff take vacation days every year. This is thought to cut down on the likelihood of fraud. Ms. Clayton explained that this policy had been approved by the Joint Executive/Finance Committee previously, with the understanding that the policy would be brought to the full Board.

Mr. Barnett moved to approve, Ms. Hudson seconded, and the policy was approved unanimously.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Policy – Ms. Johnston-Barnett showed the data on languages spoken at home in each of the counties WTLS serves. She explained that the only data that had been updated by the Census Bureau in the past year was Madison County, which showed a small increase in non-English speakers. All other county data was the same as what was presented last year.

Ms. Clayton explained that the policy submitted for approval had not changed since last year, except for plans to include AOC and other options as alternatives to Language Line, since WTLS staff have had some issues with Language Line in the past. Ms. Clayton also explained that staff are using Microsoft and Google Translate to translate some written documents. She explained that WTLS does not want to go with a translator subscription other than Language Line, since they often require a high monthly fee and WTLS staff need interpreters so infrequently.

Ms. Middlebrooks asked for clarification on the cost of Language Line and on how the AOC interpreters work. Ms. Clayton confirmed that Language Line is pay-by-the-minute rather than a monthly fee and that AOC interpreters are available to interpret over the phone and in court. Court Clerks must pay if AOC interpreters are needed in court. Ms. Webb called out the mention of the TTY service; she said that this is dated and should be updated in next year’s reworking of the LEP. Mr. Barnett moved to approve the LEP policy, Mr. Tate seconded, and the policy was approved unanimously.

Third item of business: Legal Needs Assessment

Ms. Johnston-Barnett went through the Legal Needs Assessment questionnaire and pointed out the questions that had been updated by the Management Team. She then went through the analysis of responses to the Legal Needs questionnaire from January to June 2021. There were few participants, likely due to a combination of COVID and the fact that WTLS has not been pushing the questionnaire to the public. Most responses were favorable toward WTLS. A new question has been added to the questionnaire that will ask participants to name the legal need that they think is most important, and that should provide helpful and more precise data.

Ms. Clayton mentioned that WTLS should work to get the Legal Needs Assessment translated into Spanish, and Ms. Webb suggested that WTLS share it and boost the posts to increase participation.

Fourth item of business: Strategic Plan Implementation Assessment

Ms. Johnston-Barnett presented the Strategic Plan Implementation Assessment, and she and Ms. Clayton talked about the progress toward each of the goals.

Fifth item of business: Board updates

Ms. Clayton informed the Board that WTLS will be holding a Board training in the near future. She explained that WTLS is still trying to recruit new Board members while staying in compliance with LSC's requirements for Board composition. Ms. Clayton stated that WTLS may have a new client Board member, and that an attorney may be interested in joining the Board.

Ms. Clayton informed the Board of a training opportunity through Equal Justice University in September. Attorney Board members attending the training will receive CLE credit, and the session will be recorded in case members want to watch afterwards. WTLS pays a lump sum and can send as many Board members as would like to go.

Sixth item of business: Financial update provided by CFO, Karen Laird

Ms. Laird explained that she provided a full set of financials for June, and that June 30 is the end of most state grants.

Ms. Laird went over the balance sheet. She explained that the Carroll Bank and Trust CD matured on Saturday, July 24; they are sending us a cashier's check and that money will be rolled into a Money Market Account at Community Bank. Ms. Laird explained that interest rates remain low, but the money market account rate is a little better than CD rates. WTLS now has one other CD at Foundation Bank that matures in January – that CD has a 1% interest rate.

Ms. Laird went over the liabilities and net assets portion of the financial update. She explained that most accounts are zeroed out and that WTLS has \$67,000 in unearned revenues for LSC until November.

At the suggestion of the auditors, Ms. Laird showed the Board a report of all bank balances as of 6/30/21.

Ms. Middlebrooks asked for clarification on accounts receivable – are the amounts shown on the page money that has been earned by/is owed to WTLS? Ms. Laird answered that the money is earned income and explained that many of WTLS' grants are reimbursement grants, and this is what creates the accounts receivable – WTLS invoices the grants one month and then WTLS receives a check one or two months later. The housing grants can only be billed in certain stages, and that is why the housing accounts receivable is so high.

There were no other questions about the financial update.

Ms. Laird said that Ms. Nguyen is catching on quickly. Ms. Nguyen has been helping with reports so that she knows what to do when she takes over as CFO.

Mr. Barnett moved to approve the financial update, Ms. Keeton seconded, and the financial update was approved unanimously. Mr. Barnett moved to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:45pm.

Laura Keeton, Board Secretary

Date: _____

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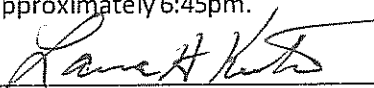
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Date: 11/13/2022