

**West Tennessee Legal Services Board of Directors  
Minutes of December 7, 2020 Board Meeting  
Held Via Zoom Due to COVID-19**

**Present:** Michael Tate, John Hamilton, Vanedda Webb, Barbara Hudson, William Kendall, Laura Keeton, Cecil Giles, Charles Barnett, Kortney Simmons

**Also present:** Karen Laird, Sarah Johnston-Barnett, Cathy Clayton

**First item of business:** October 2020 Board Minutes

Mr. Barnett moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Tate, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Second item of business:** Accounting Manual changes (segregation of duties)

- WTLS has a comprehensive segregation of duties policy that protects against attempts at fraud and reduces errors. For example, the person who signs the checks can't issue the checks.
- COVID has shown issues with our approach – there is not always someone available; we want to keep segregation of duties but allow General Counsel to sign in place of Executive Director.
- Segregation of duties chart is obsolete and will be updated (this doesn't require Board approval; Ms. Laird and accounting intern will work to fix this)
- Ms. Clayton went over the new language in the policy.

Mr. Barnett moved to approve the language, seconded by Mr. Tate, and the Accounting Manual changes were approved unanimously.

**Third item of business:** 2021 proposed priorities.

- Ms. Clayton reviewed memo on proposed priorities for the coming year; they have not changed since last year.
- We expect the need for our services to increase next year, specifically in housing, resulting from income insecurity due to COVID (expecting issues for both landlords and tenants)
- We received 179 responses for the Legal Needs Assessment, more than we usually receive.

Ms. Webb moved to adopt the priorities, seconded by Ms. Keeton, and the 2021 priorities were approved unanimously.

**Fourth item of business:** Certificate of Program Integrity

- LSC requires we do a memo every year to inform whether we maintained program integrity per LSC regulations.

After review of the memo, Ms. Simmons moved to adopt the Certificate of Program Integrity. Mr. Barnett seconded. Certificate of Program Integrity was approved unanimously.

**Fifth item of business:** Strategic plan

- Ms. Johnston-Barnett presented the entire strategic plan.

Mr. Barnett moved to approve, seconded by Ms. Keeton, and the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan was approved unanimously.

**Sixth item of business:** Whistleblower and Conflicts of Interest Policy – need to be signed and returned

**Seventh item of business:** program update

Mr. Pearson resignation

State of the program report

- Ms. Clayton presented the annual state of the program report.
- Ms. Clayton announced staff changes:
  - o Jake Old (newest attorney), Garth Carson (COVID attorney), Chelsea Glaspie (TSLA attorney)
  - o Moved two attorneys away from elder abuse VOCA work due to decreased amount of funding (moved to another VOCA unit)
  - o Katelynn Pratt hired as intake paralegal (replacement)
  - o Hired Aaron Hilton for Ryan White/HOPWA caseworker(replacement)
  - o Accounting unit is restructuring due to Sandy Bingham retirement
- Opened fewer cases this year, directly pandemic related (shut down of courts and moratoriums)
- Senior Managing Attorney Beth Bates' advocacy expanded DHS funding statewide, and Housing Manager Vanessa Bullock has been recognized as a state- and nation-wide expert on housing issues.
- Ms. Clayton discussed issues with funding – changes in grant budgets due to the pandemic.
- Will need to ask LSC for a waiver for the 12.5% PAI of total LSC budget requirement due to the prior Pro Bono Coordinator taking time off work and due to costs associated with CLEs and mileage that are usually spent on pro bono but haven't been needed this year.
- Highlighted grants awarded include:
  - o DOJ LAV
  - o Expanded Cycles of Success program
  - o Equal Justice Works fellow for debt relief
  - o Foundation Funding from Community Foundation (first significant foundational funding)

**Eighth item of business:** Financial reports

- Ms. Laird shared the balance sheet for October, item by item, and the income statement.
  - o There were no questions on the income and balance sheet.
- Mrs. Laird presented the proposed 2021 budget for next year.

Ms. Webb moved to approve, Ms. Simmons seconded, and the financial reports were approved unanimously.

**Ninth item of business:** Executive Session of the Board

All WTLS staff left the meeting so that the Board could discuss Ms. Clayton's evaluation and salary. The Board approved a 3% salary increase.

Having no further business, the Board was then adjourned.



Laura Keeton, Board Secretary

Date: 5/26/2021