

**West Tennessee Legal Services
Joint Executive/Finance Committee Meeting
September 12, 2022**

Present: Barbara Hudson, Laura Keeton, Nhung Nguyen, Vanedda Webb, and Tricia Kost

The meeting was called to order at 4:32pm.

First Order of Business: Review and approval of August 2022 minutes. Ms. Webb moved to approve the minutes. Ms. Hudson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Second Order of Business: Financial Update: Ms. Nguyen shared the July Financial Statement. On our Balance Sheet, she pointed out that our total assets showed a decrease of \$219K compared to the previous year. This is because of the decrease in Accounts Receivables, which has decreased by \$210K because we no longer have to wait on grant payments from the programs that have been disbanded since last year (HOPWA, MAI, Cycles of Success, Long Term Care Ombudsman, Ryan White, and TSLA). She added up the Accounts Receivables for all these discontinued programs from July 2021 and it totaled about \$218K, which was the bulk of the decrease in our Accounts Receivable for this year.

Regarding total Liability, we see a \$102K increase due to the shifting of our payroll date at the end of last year. There is also a slight increase in Accounts Payable due to our closing out of the 2022 Housing Counselling grant in July 2022. In terms of cash, July 2022 is relatively comparable to July 2021, with only a +2% change.

Fund balance: we are about \$18K ahead but Ms. Nguyen does not expect this to be the case for the remainder of the year, because for the second part of the year we will not be using LSC funding for SNAP, which is what we were doing for the first part of the year. SNAP's match for the second part of the year should be done through Bail Bonds and Filing Fees. Bail Bonds and Filing Fees were used to match VOCA for the first part of the year because we were under a different grant contract. In the grant contract coming up, we no longer have to match VOCA, therefore Bail Bonds and Filing Fees will be freed up to match SNAP. Our unrestricted fund balance is at \$1.23 million at the end of July 2022, compared to \$1.21 million at the beginning of the year. The remaining fund balance should zero out, most of these are donations or funds that we can spend later, rather than funds which are reimbursement based. The accounts in the red are mostly FHIP, which is notoriously behind in reimbursing us for our expenses. Apart from HUD (Housing Counseling) most of our other grants are either current or only 30 days past due. At the conclusion of Ms. Nguyen's financial presentation, she asked if anyone had questions and there were none.

Ms. Webb moved to approve the July Financial Statement. Ms. Keeton seconded the motion. The motion was approved by acclamation.

Third Order of Business: Programmatic Update:

1. Ms. Kost reported that Ms. Clayton is in DC at an LSC-sponsored (and funded) Executive Director's meeting with LSC senior management and executive directors from all over the country and had provided a list of updates to share with the Committee in her absence. One of the important topics being discussed during this LSC conference is employee engagement and retention. Ms. Clayton and the other attendees are meeting with members of Congress, the Department of Justice, and LSC's board. Ms. Kost mentioned that Ms. Clayton had planned to join this meeting from DC but will be on a bus headed to a reception at the Department of Justice that she was unaware of until she registered for the conference yesterday and received an updated agenda.
2. Ms. Nguyen continued with the next agenda item Ms. Clayton wanted to discuss related to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day this year. Previously, the Board approved allowing WTLS employees to have the week off between Christmas and New Year's Day. This year both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day fall on a weekend. Ms. Clayton suggests that we allow employees to take off the Thursday and Friday prior to the actual consecutive holidays falling on the weekend so that we would still have 11 paid holidays plus the week between Christmas and New Year.


Ms. Keeton moved to approve the additional days off. Ms. Webb seconded the motion. Ms. Nguyen then also mentioned that management is working on plan where employees will be on call during the week off to respond to emergencies. Ms. Webb stated that she felt better about approving the additional days with the knowledge that someone will be taking calls in the case of emergencies. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Ms. Kost shared an update regarding the Disaster Grant. This grant will fund a pro bono consultant to help us build pro bono support for the counties affected by the disaster, which have luckily expanded to include all federally declared disaster counties during 2020-2021, including our biggest county, Madison. We have selected a consultant, Adam Heinz, who has been very successful in helping LSC-funded programs receive pro bono transformation grants from LSC and we hope to build on this current opportunity to work with Adam to be in a good position to apply for a pro bono transformation grant in 2023. We have investigated the newer battery technology reliability before submitting a request for LSC approval for our mobile office but are still waiting on some more feedback from end-product users before we select the vendor for purchase of the mobile office unit. This will also require LSC approval. LSC must approve all expenditures over \$25,000. Ms. Kost asked if there were any questions and there were none.
4. Ms. Nguyen announced that Ms. Clayton has been involved in preliminary conversations about statewide collaboration for possible funding. This is very preliminary but one of the potential opportunities, if successful, would provide statewide funding for around 15 years. Because the discussions are so preliminary, she has been asked not to disclose the potential funding source but plans to do so if the discussions continue in the right direction. This would stabilize our

future funding significantly. The greatest thing about this possible funding is that we could use existing staff. We are losing staff because our salaries, despite our best efforts to raise them, still are not competitive with DCS (Department of Children’s Services) and other state jobs, including assistant public defenders who are now on parity with the assistant district attorneys. We will continue to work on figuring out ways to raise salary scales. With new grants, we are finding it difficult to hire new lawyers. This is partially because two of the other TN LSC-funded organizations have raised their salaries and are seeking to fill some of the same positions. This highlights the need to provide attorneys, most of whom finish law school owing large student loan debt, with “living wages.”

Ms. Webb noted that the state does not allow the amount of time off between the Christmas and New Year holidays, so hopefully that will help WTLS retain staff. Ms. Nguyen added that we do try to stress the great benefits that WTLS offers to all potential candidates. Ms. Nguyen asked if there were any questions and there were none.

Ms. Webb moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Keeton seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:01pm.

Approved by:  Date: 2/9/23
Laura Keeton, Board Secretary