

**Nebraska Children’s Commission**  
 Thirty-Seventh Meeting  
 May 17, 2016  
 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM  
 Child Advocacy Center, Gary Lacy Training Room  
 5025 Garland Street  
 Lincoln, NE 68504

**I. Call to Order**

The Nebraska Children’s Commission Chair, Beth Baxter, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

*Commission Members present (12):*

Teresa Anderson (9:05)	Kim Hawekotte	Mary Jo Pankoke
Karen Authier	Gene Klein	Dale Shotkoski
Beth Baxter	David Newell	Susan Staab (9:13)
Holly Brandt	Deb O’Brien	Paula Wells

*Commission Members absent (3):*

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Andrea Miller	Diana Tedrow
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*Ex Officio Members present (10):*

Dr. Matthew Blomstedt (9:16)	Katie McLeese Stephenson	Julie Rogers
Sen. Kate Bolz	Sen. Patty Pansing-Brooks (9:32)	Doug Weinberg (10:04)
Ellen Brokofsky	Courtney Phillips (9:16)	
Sen. Kathy Campbell	Judge Linda Porter	

*Ex Officio Members absent (1):*

Steve Milliken

A quorum was established.

*Guests in Attendance (15):*

Michele Borg.....	Nebraska Department of Education
Jeanne Brandner.....	Administrative Office of Probation
Bethany Connor Allen.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Tamara Gavin.....	DHHS, Division of Behavioral Health
Tricia Kingsley.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Emily Kluver.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Joselyn Luedtke.....	Nebraska Legislative Council
Mark Mason.....	Administrative Office of Probation
Betty Medinger.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Nicole Paul.....	Nebraska Families Collaborative
Kari Rumbaugh.....	Administrative Office of Probation
Julie Scott.....	Administrative Office of Probation
Ivy Svoda.....	Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers
Chris Triebsch.....	Nebraska Legislative Council

a. *Notice of Publication*

Recorder for the meeting, Amanda Felton, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meetings Calendar website on April 14, 2016 in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication will be kept as a permanent attachment with the meeting minutes.

b. *Announcement of the placement of Open Meetings Act information*

A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available for public inspection and was located on the table on the west side of the meeting room.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

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**It was moved by Paula Wells and seconded by Mary Jo Pankoke to approve the agenda as presented.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (10):**

Karen Authier	Gene Klein	Dale Shotkoski
Beth Baxter	David Newell	Paula Wells
Holly Brandt	Deb O'Brien	
Kim Hawekotte	Mary Jo Pankoke	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson	Andrea Miller	Diana Tedrow
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Susan Staab	

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**IV. Consent Agenda**

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a. *Minutes of the March 15, 2016 Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting*

b. *Membership Appointments for the Juvenile Services Committee*

Nominations for the Juvenile Services Committee included Vicki Thompson as a voting member and Rico Zavala as a resource member.

**Paula Wells moved to approve all items of the Consent Agenda as presented. Mary Jo Pankoke seconded the motion.** There was no discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (10):**

Karen Authier	Gene Klein	Dale Shotkoski
Beth Baxter	David Newell	Paula Wells
Holly Brandt	Deb O'Brien	
Kim Hawekotte	Mary Jo Pankoke	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson	Andrea Miller	Diana Tedrow
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Susan Staab	

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

## V. Membership Appointments for the Strengthening Families Act, Normalcy Task Force

The Commission was directed to the Nominating Committee Report for the Normalcy Task Force. The Nominations included:

- **Current or former foster parent**
  - Anna Brummer - Outreach Coordinator, PTI Nebraska
  - Jude Dean - Foster Parent, CEDARS
  - Lisa Story - Foster Parent, Foster Parent Representative - Rural Nebraska
- **Executive Director of the Foster Care Review Office**
  - Kim Hawekotte - Executive Director, Foster Care Review Office
- **Guardian Ad Litem**
  - Heather Colton - Associate Attorney/Guardian Ad Litem, Pollak & Ball, LLC
- **Other: Representative of the Department of Education**
  - Patricia Frost - Education Specialist II, Nebraska Department of Education
- **Professional who has relevant practical experience**
  - Erin Bader - Director of Permanency and Well Being Programs, Lutheran Family Services
  - Cassy Blakely - Assistant VP of Youth Policy, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
  - Claudette Grinnell-Davis - Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska, Omaha
- **Representative from a child welfare advocacy organization**
  - Sarah Helvey - Child Welfare Program Director / Staff Attorney, Nebraska Appleseed
  - Ronda Newman - Associate Vice President, Project Everlast, Omaha
  - Juliet Summers - Policy Coordinator for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice, Voices for Children in Nebraska
- **Representative from a child welfare service agency**
  - Ashley Brown - Program Director, Nebraska KVC
  - A'Jamal Byndon - Administrator, Community Initiative Consultant, Nebraska Families Collaborative
  - Nikki Novak - Foster Family Services Supervisor, Boys Town
- **Representative from an agency providing independent living services**
  - Deb Shuck - Central Service Navigator for the Older Youth System of Care, CAPWN
- **Representative from the Juvenile Probation System**
  - Jim Bennett - Director of Placement, Supervision Services, Administrative Office of Probation, Juvenile Services Division
- **Representative of a child care institution.**
  - Marti Beard - Director of Service Delivery, CEDARS Youth Services
- **Representative of the Executive Branch of Government**
  - Stacy Scholten - Service Delivery Administrator, DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
- **Representative of the Judicial Branch of Government**
  - Katie McLeese Stephenson - Project Director, Nebraska Court Improvement Project
- **Representative of the Legislative Branch of Government**
  - Timoree Klingler - Legislative Aide to Senator Sara Howard, Nebraska Legislative Council
- **Young adult currently or previously in foster care**
  - Payne Ackerman - Former Foster Youth, Project Everlast
  - Mickey Sampson - Former Foster Youth/ B2I Coordinator, DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services

It was noted that all representatives of the Legislative and Judicial branches would be non-voting ex officio members. It was also explained that Ronda Newman of Project Everlast was to be nominated in a non-voting resource capacity. Nebraska Children and Families foundation, the umbrella organization of Project Everlast, was already nominated in a voting capacity. Per the Commissions Structure Memo, only one representative per stakeholder group can participate in any Commission group.

**Paula Wells motioned and Deb O'Brien seconded to approve the Nominating Committee Report for the Normalcy Task Force as presented.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Teresa Anderson  
Karen Authier  
Beth Baxter  
Holly Brandt

Kim Hawekotte  
Gene Klein  
David Newell  
Deb O'Brien

Mary Jo Pankoke  
Dale Shotkoski  
Paula Wells

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark  
Andrea Miller

Susan Staab  
Diana Tedrow

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**VI. Chairperson's Report**

*a. Membership Application/Re-Appointment*

The members of the Commission were reminded that a new Commission term was to begin in July 1, 2016. Chair Baxter reminded members to submit an application via the Governor's website if they had not already done so. She also referred the Commission members to the Conflict Disclosure form indicating that it needed to be completed and submitted to Commission staff.

**VII. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Update**

The floor was given to Courtney Phillips, CEO of DHHS, to provide an update. She opened with information on the Alternative Response pilot indicating that 86 youth were being served through the program. Ms. Phillips continued by discussing the Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) progress, extension of the Lead Agency contract with Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC), and efforts to implement the Strengthening Families Act.

Other areas of review were the improvements to Access Nebraska, the work being done by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the streamlining of the licensing processes within the Division of Public Health, and the recent legislative and media attention received by the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTC). There was lengthy dialogue surrounding the YRTC in Kearney. Ms. Phillips mentioned that the population entering the YRTC has evolved into a higher needs population. She indicated that efforts were in progress to partner with the appropriate entities to ensure that the youth at the facility receive the necessary behavioral and mental health supports. She stressed the importance of collaboration in finding ways to support the youth so that they can have the skills and resources necessary to return to their communities and be successful.

**VIII. Legislation Overview and Legislative Resolution Discussion**

Senator Kate Bolz was welcomed to begin the Legislative discussion. The Senator discussed the Interim Study, LR514 looking at extending a Bridge to Independence-like program to juvenile justice youth aging out of the system. She also touched on LB684 which allowed for a tightened scope regarding home studies and adoptive grandparents.

Senator Kathy Campbell continued by highlighting LB746 which enabled state level implementation of the Strengthening Families act, created the Normalcy Task Force, and reauthorized the Nebraska Children's Commission. The Senator also discussed LB1081 that allowed for DHHS to participate in a research project that examined the effect of additional financial supports in relation to the cognitive development of children. The five year project made allowances for guardians to receive additional funding during the study without penalization or decrease in their current financial aid. It was also indicated that Joselyn Luedtke would provide information to the members concerning the relevant legislation in the upcoming session.

Upon her arrival, Senator Patty Pansing Books took a moment to acknowledge the work being done by the Commission and its subgroups. The Senator remarked on her recent work with Juliet Summers with Voices for Hope and Christine

Henningsen with the Center on Children, Family, and the Law. From their collaboration, LB894 was passed. The bill covered several juvenile justice issues including the right to council for all youth and solitary confinement reporting requirements. The Senator also informed the members of a study happening on White Clay through the lens of public health.

## **IX. Education Panel**

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The members of the Education Panel were introduced. The panel was comprised of Kim Hawekotte, Director of the Foster Care Review Office (FCRO), Michele Borg, Education of Systems-Involved Students (ESIS) Coordinator with the Department of Education, Mark Mason, Reentry Program Specialist with the Juvenile Division of the Administrative Office of Probation, and Tricia Kingsley, Program Specialist with the Children and Family Services Division of DHHS.

The panel began with a basic summary of educational data on youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Ms. Hawekotte shared information from the Nebraska State Ward Statistical Snapshot Project and data collected by the FCRO. Some shared statistics included the low graduation rate of 44% for state wards, that 48% of state wards were behind target academically, and that 42% of youth who changed placements also changed schools.

Michele Borg continued by discussing the efforts being made between the Department of Education, Probation, the Courts, Children and Family Services, and Behavioral Health. These efforts were being coordinated under the Fostering Connections in Education Initiative that had been in effect since 2011 and continues to meet monthly. Some areas of focus for the group encompassed supporting school stability, working towards real-time information sharing between entities, and encouraging continuity of education for system involved youth. The group worked to promote a system involved approach, noting that issues for youth exist prior to, during, and after being system involved.

Ms. Borg went on to highlight the six tenants of Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow: A QuESTT for Nebraska. The tenants encompassed Positive Partnerships, Relationships & Student Success, Transitions, Educational Opportunities and Access, College & Career Readiness, Assessment, and Educator Effectiveness. She also touched on the development in an internal multidivisional team that provided technical assistance to schools across the state, creation of a School Practitioner Advisory Council, the statewide meeting for education representatives held 3-4 times a year, and the Superintendent Notification process that recently went live.

The focus of the panel switched to Mark Mason. Mr. Mason explained that the goal of Probation was to advocate and work with parents and youth to help them navigate the system and provide them with necessary supports. He also noted the current efforts to inform the school system of their role with the youth. Mr. Mason emphasized the importance of a successful transition for youth entering back into their community and discussed the efforts that were made to prepare families for these transitions. He also covered the importance of providing the foundation for success in their work lives. The Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) Program was given as an example of efforts to promote the success of youth reentering their communities.

The final panel member was Tricia Kingsley. Ms. Kingsley delved into some of the barriers that are still problematic for system involved youth. She pointed out that students in foster care were three times more likely to be suspended or expelled and eight times more likely to become incarcerated or drop out prior to graduation. Problems that needed to be addressed included the delay that is experienced when a change in school is required for youth, the higher likelihood of suspension or expulsion among system involved youth, increased time spent in seclusion or placed under restraint, and that youth with behavioral issues often have their educational days significantly reduced.

The floor was opened for questions and general discussion. It was remarked that managing behavioral health issues are a constant struggle for educators and school staff. Ms. Kingsley stressed the need for accessibility of trauma informed education especially for the para educators working with the special education population. The movement towards information sharing and the work of the Data Warehouse Pilot will also help increase school awareness of potential issues with youth. The Commission also discussed the need to ensure kinship homes have access to information, promoting normalcy, and the importance of the relationships and supports of the youth.

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## **X. Community & Evidence Based Services Grant**

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Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Probation Administrator with the Juvenile Services Division of the Administrative Office of Probation, and Katie McLeese Stephenson, Director of the Nebraska Court Improvement Project, presented information on the Community & Evidence Based Services Grant. Ms. Brandner reviewed the history of the grant program and its goal to promote intensive in-home services for youth. Efforts were to be focused on utilizing Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and partnering with Boys Town to explore the use of their model. Ms. McLeese Stephenson emphasized the need for system collaboration.

The grant funds would support training and funding for a three year period. The hope was that the funding would act as an incentive for providers to participate. There was need to ensure that the participating population will be best matched for MST to ensure fidelity. Ms. McLeese Stephenson indicated that a staff with the Court Improvement Project office would be responsible for assisting in oversight, fidelity monitoring, and handling referrals for the program.

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## **XI. Psychotropic Medication Committee Update**

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The Co-Chair of the Psychotropic Medication Committee, Paula Wells, was invited to provide an update on the work of the committee. Ms. Wells noted that the Committee resumed work with a meeting earlier in the month. Future work of the group would be to prepare and assist in the integration of the Heritage Health delivery system, updating the language in the work of the Committee to include juvenile justice youth, and collaborating with and supporting the efforts of DHHS in relation to psychotropic medications. She indicated that the next meeting of the Committee would be scheduled in August.

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## **XII. Lunch**

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The Committee recessed for lunch at 12:15 p.m.

The meeting resumed business at 12:53 p.m.

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## **XIII. Behavioral Health System of Care Initiative Update**

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Chair Baxter introduced Tamara Gavin, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health Services with DHHS, and Betty Medinger, Senior Vice President with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF). Ms. Gavin talked about the importance of the System of Care (SOC) Initiative becoming a co-owned process by the system stakeholders. With a goal of bringing together youth, families, and system partners, various stakeholders developed nine goals and ninety-three implementation strategies that fed into the SOC strategic plan.

The creation of a governance structure was in progress consisting of a leadership board, implementation committee, youth and family advisory boards, an evaluation committee, and five work teams as outlined in the provided handout. Ms. Medinger noted that NCFF had recently hired a Project Lead, Nathan Busch, to assist in implementation. She reviewed the partnerships that had been established and the important role that each group played in making the SOC initiative successful.

The two presenters noted that a grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) had recently been applied for. If received, the grant would provide up to \$3 million annually for four years. These funds would be utilized throughout the six Behavioral Health regions to enhance available services. Funds would allow for improved crisis response and ensuring that education and training is made available system-wide. There were also strong efforts into looking at how to braid funding and how to provide services with low or no costs in order to ensure sustainability.

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## **XIV. Probation Update**

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*a. Presentations on the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Pilot and Juvenile Justice Wraparound Pilot*

Julie Scott, Justice Behavioral Health Specialist with the Administrative Office of Probation, provided information on the two current juvenile justice pilots. Ms. Scott summarized the process of joining efforts with the Division of Behavioral Health. She related the complications that arose such as the efforts to create uniform language and definitions not only at the administrative level, but also with Behavioral Health regions, and the judicial district levels. Through their collaboration, the entities were able to identify statewide needs that lead to the creation of the two pilot projects.

The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Pilot. The goal of this pilot was to improve the effectiveness and reduce the delay in necessary treatment by streamlining the evaluation process that a youth undergoes. Ms. Scott walked the Commission through the process that probation officers, providers, and behavioral health regions go through when evaluating a youth. She noted that officers were currently using the MAYSI-2 for screen purposes due to its high fidelity and the fact that it evaluated for substance abuse, mental health issues, and trauma. Ms. Scott indicated that she would distribute the most recent report from the pilot project to Commission members.

Discussion continued to the Juvenile Justice Wraparound Pilot. Ms. Scott explained that the purpose of the pilot project was to provide individualized, strength-based supports to assist families in improving their stability. The pilot targets youth who were at high risk of entering the juvenile justice system as well as youth reentering their communities upon leaving out-of-home placement. The Wraparound Pilot was modeled after Behavioral Health's Professional Partner Program. Because of this pilot project, many of the involved youth were able to remain at home with their family. Ms. Scott noted that work was still being done to evaluate what areas of the state would be best served by the program.

Jeanne Brandner provided a general update for Probation. Ms. Brandner briefly reviewed several Legislative Bills including LB954, LB894, and LR551. She also talked about the involvement of probation in various projects such as addressing YRTC needs, incorporating youth voice into their work, and work with the Sex Trafficking and Normalcy Task Forces. Ms. Brandner went on to review the monthly report on Probation Juvenile Justice Reform Efforts. Topics of discussion were comprised of risk reduction, non-delinquent status youth, placement, detention, and education and employment.

#### **XV. Workforce Workgroup Update**

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Chair Baxter gave the floor to Vicki Maca, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Operations with the Division of Children and Family Services, and David Newell, President and CEO of Nebraska Families Collaborative. The two individuals were invited to present information on the current work, success, and barriers faced by child welfare case managers and supervisors.

Ms. Maca began by explaining the current crisis that the child welfare workforce is facing. She explained many of the factors that lead to a shortage of much needed case managers and supervisors. Some of the issues identified included high caseloads, difficult conditions, and inadequate pay. Identifying an appropriate number of caseloads to meet demand was difficult, as considerations such as maternity leave, vacation time, probationary employment, and training periods all needed to be considered in the equation. She also highlighted the importance of supervisor training noting that DHHS was currently developing new training with the assistance of a consultant.

It was noted that the current IV-E stipend allowed the opportunity for current employees to continue their education at no cost to them. A downfall that was pointed out is that there is not currently a system to increase pay for case workers who attain a Master's degree. Lengthy discussion over how to tackle this barrier occurred. The Commission members suggested looking into the creation of multiple levels of case manager positions and identifying the steps in the process.

Competition for child welfare workforce employees in the surrounding areas also had an effect on the ability to keep workforce in Nebraska. Surrounding states offered competitive salaries and benefits that pulled from the state's workforce population. The group voiced a need for additional funding for workforce issues, and expressed a desire to become more educated and involved in the budget hearing process.

The two presenters stressed the high level of respect that caseworkers deserve. Mr. Newell expanded on this the discussion by indicating the stressors that come not only from the population they serve, but also from the professionals that caseworkers interact with on a daily basis. A concerted effort needed to be made to treat the child welfare workforce with more respect. Discussion arose of the potential for an appreciation week or month that focused on the recognition of caseworkers and the work they do.

Mr. Newell went on by discussing several factors that would aid in addressing workforce issues. The topics encompassed the creation and understanding of stability, capacity issues, technology, psychologically safe workforce, licensure status, and creation of a STEM like initiative for social work. Mr. Newell elaborated by indicating that longer term contracts increased the stability of the workforce and decisions of the various stakeholders. He also touched on

the need to work with the educational systems in order to increase the population to fill the necessary workforce positions, the need for a modern and user friendly database, providing a safe and respectful work environment, and investigating the potential for social worker licensing requirements. Lastly, Mr. Newell suggested the creation of a STEM like initiative to promote social work as a valued occupation beginning in the primary school setting.

Commission members conversed on the appropriate steps to take in tackling the child welfare workforce crisis. It was suggested that the Executive Committee create an action plan. There was a consensus among members that the Commission would take on workforce issues as a priority. Collaboration with a national consultant was suggested in order to provide additional support for necessary next steps.

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**XVI. Legal Parties Taskforce Update**

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Kim Hawekottee briefly updated the Commission on the work of the Legal Parties Taskforce. She noted that a survey had recently been completed that captured the views and experiences of attorneys who practice juvenile law in Nebraska. A presentation of the results would be shared at the next Commission meeting.

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**XVII. Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee Update**

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Ms. Hawekottee continued by summarizing the work of the Juvenile Services Committee. She indicated that the June meeting of the Committee would be spent updating the Committees 2013 Strategic Plan. An update on the decided action steps would be provided at the next Commission meeting.

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**XIII. Public Comment**

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Chair Baxter invited any members of the public forward. No public comment was offered.

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**XIX. New Business**

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There was no New Business to present.

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**XX. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

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*a. Retreat Planning*

Members agreed that the normal meeting date of July 19<sup>th</sup> should be held for the Annual Retreat with the addition of a half day meeting on July 20<sup>th</sup>. One of the desired areas of focus would be to examine workforce issues and potential recommendations. Several venues were suggested, with a final location to be determined according to availability at the Executive Committees discretion.

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**XXI. Adjournment**

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It was moved by Karen Authier and seconded by David Newell to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

06/01/2016

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