

# Far Northern Coordinating Council on Developmental Disabilities dba Far Northern Regional Center Minutes

Regular Meeting  
Friday, June 14, 2024  
9:15 a.m.  
Gaia Hotel-Anderson, CA  
Zoom option available

1. **Call to Order:** 9:16 by Chair Cali McKinzie

## 2. Roll Call

- a. Present: Cali McKinzie; Deborah Anderson; Lori Childres; Joseph Cullis; Terria M; Christina Johnson; Patricia McCarthy; William Moore; Adrian Hugo; Selene Mercado; Andreas Economopoulos; Jamie Murray
- b. Absent: Timothy Howard; Kim Leeseman; Daniel Strauss; Edna Winkle; Araceli Garcia; Haylie Torres

## 3. Introductions

- a. Visitors: Cindi Freshour, We Care A Lot Foundation; James Ford, DDS; Lee Cha, DDS; Tina Reszler, SCDD; Amy Facca, We Care A Lot Foundation
- b. Staff: Audra Feeback, Chief Financial Officer; Keith French, IT Manager; Tracy Duarte, Associate Director Community Services; Dr. Christine Austin, Medical Director; Wayne Doering, Associate Director of Client Services North

4. **Public Input/Open** Forum (*This section is for members of the public only; and is to provide the public an opportunity to comment and/or present information to the Board on any matter. **Each member of the public will be afforded up to five minutes to speak. If you have additional information you are encouraged to submit it in writing.***)

No public comment

## 5. Approval of Agenda for June 14, 2024.

- a. Motion and second Andreas Economopoulos and William Moore. Melinda Roberts unable to attend Melissa Gruhler will report, No further discussion, Motion passed

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## **6. Approval of Minutes from May 17, 2024**

- a. Motion and second Terria M. and Patricia McCarthy, No discussion, Motion passed

## **7. Report from Chairperson, Cali McKinzie**

- a. The “Health and Wellness” committee is now a standing committee that will report to the Board.
- b. We are approaching fire season. Check your to go bags, make a list of things you want to grab listing the most important items.
- c. Recommendation to have another training provided by Travis McIvor, Far Northern Regional Center’s Emergency Response Coordinator.

## **8. Management Reports**

- a. Financial Report-Presented by: Audra Feeback, Chief Financial Officer
  - i. Purchase of Service Report, FY 23-24
    - Currently working to close the fiscal year. The forecast is good.
    - Interest earnings have done well this year. With these funds, we were able to replace end of life copiers including our primary color printer.
    - POS not a lot to report as far as change.
    - Under budget by 40 million dollars
      - Reasons: Need of more providers  
Taking into consideration for three years things have not been running at full capacity.  
New programs coming for Social Rec
      - Funds returned will be redistributed to those regional centers that find themselves over budget
      - Even though we are returning funds, it is unlikely that this will affect our future allocations.

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### ii. Operations Report, FY 23-24

- Under budget by \$318,323
- Renovating the Chico office including adding hoteling.
  - To reserve space in the offices set aside for hoteling new Software has been implemented.
  - Working well for those who have a remote work agreement
  - Staff can reserve by the hour or a full day
  - Some offices have additional features such as offices for those who are hard of hearing
  - All offices include wireless charging pads
- Cell phones have been issued to Case Management prompting the initiation of a headset program.
  - Staff may choose the headset they prefer. The Regional Center will reimburse up to \$200. The headset just must be Bluetooth compatible and also have the noise cancelling feature.

### iii. Other: Financially the Regional Center is in a good place

### b. Clinical Report: Dr. Christine Austin, Medical Director

#### i. Update on the Referral Line and Intake Process

- During the past month, we have worked with the team and Keith in several areas:
  - Reviewed the phone system and what features we have to help with customer service
  - Taking a look at the workload of the staff on the front lines and how we might improve
  - So far this month we have already received 205 referrals assigned to intake
  - Calls are being answered and voicemails are being returned within 24 hours
  - Additional staff hired along with new job postings
  - Continuing to reassess and put supports in place

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- This is an ongoing process. The state is looking at the intake process in hopes of making it the same in all regional centers. Dedicated to making the process easier. This will take time in order to move this forward. They want individuals to have the same experience regardless of what regional center is processing the intake.
  - ii. Assessments: Also part of the intake process
    - Adding additional vendors for assessments
    - Looking at updating our website as well
- c. Community Services: Tracy Duarte, Associate Director
  - i. Community Service Update
    - Update on HCBS all vendors must be in compliance by the end of August.
      - 69.2% of the sights have been visited with 64% in compliance.
      - 18 compliance plans have been written. Continuing to provide what is necessary for them to become in compliance.
      - Additional trainings are being provided via email, phone calls, Northern California Learning Institute as well as coaching calls and Person Centered Practice.
      - Zoom meetings that break down the requirements so the rules can be understood. We are wanting to insure that they understand the rule and can implement it.
  - ii. Action Item #8- 2024-2025 Draft Performance Contract  
Action Requested: It is requested that the Board of Directors approve the attached Performance Contract for Calendar year 2024/2025  
Motion and second Terria M. and Andreas Economopoulos, no discussion, Motion passed

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d. Human Resources Report: Presented by Melissa Gruhler, Executive Director

i. Update on Human Resources

- As of June 1, 2024- 281 individuals are employed by FNRC
- Review of board packet page 52-HR Report
  - Year to date: 16 separations  
35 new hires  
Several promotions
  - Active Recruitment remains a priority

ii. Action Item #1 – Retired Annuitant, Suzanne Pitcher

Action Requested: It is requested that the Board of Directors appoint Suzanne Pitcher to be re-employed by FNRC effective July 1, 2024, for a period of no more than 12 months, pursuant to the Government Code requirements.

Motion and second William Moore and Patricia McCarthy, no discussion, Motion passed

iii Action Item #2 – Retired Annuitant, Diana Anderson

Action Requested: It is requested that the Board of Directors appoint Diana Anderson to be re-employed by FNRC effective July 1, 2024, for a period of no more than 12 months, pursuant to the Government Code requirements.

Motion and second Christina Johnson and Lori Childres, no discussion, Motion passed

**9. State Council on Developmental Disabilities, North State Office**

**Report:** Tina Reszler, Community Program Specialist II

i. NCI survey is ongoing the deadline is June 30, 2024. DDS may issue an extension, which allows for mail in surveys. 15,000 surveys have been returned statewide. 5,000 were returned online by family members.

The North state office is offering training opportunities across the nine counties in their region.

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**10. FNRC Board Committee Reports and Action Items:**

- a. Consumer Committee Report, William Moore Committee Member
  - i. Review of the Board Packet-Melissa Gruhler, Executive Director
    - Reviewed and discussed the agenda and action items
    - Discussed the HR report and dashboard in detail including the caseload ratios
  - ii. Board Member concerns and announcements
    - Melissa updated the committee on the meeting with Plumas County First Five Executive Director. Another meeting is scheduled for August.
    - The next Consumer Advisory Council meeting will be in Trinity County on July 9<sup>th</sup> at the Trinity County Library.
- b. Finance Committee Report, Lori Childres, Chair
  - i. Action Item #3 – Brilliant Corners (PF4968)

Action Requested: The Board approve contract PS-2733 with Brilliant Corners (PF4968) for CRDP Start-up funding to develop a community housing project effective June 1, 2024 through February 28, 2026 for a total maximum contract amount of \$500,000.00.

Motion and second Finance Committee and William Moore, no discussion, Motion passed.
  - ii. Action Item #4 – First Transit (HF0366)

Action Requested: The Board approve contract PS-1095 ADD #10 with First Transit, Inc. (HF0366) for Transportation Services effective July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 for a total maximum contract amount of \$2,983,550.64.

Motion and second Finance Committee and Andreas Economopoulos, no discussion, Motion passed.
  - iii. Action Item #5 – New Beginnings Housing Foundation (PF5474)

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Action Requested: The Board approve contract PS-2734 with New Beginnings Housing Foundations (PF5474) for CRDP Start-up funding to develop a community housing project effective June 1, 2024 through February 28, 2026 for a total maximum contract amount of \$400,000.00.

Motion and second Finance Committee and Patricia McCarthy, no discussion, Motion passed.

- iv. Action Item #6 – UNH University of New Hampshire/UNH  
Action Requested: The Board approve contract PS-2735 with UNH University of New Hampshire/UNH, Institute on Disability (PY1665) for START Services effective June 1, 2024 through February 28, 2028 for a total maximum contract amount of \$961,954.00

Motion and second Finance Committee and Terria M., no discussion, Motion passed.

- c. Wellness Committee Report, Cali McKinzie; Christina Johnson

- i. Action Item #7 – Health and Wellness Policy

Action Requested: The FNRC Board of Directors approve the new Wellness Policy Statement in an effort to make wellness an integral part of everyday life for the individuals we serve. Once developed, regional center staff will institute procedures that can be utilized to enhance services that can directly and indirectly address wellness in the daily activities of living. Such procedures can include requirements for new program descriptions and can encourage existing programs to enhance their services to include improve outcomes for individuals receiving their services. FNRC will develop a 2-year pilot program to improve wellness activities, for up to 50 clients living in Supported Living Services and for an additional 40 clients receiving Independent Living Services.

Individuals participating in the pilot program will be followed to determine the effectiveness of the program for up to 5 years.

Motion and second Andreas Economopoulos and Christina Johnson, no discussion Motion passed.

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- ii. Blue Zone presentation – presented by Christina Johnson  
You-Tube video “Blue Zone Project”
- d. Service Provider Advisory Committee, Jamie Murray, Chair
  - i. Hybrid meeting in person and Zoom
  - ii. Tracy Duarte, Associate Director of Community Services –  
presented the “Draft” Performance Contract.
  - iii. Rate increase may be back on the table currently waiting on the  
Governor.
  - iv. Discussed Semper Farm and the food program. Meeting the  
needs of special dietary requirements. Incorporating the fresh  
vegetables into their daily life.
- e. Nomination Committee: Election of the 2024-2025 officers
  - i. Proposed Slate of Officers presented by the Nomination  
Committee
    - Chairperson – Joseph Cullis
    - Vice-Chairperson – Patricia McCarthy
    - Secretary – Lori Childres
    - Treasurer – Timothy Howard
    - Parliamentarian – Adrian HugoMotion and second Nomination Committee and Andreas  
Economopoulos, no discussion, Motion passed

**11. Report from Executive Director, Melissa Gruhler**

- i. Rate Reform: Rate increase currently delayed until 2025.  
Advocacy groups have been successful in many areas so we  
are waiting to see how this will affect the State Legislators.  
Overall they are opposed to the delay and have  
presented this to the Governor which would move the  
implementation of the rate increase back to effective date of  
July 2024. The Providers have been waiting several years for  
this rate increase.



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- ii. Intake Referral Process:
  - Thank you to Dr. Austin and Team for all your work to improve this process.  
Actively recruiting for another intake support person. In addition, we hope to hire an intermittent casual bilingual staff who can provide support to the first of contact individuals.
  - Meeting with the Director of First Five Plumas County.
    - Meeting was successful
    - Listened to her concerns
    - Provided updates on our referral line process
    - More information needs to be provided to these Counties. They were invited to contact Melissa with a date for an in-service meeting.
    - More information on SDP was requested and this too will be addressed at the in-service meeting.
- iii. Currently serving:
  - 10,270 individuals some are still going thru the intake process.
  - 199 individuals currently utilizing the Self Determination Program.
- iv. Self Determination Program Film:
  - Film shown at the Cinemark in Redding. The showing went well, ending with a time to ask questions
  - This showing was open to the public
  - Thank you Selene Mercado for taking part in the film
  - Hoping to have the link to the film on our website very soon
- v. Native American Disability Symposium
  - Well attended
  - Special thanks to Season from Acorn to Oak trees
  - Partial assessments took place on those individuals over three.

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- Breakout sessions were held.
    - FNRC Services
    - Individuals needing assessments first steps provided
  - Acorns to Oak Trees will be working on our first baby clinic which will be held June 28<sup>th</sup> in Lassen County.
    - Full assessments will take place for those 0-3.
    - By the end of the day they will know who their Service Coordinator will be.
- vi. Strategic Planning
- Thank you to those who have participated in the meetings
  - Draft Plan presented including the Mission Statement and Objectives
  - August 22 the complete plan will be presented to the Executive Committee. The goal will be to present the Strategic Plan in its entirety to the full Board at the September Board Meeting.

### **12. Announcements, Reports, Questions and Answers, Summary**

#### **Comments: All Board Members**

- i. Terria M., People First meeting held June 11-minutes were shared. \$206 in the treasury. Talked about officers and will go over the bylaws at the next meeting.
- ii. William Moore reported on the People First Conference that took place in May. Very successful conference. Working on growing and becoming stronger. Already making plans for the conference next year possibly in Sacramento. Next Region 2 meeting is in August.
- iii. Andreas Economopoulos –shared a picture from the Farmer’s market. As of last month he has a business license to give piano lessons. Going to a summer school class to learn new skills.
- iv. Cali thanked everyone for allowing her to be the chair the last two years. She will continue to be on the Board.

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Motion and second to move into closed session William Moore and  
Andreas Economopoulos, no discussion, Motion passed

**13. Transition to Executive (Closed) Session, W & I 4663 (a),**

- (1) Real estate negotiations.
- (2) The appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, or dismissal of a regional center employee.
- (3) Employee salaries and benefits.
- (4) Labor contract negotiations.
- (5) Pending litigation

Motion to leave closed session Joseph Cullis and William Moore, no  
discussion, Motion pass

**14. Next Meeting:** September 26 and 27, 2024, Mt Shasta Resort, Mt  
Shasta, CA

**15. Adjournment:** Motion and second Patricia McCarthy and William  
Moore, no discussion, Motion passed

Meeting adjourned 11:44 AM

Respectfully submitted by:

*Shelly Nickle*

*Administrative Assistant*