

Alaska Commission on Aging, Special Board Meeting

November 1, 2016

Teleconference

Approved December 7, 2016

Call to order: Meeting called to order by Chair, David Blacketer at 11:01 a.m.

Members present: David Blacketer, Chair; Marie Darlin, Vice Chair; Mary Shields; Gordon Glaser; Linda Combs; Banarsi Lal; Paula Pawlowski; and Rachel Greenberg

Not Present: Anna Frank, Duane Mayes and Bob Sivertsen

ACoA Staff Present: Denise Daniello, Lesley Thompson, and Deirdre Shaw

Action: Adoption of the Meeting Agenda. Motion was made by Marie, second by Rachel, to approve the agenda as presented. Agenda approved.

David Blacketer reminded the Commission members to email their Ethics Disclosures to Denise.

David referred the first agenda item to Denise. She reviewed the events of the past week regarding the October 26, 2016 Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's special board meeting. Denise sent the ACoA Commissioners copies of the documents from the meeting including verbatim transcripts of the Trustee special board meeting (downloaded from a news article), copies of statutes for the Trust and the ACoA, in addition to related news articles.

The Trust special board meeting began as a conversation of the need to change direction of the Trust and the need to have a new focus on resource development and financial expansion. With that change, a couple of the Trustees noted that there needs to be a different skill set of the Trust CEO. This statement came as a surprise to many of the people at the meeting including 3 of the 7 AMHTA Trustees.

Four of the Trustees proposed a shift of the Trust from planning of program based services to resource development and financial expansion. The proposed change in direction was being acted on by Trustees without providing an opportunity to provide comment from the Trust statutory advisory partner boards, Trust beneficiaries, or public members. There was additional concern expressed by a Trustee that meetings were taking place without public notice or knowledge of 3 of the 7 Trustees. The majority of the Trustees voted to move forward with consideration of a new interim CEO, Greg Jones, the previous Executive Director of the Trust Land Office, following the resignation of Jeff Jessee, who was the current CEO.

Denise reported that Jeff read a prepared letter of resignation during the Trust October 26 meeting. He resigned as CEO and, pending Trustee approval, offered to become a program officer for the next three years and then retire. He would not resign as CEO until they had an approved replacement. This change must be approved by the Governor.

Four of the seven Trustees moved to accept Greg Jones as the interim CEO Greg Jones. One of the dissenting Trustees noted that Mr. Jones was being hired without submission of his resume or an interview by Trustees.

Rachel Greenberg expressed her concerns about the proposed new direction. She stated that the Trust's primary focus should be on insuring that there is an integrated comprehensive mental health program for the state, according to their statutes.

Denise replied that the Commission and the other partner boards/council had not been provided an opportunity to offer public input about the new direction being proposed.

David announced that it was time to open the ACoA meeting to public comment. After waiting 10 minutes for anyone interested in offering public comment, he continued the meeting with discussion among Commission members.

Linda Combs asked if the possible violation of the open meetings act is being pursued. Denise replied that she is not sure at this time.

Linda stated that this allegation would be serious enough to make their actions null and void. This is really a serious issue without meetings being publicly noticed and no meeting agendas provided. This matter should be addressed.

Gordon Glaser expressed concerns about the process that the Trustees took to arrive at their decision to pursue a "new direction." He commented that the Commission has a statutory relationship with the Trust and was not provided with any communication from them regarding a major change in staffing and focus. Gordon also noted that the Commission should recommend a delay in the personnel action and direction until our boards and beneficiaries are involved.

Marie Darlin noted that Commissioners all received a copy of a letter drafted by Bruce Botelho which discussed the Trust's new direction of exploring more commercial activities like a mine at Icy Cape.

Proposed Actions

Denise presented possible recommendations for the Commission's consideration:

Proposed Actions

- A What, if anything, should the Commission do to protect the interests of Senior Trust beneficiaries and other vulnerable older Alaskans?*
 - a Should the Commission write a letter to the Governor and express concerns about the process taken at the October 26, 2016 meeting to change the course of direction of the Trust Authority on behalf of Trust beneficiaries?*
 - b Should the Chairpersons of each statutory advisory board request a joint meeting with the Governor's Office?*
 - c Should the Commission collaborate with the other statutory beneficiary boards to join in writing an open letter to beneficiaries and statewide public comment session in November?*
 - d Other action?*
 - e No action to be taken*

Rachel stated that the Trust special board meeting took everyone off guard. She suggested the immediate action step would be for the Governor to not accept Jeff Jessee's resignation as CEO. Taking into consideration the State's budget situation, many new legislators, and Jeff's expertise and advocacy for the beneficiary groups, she believes that it would not be beneficial to change the course by having a new person as CEO. This decision could potentially lead to a negative impact for Trust beneficiaries. We need to ensure we are involved with the Trustees as to where the future focus should be.

After much discussion, the Commission decided to move forward with the following motion:

Action: Motion was made by Gordon, second by Mary, to send a letter to the Governor which would include the following message: "We value our previous beneficial relationship with the AMHTA and encourage the Governor's office to ensure that the relationship continues. By ACoA's statute, we are instructed to *make recommendations directly to the governor and the legislature*. We recommend that the Trust delay its decision to change direction and staffing until these changes can be explained to the Commission, other impacted government and non-government organizations, as well as to Trust beneficiaries. We would be pleased to meet with you and/or staff if additional information would be helpful in your decision-making." **Motion approved.**

Denise will draft a letter from the Commission addressed to the Governor expressing our concerns regarding the Trust's recent decisions and our willingness and interest to meet with the Governor's Office. Gordon offered to send draft language to Denise that could be incorporated in the letter.

Other Discussion:

Banarsi serves on the Trustee Nominating Committee representing ACoA. Currently, Trustee Larry Norene is up for re-appointment. Banarsi requested direction from the Commission concerning Mr. Noreen's re-appointment request. The Commission said that all applicants should be considered and for those who have the best experience and knowledge of beneficiary issues should go forward. Denise also noted that the Trust might have advertised this position only for 3 business days, based on what she has heard. There was a consensus by Commissioners that this was not sufficient time for public members to apply for the Trustee position. Marie hopes that there should be more than one applicant and they should give more time for recruitment. Banarsi suggested that he could talk to other members of the Trustee Nominating Committee and recommend that the Trust extend the timeframe for recruitment. Mary suggested that we send a separate letter to the Governor concerning this issue. (Follow-up note: Trust staff sent correspondence following the Commission's November 1 meeting that they had advertised for the Trust board opening for more than two weeks. As a result, many applications were received for the Trustee Nominating Committee to consider.)

The Trustee Nominations Committee reviews all applications and chooses their top candidates to be interviewed. After making their final selection, the Trustee Nominations Committee forwards a name of the candidate directly to the Governor's office. The Governor can choose either to accept or reject the Committee's recommendation. The Legislature then takes final action in the approval of Trustee appointments during session.

Meeting adjourned 12:04 pm.

ACoA will meet on Tuesday, December 7 via videoconference and teleconference for a regular board meeting.

Submitted by ACoA staff