

## **Soldiers' Home in Holyoke Board of Trustees Meeting**

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Soldiers' Home Holyoke (HLY) was held in person, virtually and telephonically on Tuesday, May 10, 2022. The meeting began at 5:37PM.

### **Board Members Present in Person:**

Sean Collins, Cindy Lacoste

### **Board Members via WebEx:**

Mark Bigda, Gary Keefe, and Kevin Jourdain

**Board Members Not Available:** Isaac Mass, Carmen Ostrander

### **Also Present:**

Sharon Boyle, Legal Counsel (EHS) ; Matthew Deacon, Legal Counsel (DVS); Dr. Diane Dietzen, Chief Medical Officer (HLY); Robert Engell, Interim Administrator (HLY); Debra Foley, Communications (HLY); Stephen Giordano, Business Office Accountant (HLY); Kelly Hansen, Quality Manager (HLY); Glen Hevy, Deputy Superintendent (HLY); Michael Lazo, Interim Superintendent (HLY); Brooke Leahy, Chief of Staff (DVS); Michael Lynch, CFO (HLY); Caitlin Menard, Director of Social Services (HLY); Elba Pires Morgado, Ombudsman; Cheryl Poppe, Secretary (DVS); Patti Spirito, Ombudsman; Mark Yankopoulos, Legal Counsel and Kathleen Denner, Recording Secretary (HLY).

**Pledge of Allegiance** - All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Roll Call:**

Chairman Keefe conducted a Roll Call as follows: Trustee Collins (Yes), Kevin Jourdain (Yes), Cindy Lacoste (Yes). Trustee Bigda joined the meeting at 5:55 PM.,

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Upon motion by Trustee Lacoste to accept the unamended minutes of the regular Board Meeting held on April 12, 2022, Bylaws Committee held on March 15, 2022, Finance Committee held on March 16, 2022, and Operations Committee meeting held on March 22, 2022. Trustee Jourdain asked that the Finance Subcommittee minutes be held till the next board meeting. Chairman Keefe amended that motion to approve the minutes of regular Board Meeting held on April 12, 2022, Bylaws Subcommittee held on March 15, 2022, and Operations Subcommittee meeting held on March 22, 2022. Upon motion by Trustee Lacoste and seconded by Trustee Jourdain it was unanimously VOTED to approve the minutes of regular Board Meeting held on April 12, 2022, Bylaws Subcommittee held on March 15, 2022, and Operations Subcommittee meeting held on March 22, 2022.

**Payette Update (Mr. Lazo):** next update will be in August.

### **CFO/Treasurer Report (Mr. Lynch)**

Mr. Lynch updated the board on the trustee fund account the donations we received this month were \$3,600 bringing our annual total donations to \$45,000 with expenses totaling just above \$34,000. He continued that the expenses for this past month including entertainment, bingo memorial inscription, and subscription services relating to IN2L a digital programming vendor we use in multiple areas of the building. Mr. Lynch asked the board to review and approve the funding for subscription for fy23 relating to IN2L in the amount of \$5,550, the Home utilizes two separate products in different areas of the building, and they were billed separately in different billing cycles

and amounted to \$5,642 in expenses in prior years and they were subject to a 3% annual increase. Mr. Lynch shared that they successfully negotiated with IN2L to combine these products under one billing cycle and lock in the rate of \$5,550 for the next three fiscal years. He continued that this will save the trustee fund several hundred dollars which will simplify our billing and payment schedule.

Mr. Lynch has prepared and submitted the FY23 trustee fund spending plan for review to the Finance Committee members and my goal is to have it approved by the board prior to the start of FY23 on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Lynch shared that they have recently hired an accountant to support the finance team, her first day in the office was today and we will be posting for budget director soon. Trustee Lacoste asked how many open positions are there in your department, Mr. Lynch replied at this time the budget director is only position they are looking to fill in the short term.

Trustee Jourdain made a motion to fund the \$5,550 for IN2L subscription and was seconded by Trustee Collins Jourdain. All in favor. The motion passes unanimously.

### **DVS Staff Report (Secretary Poppe)**

Secretary Poppe hoped that everyone had a good Mother's Day observance and as we approach Memorial Day she wanted to let everyone know about the services that will be taking place at our State cemeteries in Agawam and Winchendon so on May 30 there will be a ceremony at 9 am at cemetery in Winchendon, and then in Agawam at 1 pm both cemeteries will be looking for volunteers for flagging which will begin at 8:30 am on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Secretary Poppe shared that they are pleased to be able to start welcoming families back into our cemeteries for observances. Chairman Keefe asked if she has heard anything about state house ceremony for Memorial Day, Secretary Poppe replied that the Memorial Day ceremony always takes place at the cemeteries, if you are referring to the reading of the names that will take place Thursday at 9 am but the state house is still not open for events. She continued that the Gold Star Wives are looking to have their conference in July.

### **Holyoke Soldiers' Home Administrator/Staff Report (Mr. Lazo)**

Mr. Lazo reported that the current census is 99 veteran residents, and we will be admitting two more veterans this week that will give us a total of 33 veterans since December. He continued that a challenge that is starting to appear is that after this week we will only have 8 beds available, so we are getting close to capacity.

Mr. Lazo shared that the 100% of our current veteran residents have received the first booster dose and 304 out 304 eligible staff members have received booster dose and will still have 4 organic staff that are not yet eligible for this booster. He continued that we are offering the second booster to eligible staff and veterans so far we have 86 of 89 which is 97% of eligible veterans have received the second booster, at this point 5 veterans have declined and 6 are not yet eligible. Mr. Lazo stated that we are working with the 5 to educate them on the reason for the vaccine. He continued that staff is also eligible for the booster and 25 have elected to receive.

Mr. Lazo stated that we continue to do surveillance testing 2 times a week and we have seen a small increase in staff positives, right now we have 4 staff members positive and out of the building and 0 positive veteran resident. He continued that staff is doing a great job at self-reporting and we have seen a slight increase possibly due to Mother's Day and families getting tougher.

Mr. Lazo informed the board that our current building construction on 2 South our isolation unit is moving very slowly, there are some back ordered materials while contractors waiting to receive before they can start so we are looking at 3-4 weeks for some products to come in. He continued

that we are working with DCAMM on other issues in this building which include the transfer switch upgrades for the emergency generator and façade repairs.

Mr. Lazo reported that on Monday of this week we had our third veteran community meeting where we talked about admissions, infection control, outpatient department and the dormitory with the next meeting scheduled for August 8. He continued that we had 15-20 folds from VFW and veteran services officers with most questions about the census at the time.

Mr. Lazo said the outpatient department still has 3 veterans remaining who have not identified a PCP and are not responding to calls or emails, and we will continue to follow up until we have a resolution.

Mr. Lazo shared that this week we are celebrating Nursing Home Week and the recreation department has activities every day with today's activity being gardening outside. He continued that we celebrated National Nurses Day on Friday, there is baby picture contest, with fun things for staff and veterans to do, tomorrow is sports day there will be sports games for the veterans and staff will get to dress with their favorite team.

Mr. Lazo stated that we are looking forward to May 21 when the American Legion riders club ride by Home and stop to present a donation to the Home and we thank the American Legion riders for this donation.

Mr. Lazo reported that for staffing we have 308 organic employees with 291 or 95% are active and reporting to work. He continued that the average HPPD in April was 7.6% which remains above the CMS gold standard. Mr. Lazo said that shift differentials will stay in place in July. He continued that on April 25 our Occupational Health Nurse joined out staff, we have an offer out for general counsel and he has accepted and will start mid-July, background checks for the Assistant Director of Nursing and Director of Nursing, we are still recruiting for a Chaplin, two Veteran Care Coordinators and a night Nursing Supervisor. The Home participated in two job fairs one at the Holyoke Mall and the other at STCC we are able to make some good contacts. Jen Hill from our education department participated and she came from Job Corp, and she was able to reconnect, and this will help us reestablish our communication and in the long run help bring staff in.

Mr. Lazo discussed the VA survey corrective action plan was submitted on April 27 we are waiting acceptance from the VA. The survey went very well with a 96.2% goal rate for long term care survey and a 97.8% goal rate on the dormitory survey.

Mr. Lazo said we have had some questions on communication and how we communicate with families, veterans and staff. We have a number of pathways that we use some of those are the family advocacy meeting, veteran advocacy council meeting, weekly staff newsletters, monthly family update, the Flag and Staff newsletter that is bi-monthly, the Front Lines community electronic newsletter, and we hold open staff forums for staff to ask questions, nursing conducts nursing rounds to educate nursing staff and give on the spot education, Ms. Hansen and myself will do walking rounds and walking forums where we visit each clinical unit and give updates, Dr. Dietzen continues with her Medical Moments where she speaks with family members who call in on a topic and starting in June I will be having town hall meetings where I will be in the rec room and staff can come by anytime to ask questions.

Mr. Lazo reported that at the last meeting there was a question of the veterans in our outpatient department have their PCP in Northampton and it is estimated that 70% went to Leeds, 25% went to Springfield and 5% went to other locations. Regarding the Pinnacle surveys, we checked in with

Pinnacle and compares us only other veteran homes and veteran homes typically have higher scores than civilian nursing homes, so we are doing well compared to other state veteran homes.

Mr. Lazo followed up with Chairman Keefe regarding the Board of Trustees picnic and it looks like August 9 which is a Tuesday when there is a board of trustees meeting and at this time there is no budget determined but should be similar to last year.

Chairman Keefe asked from the last meeting when we had 3 veterans still looking to find a PCP. Mr. Lazo replied the 3 still remain outstanding, two are not responding to calls or emails, one wants to visit Leeds in person, but he will not forward his documents to the hospital he wants to bring them in person to Leeds.

Chairman Keefe asked if there is any potential ending of the \$5 and \$10 incentive does Ms. Leahy or Secretary Poppe know anything about it, Secretary Poppe that those suggestions have been brought forward but has not had any formal response yet. Ms. Boyle added that she has nothing to say at this time about that. Trustee Jourdain asked if we are still good on staffing and what percentage is external staffing from agencies and are we reasonable able to cover all of our shifts organically. Mr. Lazo replied that our HPPD remains at over 7% which the gold standard for CMS is 4.408%, however 11% of our staff continues to be agency so we are not yet fully organic, but we are improving. He continued that last month we were at 14% and we slowly bringing in more organic versus agency. Trustee Jourdain stated that we have a resident count of 99 and we will be bringing in 2 new veterans with 8 vacancies the total census is 109 residents. Mr. Lazo replied that total census with all beds open would be 128 but with 2 South and 1 North closed that takes 18 beds offline.

Trustee Jourdain asked for an update us on 2 South and 1 North. Mr. Lazo replied that 2 South is our isolation unit which has been programed for construction to create negative pressure in the unit, construction has been delayed due to supply chain issues the vendor is waiting for some materials and we are expecting it to be 3-4 weeks for it to come in. He continued that 1 North is now acting as isolation unit while 2 South is under construction. Mr. Lazo stated that when the vendor is able to start construction, we are estimating 200 days of construction so we are estimating that January would be a realistic timeframe to be back online as our isolation unit. He continued that unfortunately 1 North is a secure unit, and we have some veterans waiting to get into a secure unit. Trustee Jourdain asked pre-COVID we had more than 128 residents so why are we so far reduced. Mr. Lazo said the DPH guidance limits of number of residents per room, prior to COVID we had 4 or 5 in the rooms in 1 North. He continued that in the main building and the floors upstairs we had 4 veterans in a room that should have been 2 and 3 veterans in a room that should have been 1 the Home was nowhere near compliant and even now after refresh many of the rooms are not meeting the standard but we are much better off with single and double rooms versus 3 or 4 person rooms. Trustee Jourdain stated he did not recall us talking about that level of reduction to 128. Mr. Lazo shared that this was probably discussed when Val started the refresh on the third floor. Trustee Jourdain asked what was our staffing prior to COVID and what is it now. Mr. Lazo replied that he does not have the staffing prior to COVID, I can get that number, but right now we are at 308 organic staff members. Trustee Jourdain stated that is reduced, is that when you say 308 is that total or with people out on leave. Mr. Lazo said that the 308 total with 291 active. Trustee Jourdain stated that is definitely down from when we had closer to 350 pre--COVID. Mr. Lazo stated our FTE cap is different, our FTE cap is 356. Trustee Jourdain stated we have more positions filled pre-COVID, in light of the fact that we have no more domiciliary, and we have 100 less beds than previously I find it interesting we are still having staffing issues it seems like we have more or less 10% less staff, wildly reduced scope now that we are ramping up with residents. He continued that at one point we got down to 60 residents, do you have any thoughts on the number of staff we had then and now. Mr. Lazo stated that he cannot speak about staff then but when the set schedule

was put into place in early 2021 by the Unions it was based on 10 open units and right now we are at 8 open units so we are very heavily staffed based on units and staff per shift particularly with our A and B weekends our Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday s are heavily staffed so we have weekends covered. Mr. Lazo will talk to nursing and staffing to bet some pre-COVID comparisons. Trustee Jourdain agrees with Mr. Lazo, but it seems like we are really heavy and how in light of that is there still a need for agency. Mr. Lazo answered that the agency is mostly evenings and nights. Trustee Jourdain stated that we have not been able to smooth out the schedule moving people around to different shifts to accommodate the high staffing levels. Mr. Lazo shared that when someone gets hired, they get hired into a shift, we need people that are interested in the night shift we can't take someone who bid into a day shift and put them in the night shift, we can ask but if no one is willing we cannot make them change their shift. Trustee Jourdain asked why not. Mr. Lazo stated that you cannot change their hours and wages without the union activity otherwise it is considered direct dealing and we would run into a filing with the union. Trustee Bigda said a lot of people would leave. Trustee Jourdain said there has to be a certain level of flexibility so that we have a reasonable level of distribution of staff. He continued that his concern is that it seems like we are overloaded on day shift and not sufficient on the nights and weekends. Trustee Jourdain asked if we have people on just because that's the shift they always had, is it efficient and are being good stewards with the states resources and do we have too many people on the day shift. Mr. Lazo shared that the day shift if full staff, is it too many, I don't think it is too many, we are well above the gold standard for HPPD so we are heavy, how do we adjust that is a conversation we would need to have. Trustee Bigda looks at that this as a very positive selling point. Trustee Jourdain stated inefficiency is never a good thing. Trustee Bigda stated to look at the distribution of workers in hospitals as well, it is the same, everyone wants the day shift, less want the second shift and nobody wants the third shift and that is the reality. Trustee Jourdain stated that we give differential and different incentives, he asked if Mr. Lazo could give a staffing plan so he could understand the amount of staffing working on each of the shifts. Trustee Jourdain said that looking long term this is the reality in terms of the small number residents and he is concerned about the continued use of agencies. Trustee Bigda shared that having more people on staff is not inefficient, it is awesome health care, and we should all be so lucky to have extra people on shifts so that inefficiency comment I don't think is appropriate. Trustee Jourdain replied that we are going to find out and that he is reserving his judgement so he can study things and make opinions from there. He continued that this notion that I get and red flags go up when I hear thinks like we just have extra staff during the day because we don't want to upset the unions, I want to make sure the use of agency is for a real need and not because we are not accommodating whims of certain people I want to make sure we are being good stewards of our resources and are we distributing and allocating the resources in an effective way. Trustee Bigda said that he and Trustee Jourdain could go and go round in circles so let's move on. Chairman Keefe restated that if Mr. Lazo can get that information for Trustee Jourdain.

Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Lazo about the contractor and the roughly 200 days to receive a specific part of equipment because of the supply chain issues. Mr. Lazo replied that the piece of equipment is expected to take 260 days, the back order on initial materials so hopefully the backorder won't impact us too much.

Chairman Keefe asked if the nighttime differential that the Home offers, what is the differential and when was that last time it was reviewed. Ms. Hansen the differentials are based on position so a RN \$5 per hour and it is less for LPN and CNA's. Chairman Keefe do you know is that something that is bargained with bargaining units or set by EOHSS, Ms. Hansen said that it is talked about in the contracts, Chairman Keefe asked if we know the last time it was looked at. Ms. Hansen does not know. Chairman Keefe asked if Ms. Hansen could find that out.

## **Holyoke Soldiers' Home General Counsel Report (Atty Yankopoulos)**

Mr. Yankopoulos reported the only significant change we have had since the last meeting is that we have candidate for general counsel and will be on the ground mid-July. He continued that all the investigations are continuing the Attorney General, DOJ, the IG released a report regarding the pre-COVID investigation it was working on, and they are still continuing with COVID related issues. Mr. Yankopoulos stated that there are no outstanding request or lawsuits. Trustee Keefe asked when the new general counsel is starting, Mr. Yankopoulos replied early to mid-July. Mr. Lazo added that the new general counsel is on National Guard orders till the end of June.

#### **Home's Family Advocate Committee Report (Ms. Menard)**

Ms. Menard the meeting will be held tomorrow, we have been switching days and times. She continued that at the last meeting the discussion was around food and laundry, with good feedback on admissions.

#### **Home's Veterans Advocate Committee Report (Ms. Menard)**

Ms. Menard reported was cancelled last month and will be this Thursday. She also shared that they were going to discuss having the bishop come in to do mass and we have had some changes in our spiritual programming.

#### **Trustees' Finance Committee Report (Trustee Jourdain)**

Trustee Jourdain reported that the Finance Committee met on April 20 and discussed IN2L change that the board has approved. He continued that they approved some small appropriations for bingo and entertainment. We had a presentation from Maggie Feyre who does a fantastic job in recreation.

Trustee Jourdain shared that they wanted to dive into the entertainment budget and one of the questions was are we being robust enough, are we getting number one top quality entertainers, are we mixing it up, does Ms. Feyre feel comfortable asking the board for the resources she needs, we want her to think out of the box for trips and make sure she feels comfortable to make a request of the board so the residents have top notch entertainment. Trustee Jourdain shared that after so many years in the institution and she talked about 155-165 activities per month, the number of different groups trying to get reactivated back in, we provide about \$3,000 a month for entertainers and parties, she scopes out the entertainers and then gets feedback from the veterans. Trustee Jourdain shared that there is a plan to have 5 bands over the course of the year to be rotated in, 6-10 theme parties per year.

Mr. Lynch gave an update on the state budget and in FY23 as of April 20 we had a request in for \$29.7 million dollars for the Home with an increase of 4% form prior FY. He continued that they discussed capital plan, items going though DCAMM like the funding of screening trailer, there was an under bid for a security project for the Home for security upgrades, there was also a formal study project of a façade improvement estimated at over \$100,000, the building is having issues with rain and some repointing work that needed to be done.

We also discussed the CFO evaluation and at the next meeting based on Mr. Lynch's choice of open or closed session at the next Finance Committee meeting. Trustee Jourdain shared that they also discussed putting together a volunteer appreciation dinner in the future, those had been done in the past and we would like to rekindle. He continued that a discussion was had regarding the loction of the tablets that were donated and are they circulating around for everyone, TV sources in the Home, IN2L is providing 4000 programs for that and see if we have capability to do some expanded cable beyond the Direct TV we were told that the current service has over 50 channels so do we need to do a survey on that, do the veterans have sufficient entertainment. The Finance Committee could do some kind of informal study of residents to make sure they are happy with the television service. There was also discussion of an upgrade in internet services, the WIFI

challenges in the building, we were looking for interim upgrades until they are in the new building, we also mentioned new equipment or TVs that the board open to suggestions for donations. He continued that the antenna services making sure DCAMM is sensitive that the new building is able to provide antenna revenue and services, Mr. Lynch had DCAMM agree to come to future meeting.

Trustee Keefe stated that he asked Senator Velis to come and talk at this meeting about the legislation, but he cannot give briefing until the legislation is finalized. He continued that he will see if Senator Velis is available to come to the next meeting. Chairman Keefe stated that the legislation is coming to an end whatever the finalized document oversight is going to be there is going to be some turn over and I know we all reviewed the IG report where they brought up some of the trustees account, Chairman Keefe asked Trustee Jourdain if we are at a point to avoid a break or a elapse where there might not be funding as we get closer to the end of the year should we be looking at lining up some of this stuff to make sure it is in place with this current board and the Finance Committee obligating the funds to make sure the veterans are still taken care of. Chairman Keefe continued that he would ask Mr. Lazo and his staff to not be afraid to ask the question because technically we could get to the point where this board dies, and we don't know what new board looks like and we don't want our residents to go without. Trustee Jourdain stated that the continuity plan if that contingency occurs, I think we need to be sensitive to it that, if legislator goes in that direction that there, we would be some sort of a runway where we would have the capability to put things in place with a transition plan, we will want the next group to be good stewards of the resources and the donor funds.

#### **Trustees' Bylaws Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)**

Trustee Lacoste we approved the administration policy to move it to the full board but waiting on two procedures and will review next month.

#### **Trustees' Operations Committee Report (Trustee Collins)**

Trustee Collins reported on the KPI that from high-level things are holding steady we did have a discussion with Trustee Jourdain, and he brought up in regard to agency hours that in January we were at 30% and in March 14% and reporting tonight we are at 11% so we are making progress. He continued that they will continue to watch what shift those agency hours are being utilized and if you look at the news it has been a big issue with agency nursing hours at all hospitals. Trustee Collins said great work and although we are still in the red it is a huge improvement.

Trustee Jourdain continued by discussing safety there are a couple of yellows, we did have a good discussion with the restraints and behavioral events, during the discussion as we are admitting newer patients the acclimating to the environment could be leading to an uptick in those events and hopefully those will flatten out as new veterans adjust to their new surroundings. Ms. Hansen added the two factors playing into the behavior events are acclimating the new veteran and the other thing that happened during February/March was staff training on what should be reported as behaviors and encouraged the staff to capture the behaviors every time it occurs and not accepting it as someone's normal and to be reporting more comprehensively. Trustee Collins added how that ties into CMS for reimbursement in the future. Ms. Hansen added that this ties into the case mix index and when the higher the number the more time intensive a veteran is which then drives your staffing and when move forward to CMS it drives your reimbursement. She continued that even if not was hitting but they are yelling and disrupting the unit it takes up staff time to correct what is happening and all of those drives up the case mix index, which will drive up your revenue.

Chairman Keefe asked that last month you talked about skin injuries and try to get a determine a benchmark for bruises is that new one listed there. Trustee Collins said it was added at the beginning of this year, the team is capturing bruises, skin tears, any new findings on anyone's skin it is a new metric that they are tracking. Chairman Keefe wanted to know if oral care is going to be

tracked as a KPI and how will you measure. Trustee Collins replied that this is a new procedure based on family feedback it is not reported on the dashboard, but it is something they do address with veterans. Ms. Hansen shared that we had identified as an internal performance improvement project and it is being reviewed by the nursing leadership team, VCC's and supervisors. They are going around looking in people's mouths to make sure oral care is being done so we have the providers will be doing more with oral care and that all of the nurses who are performing admissions can do a good oral care assessment, so it has blossomed into a bigger project than we originally conceived but it is going good places. She continued that it did not merit a spot as one of the key performance indicators, but it is one of the things we are tracking in our quality committee.

Chairman Keefe asked if PT was going to be added to the KPI as a metric. Trustee Collins replied that physical therapy is tracked quarterly, and we will probably do the same with the oral care and place a snapshot on the dashboard.

Trustee Collins stated that the rest of the KPI's are looking stable, there are incidents with UTI, lower respiratory tract infection as we come out of the winter months. He did point out that we got into the green with our overtime hours being down and agency hours are down, but staffing is very robust.

Trustee Collins wanted to know if a we could resurrect the report that gave us a break down by floor, by what is open and what is close and to get the patient census per unit, case mix that is the complexity of the patients so the higher the complexity the higher the staffing is not always the same if you have sick patients, patients with catheters, patients with behavioral issues, then the complexity goes up and they require more support. He would like to see that number in the case mix because they are doing a good job putting the same acuity patients on those units, but I think if we had one in regard to the actual patient load then we could figure out the staffing assigned to those units that may be beneficial to the team.

Trustee Jourdain asked if Mr. Lazo could tell us where the overtime is occurring on what shifts that is happening. Mr. Lazo replied okay.

Trustee Collins gave an update on policy reviews that we did and there was nothing really jumped out at anyone of us, but Nursing 099 Weights tracking of changes was a combination of two together of dietary and nursing service. He also asked on the volunteer services is where volunteers can be in the building and if they can be in locked units and the answer is yes. Trustee Collins wanted to give a graphic, on the falls report, of where we were last year and where we are so far YTD. He loves to see the report behind this in regard to any veteran that had a fall and look at the medication they were on, the time of day, what unit and what precipitated that and that will be set forth at the next committee meeting. Trustee Collins stated that the clinical folks ask certain questions to make sure we are doing the right thing and Dr. Dietzen, and her team do great analysis.

Trustee Collins reviewed the transition plan and a few items he had questions on he started with the review on call process and asked Mr. Lazo that they are waiting for it to come back to the Operation Committee and that the on-call process is squared away, not one person should carry the burden it should be carried through leadership and staff. He continued with nursing leadership and that Ms. Hansen has been carrying the weight in regard to the after-hour call process and supporting nurses' services and now with the DON and ADON this can be spread out.

Trustee Collins stated that the Committee Structure and Governance Model a lot has been done but he asked to see the finalized list for all those charters and that will be produced for the next Operations Committee meeting. He continued that for informatics Mr. Engell gave a report on the



EMR, but he would like to see a timeline to when things kick off and when to expect it be in place and training. Trustee Collins said on Admissions that is somewhere in process and he asked for the final copy to be produced so the Operations Committee can take a look at it. He continued with drills, codes and elopement they have already done some of the fire drills and we need to get that on our schedule so whether do elopement, fire, code blue so we have tracking of that. He shared that under facilities review of documents of vehicles and equipment and licensure to operate them and that they are working on the master list, and we will keep it on our radar until it is complete. He finished with the tracking of infections that is covered under antimicrobial stewardship.,

This was all part of the long list that was put together and these are some of the items in flux, they may be completed but need to make its way to the committee and board for closure.

Trustee Collins shared that the Pinnacle report feedback from our stakeholders, reviewed the graph and don't want to get cut off in anyone month looking at trend overall satisfaction went down, the ongoing issues with the quality of food, communication and professional therapy. He continued that the interesting part as we discuss all these at the Operations Committee the professional therapy has surprised me because physical therapy and occupational therapy are always hitting their targets in regard to seeing the veteran by the timeline of 5 days, that may have been what drove this lower score may be a question of reimbursement. He continues that he understands how the frustration on family's part on how things were billed, may have drove it down. Trustee Collins stated the issues the regards multiple ways to get at the communication piece all engagement you do with the families and the stakeholders, this may not be the best way to capture the information. Trustee Collins stated at the next Operations Committee meeting they will be reviewing contracts to see what is being renewed so the Finance Committee has awareness of what is coming down the road.

Chairman Keefe stated that most break down of the services are trending in the right direction, what is it with the quality of the food that it took such a dive. Mr. Lazo replied the biggest depends on which veterans' family are asked which month, some really enjoy the food, and some do not like much. Those who bring it up we ask them what would be more satisfying, it is an uphill battle. Chairman Keefe asked if we ever solve the ice cream issue, Mr. Lazo replied that it has not been resolved yet. Trustee Jourdain asked regarding foodservice maybe the operations committee should invite the head of food service to come in and discuss on perhaps there is something more that we can do in this area, maybe a survey what do they want, how are we not delivering. Trustee Collins said that is a great idea if we could get the head of food service and dietary to get a report together.

### **Superintendent Hire Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)**

Trustee Lacoste reported that we received a note from Mr. Deacon stating that we did post a procurement for a search for the superintendent vacancy on the COMMBUYS for the PS61 state contract list and it has closed there were only 2 vendors that opened the posting with no responses. She continued that Mr. Deacon and team will look at the next step in the couple of weeks into the state procurement laws. Chairman Keefe stated there is an entire new team here that has been working both with the board and with the team inside the walls of the Soldiers' Home, the acting superintendent, CFO, Dr. Dietzen and we are seeing the trends going in the right direction. As we get one step forward there seems to be a setback like thig IG report that came out. He continued is there some way to do our own advertisement to show all the good that his going on in here, I know all across the country healthcare is struggling. Trustee Jourdain asked if we can do something like that we should definitely consider and have it vetted, because we are trying to promote the facility as a great place to live, discuss all of the reforms that have been put into place and tell the story of how much improvement has taken place and the bright future of the facility. He continued that in terms of getting a firm I am always suspicious of these COMMBUYS they are counting on people to find us is not always a good approach, who can go around and talk to these firms.

Trustee Jourdain shared that this is a super top priority, and we need resource from the state to network with people to get us a firm to see who would be interested in our business, with all the employment firms that are out there that nobody wants to do business with the state and these contracts pay pretty well, based on the last search. He would also like to understand the BE Smith obligation under the last contract, we never got an answer on how they are able to get paid and promise if they do not find us a successful candidate that they agree to give us another free search and they just walk away from that. He continued that he is not ready to let that situation walk down the street, he would like to hear an intelligent answer to if we should get some money back. Trustee Lacoste added that we received a letter from BE Smith when they resigned, and they did not request the last payment that was due to them, and they cited a section of the contract that allowed them to step back and walk away. She continued that this was her recollection, so we need to pull the file and look at it again. Trustee Jourdain stated that he is interested in seeing what legal perspective was and how much was the total amount of payments versus the last payment. Trustee Lacoste stated that was paid for by the state. Trustee Jourdain said that the taxpayers did pay for that I would like more details on that to compare. He continued that if there are suggestions from HR as to how we can call people up there are searches going on all the time in state service we are supposed to have relationships with these firms. Trustee Lacoste shared that Mr. Deacon is looking at what the next steps are that we can take under the laws of the State. Trustee Jourdain said this process is taking forever we are at over a year since we lost our last candidate. Trustee Lacoste stated we have an acting superintendent that the Home is progressing and is doing exceptionally well, I believe we are not in an emergency situation anymore. Trustee Jourdain's opinion is that the process should go faster, and we should have a sense of fire in our belly.

Chairman Keefe agrees and looming out there for me is that legislations and I know that there are things that the 7 of us want to basically check off and make sure we took care of on our watch. He wonders is we could we sit down with Mr. Lazo and Ms. Foley and then talk to Secretary Poppe he feels so much good going on and COVID is still restricting what you can and cannot do, there has to be a way to get some positive coverage like a story link in Boston on Chronicle or Sunday mornings in Western Mass. He feels part of I where I am failing a chairman here is that I am not getting you a venue to highlight the way the home has taken a 180 degree turn and is doing wonderful stuff . He continued when you go in there the staff's positive from the time you walk through the door everybody is in a great mood. Chairman Keefe believes if we could do something to get out from underneath this people would understand this is a decent paying job. He continued that DVS and EOHHS are working to keep the incentives in place. The best part of the job is the residents, the veterans. Chairman Keefe stated that we have to find a way to come out with some positive media because we are going on 3 years of old bad news telling the same stories . He continued that he will talk to Ms. Foley, Mr. Lazo, Ms. Leahy and Secretary Poppe about getting a positive media coverage. Trustee Collins stated that he did make that very comment when we were talking with BE Smith and trying to get a perspective where they were when we started the search committee again is that we need to create a video with the new building, interviews with staff and the goodness going on in the Home. He continued that we need the positive press and that we are under a dark cloud that we cannot shake He would love to make a video and get the excitement with a walk through panoramic and architectural firm can share all that is new and exciting. Chairman Keefe shared that it is not just the healthcare industry, it is everywhere and no matter what your business is you have to advertise, you have to recruit, you are competing for talent acquisition and then hopefully properly managing talent to keep your team. He continued that we need to take a look at and see what we can do that when it comes to the Finance Committee can do with these accounts and expand those funds.

## **Old Business**

**COVID-19 Memorial Planning Committee status(Trustee Keefe)**

Chairman Keefe stated that they have not had a meeting yet and asked Mr. Lazo to reach out to Ms. Blomquist at Payette, because she was going to let us know who the point of contact was going to be for the memorial planning committee, he thought she mentioned the design artist. Chairman Keefe was hoping the design artist could give the board, based on the plan layout, maybe some drawings. He continued that once we know where the memorial is going to sit in the new facility then we could start getting down to what the actual memorial would look like if we could make contact based on the plan layout, where it is going to sit with the new facility and what it would look like and what it would say. Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Lazo to give Ms. Blomquist his contact information.

**Update of EMR vendor contract (Mr. Engell)**

Mr. Engell updated the board on the RFR process, as you know we have selected a vendor for the software and what we are doing now is finalizing the RFR for the implementation vendor. He continued that we went with a separate RFR process to make sure we maximize the best vendor to support us with this effort. We were going to use one of those PRF accounts but we made a decision to pivot to a broader RFR so we would have a wider distribution of the bid document and to be able to get the best possible vendor.

Mr. Engell said that we are working on the final rewrites and anticipate by early by next month that the bid will be available for response. He continued that we anticipate a 18-24 month implementation time table and the reason it is that long is because we are EMR naïve in our building and it will take time for our employees assessment, evaluation, review of where they are in technology adoption is so that we can make sure we have an effective implementation so we will be spending a lot of time doing prework with our team looking at change management it will be very training centric. Mr. Engell stated then once we are ready, we will have metrics that are part of our RFR and then start looking at the EMR software and bring it into the Home. He continued that we have the green light from the Governor's budget, EOTTS (Executive Office of Technology Services and Security) capital and both A&F and DVS and their level of support for the capital project so we can proceed and there is nothing in our way.

Chairman Keefe knows this is multi phased but would like to know what is the long-term strategic projection for being 100 % complete and then working backwards phase by how many phases are there and is there a target date for each phase. Mr. Engell replied that as of yet we do not have a hard date we have a range that is 18-24 months. He continued that we will learn a lot when we have our organizational readiness assessment which will use metrics to show us how ready our organization is for the technology adoption and how much training we will need to do to bring everyone forward. Mr. Engell stated that we have a wide range of people from those who are technology averse and have not used EMR's to those who are rapid adopters who have used EMR's. He continued that the first thing to do is to complete the assessment of our staff and allow for our staff to help us identify what we need to do. He will put together the phases in more detail for next month. Chairman Keefe is wondering if the readiness assessment is not the final step, Mr. Engell replied that there will be a number of readiness assessments and that the first one will be when the vendor comes online initially and that will help drive the training program and then another assessment will be based on training programs to determine that the staff are understanding and learning and ready we will continue to move forward. Chairman Keefe is looking for a phase target set of dates so we can track if we are falling behind, so if you could put something like that together so the board knows if we are on target.

Mr. Engell shared that we are working with another third-party vendor KMBS OnBase on a scanning project to scan our existing medical records, so we are ready to upload when software becomes

online. Trustee Jourdain stated that there was a comment in the IG report that they requested that DVS be given monthly updates on this topic, have those started yet. Mr. Engell tried to remember what level of detail is included in the monthly legislative updates as it relates to the EMR, he will check on that and get back to the Board. Trustee Collins referred to the staff readiness as we have a 24-month window and where are we going to be in this building in regard to infrastructure, computers, refresh, all of these need to be part of the assessment. He continued that he has confidence in the staff and he been through multiple EMR changes but I am interested included with the new timeline when are the new pc's going to rollout and making sure the building is ready for this, and where are they going to be and understand who is going to be using the EMR is it the CNA's, licensed providers only, staff utilization tool for medication and vital signs. Trustee Collins would like to see the whole picture but what hasn't been talked about is we are building a building fairly soon but I don't know the requirements in regard to the infrastructure here to be able to handle the new computer system. Mr. Engell replied that in very board brush terms most of the technology will be wireless, and it will be looking the wireless backbone in the building and making sure it is done in such a way that we can protect the security. Trustee Collins asked if all the systems have cyber certificates to meet the requirements for HIPAA. Mr. Engell replied yes that security is a very strong part of the procurement process we work very closely with EHS IT, and we work closely with EHS IT Legal on the technical side of the requirements for security and the other on the legal components that reinforce and reflect that. Mr. Engell stated that in terms of who uses it will be everyone who touches the resident's clinical life from the CNA, the activities professional, dietary, clinical staff, licensed staff, physician, practitioners, pharmacy, as well as the clinical consultants based on credentialling, many will be using it. He continued that we are being mindful of accessibility requirements, so we have had a review of Wellsky with our vendor that did that review.

#### **Update on VA Small Home Grant Program (Sec. Poppe/Mr. Engell/Trustee Keefe)**

Secretary Poppe stated that we do not have any formal communications from the VA at this time. Chairman Keefe shared that he is in DC, and he has a meeting with Chairman Neal, Mr. Dupont and the staff. He will ask if in June we can get a brief update from Mr. Dupont. He continued that they sent correspondence about 2-3 weeks ago to the VA that they had not heard back.

#### **Staffing Status (Mr. Lazo)**

Mr. Lazo stated that there is not additional information.

#### **Status of Regular meetings in July and December 2022**

Chairman Keefe shared that last year we voted to bypass these meetings, we more than meet our statutory meeting requirements of 9 meetings a year, in fact, this board in the last 2-1/2 years has almost tripled the meetings we are required to have. Trustee Lacoste made a motion to not have regular meetings in July and December. Trustee Jourdain seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passes unanimously.

#### **Date for Statutorily Required Joint Chelsea & Holyoke Board Meetings**

Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Engell to share with the group any information he has on the Joint Board meeting. Mr. Engell stated that currently a meeting on the June 21 virtual at 16:00 pm. He continued that the agenda is currently being created and will go our shortly.

#### **Update on License Plate Program Initiative (Trustee Jourdain)**

Trustee Jourdain reported

#### **Board Input to performance Evaluations for Superintendent & Treasurer/CFO Date inputs due to DVS**

Chairman Keefe asked Ms. Boyle to relook at this. He continued that Ms. Boyle and Mr. Deacon went back up the chain of command and came back with a way that the board can get input and find out what the goals are for both Mr. Lazo and Mr. Lynch. Chairman Keefe shared that the way ahead for this is for the Superintendents goals to make sure that we comply with opening meeting law Mr. Lazo will be available at the next Operations Committee meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup> and that time he can discuss his goals. Chairman Keefe asked that any trustee that would like to have any input please send to Trustee Collins . He continued that the same process will work for Mr. Lynch as the CFO/Treasurer goals those will be openly discussed at the Finance Committee meeting on May 18th at that time I am going to rely on Trustee Jourdain to be the lead on that and take those inputs from any board of trustees that would like to provide input and then Trustee Jourdain and Trustee Collins will finalize the inputs and send them up to Secretary Poppe or Ms. Leahy to incorporate into the annual appraisals. Both Ms. Leahy and Mr. Deacon agreed with the process.

Chairman Keefe asked Secretary Poppe to emphasize the date EVS needs these inputs from Trustee Jourdain and Trustee Collins. Secretary Poppe stated that the input for Mr. Lazo will go to her, and that the deadline was moved up to the end of May but could probably go to early June. Chairman Keefe asked if we set a date of June 3, Secretary Poppe said that would work. Trustee Jourdain asked if once we give our feedback is should we be thinking about the process on how we discuss with Mr. Lynch and Mr. Lazo the feedback we are providing. He would like to know the forum to share our thoughts and how do we think that through, we are going to share this with the goals is it going to be just in writing or share with them and then we can have a conversation, but there should be some feedback when once we give our written pieces of feedback. Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Deacon and Ms. Boyle how we can do that, is it possible to do that in an executive session post the joint June session, we are going to have a very short meeting with an abbreviated agenda but is it possible to have Trustee Collins and Trustee Jourdain with Secretary Poppe to go into an executive session and talk specifics on the inputs provided. Trustee Jourdain thinks it is up to the employees to choose open or closed, he is open to whichever way it will be handled, and they may want to have a conversation or ask questions.

## **New Business**

### **Board of Trustees Resolution on proposed closure of VA Hospital in Leeds, MA. (Trustee Jourdain)**

Chairman Keefe shared that he and Trustee Jourdain discussed the closure of Leeds and Trustee Jourdain created a resolution regarding the announcement of the Western Mass closing of the VA Hospital in Leeds and this created a lot of angst, and it is still a battle that is being pushed back like a lot of other things are. What we are seeing here is a lot of decisions made with the previous administration at the federal level that is now being looked at with the new administration. Trustee Jourdain shared that the local city council , local legislators both state and federal are weighing in with their deep concerns based on what they are hearing from constituents that are using the VA and how important it is to the veteran community. He continued that this board was fortuitous in fighting to keep the beds we have in this facility and in the new facility. Trustee Jourdain shared that there are a lot of people who are really concerned about the loss of beds in Leeds, so as a result they are worried about how far to travel, is this the state dialing back services, part of our mission has changed here we had the domiciliary, we had outpatient services, skilled nursing, we have gotten rid of domiciliary, outpatient and part of that analysis was you can to the VA and get those services well if this proposal goes through they will not be able to. He continued that they are saying those services are going to be transferred to a clinic in Springfield and we do not know what that is going to look like in the future. We hope that is seamless and that there is no reduction in services but for the residential component and the people who live at the facility, those beds are

gone, and they are being relocated to Connecticut or out towards the Cape which will put more pressure on our beds when those dry up.

Trustee Jourdain added with everyone weighing in in on this state legislators, federal legislators, local legislators, local constituents, citizen group he though who more that the Soldiers' Home would also want to weigh in in solidarity with the mission of the VA and I thought a resolution of support to preserve the VA would be in order. Trustee Jourdain read the resolution. Chairman Keefe had Ms. Denner update VA to United States Department of Veteran Affairs and in the fourth bullet take out "for".

Trustee Bigda asked Trustee Jourdain what is meant by denials of care? Trustee Jourdain replied that the view for denials is if you don't have transportation or availability as you used to have this access, you effectively are being denied care, you lack access to the care. Chairman Keefe asked Ms. Denner to make updates and forward to him to collect signatures and send out to the congressional delegates, the secretary of veteran affairs, our Governor and our state delegation in western mass. Trustee Jourdain made a motion to adopt the resolution as amended and it was seconded by Trustee Bigda. Everybody in favor. The motion passes unanimously.

### **Inspector General report**

Chairman Keefe stated that last Friday the Office of Inspector General report came out and covered the years leading up to COVID, as he read through the report there were a lot of changes that have been made and one of the areas that took a lot of hits was the trustees accounts of the money. He stated that Trustee Jourdain had had a great hand on that ever since he has taken the helm of it. Chairman Keefe asked Trustee Jourdain if the Finance Committee is confident that they are adhering to everything that came out of that report and the stuff they wrote up on the finance side of it. Trustee Jourdain stated that what we have done that was mentioned there unfortunately or fortunately depending on your perspective there is going to be a round 2 to the IG report and it is going to be very centered on the trustee accounts. He continued as far as the trustee account we have an investment policy, we have a use policy, we have finance committee meetings. He continued that everything that we should be doing we are doing, if someone has any suggestions of something that we need to do and we will do it. Trustee Jourdain stated there are safeguards in place, having all checks signed by board member, comprehensive audits, biannual audits on an ongoing basis, budget process, these are very comprehensive Finance Committee meetings. He stated that he would be interested if the state departments that were involved in the comments from Mr. Acuna have comment that they want to share with us basically the only thing I have heard is yes we have received it but have not heard what is true or not true. Trustee Jourdain suggested that the board think about how we talk through some of this. He continued that just because I don't bring up certain things in the IG report does not mean I don't have concerns about the things that were written or that I agree with everything at face value or conversely that I disagree with anything at face value. He continued that he is looking for, when can we as a board the proper forum to talk about some of these things and what has been reformed and what do we still need to do better on an ongoing basis because we have made so much progress.

Trustee Jourdain stated that there were a number of things that were not mentioned in this report that could have been. He continued that it is important that we acknowledge the report, that we all read it, think about and think about what we have done and what we can continue to do to get better. Chairman Keefe stated that it touched upon a lot of the recurring themes, it does talks about the trustee funds and the trustee members. It also discussed some of the stuff that Mr. Lazo, Dr. Dietzen and the team have fixed on shift work and people not being happy and having their schedules moved around. He continued that a lot has been fixed but it will be the one little thing that someone does not bring up or that we miss because we assume that everything that was out in the Pearlstein report was covered in this and all the other investigations. Chairman Keefe asked

everyone to please review the report and if you are not sure an item has been addressed make sure to bring it up and we will do our due diligence to make sure that we are addressing it.

Chairman Keefe announced that on Thursday May 26 at 3 pm at the Soldiers' Home we will be having the Memorial Day ceremony. Mr. Lazo this will be our second year we were able to start the ceremony last year, the letters have gone out to invite families of 28 veterans, the board is invited, and Trustee Lacoste spoke to the group last year, if any board member would like to speak, please let me know. He continued last year we had 20 family members and this year there will be a small reception after. Chairman Keefe asked if Mr. Lazo has requested any support from the honor guard, Mr. Lazo replied not at this time Chairman Keefe asked him to email to see if they can fill that.

### **Proposal for meeting after joint**

Chairman Keefe shared that Trustee Mass wanted to discuss where we are at with the superintendent, as Mr. Engell puts together the joint meeting it will go through quickly because there is only so much that we can talk about that is common between both Homes. He asked for motion for a special meeting after the joint meeting, a scaled down agenda. Chairman Keefe would like to have Senator Velis, and Zach DuPont from Congressman Neal's office and potentially go into executive session afterwards to have discussions with Mr. Lynch and Mr. Lazo about inputs for their goals. Chairman Keefe asked for a motion to have a special meeting at the conclusion of the required joint meeting. Trustee Jourdain made the motion, and it was seconded by Trustee Bigda. All in favor. The motion passes unanimously.

Trustee Jourdain gave an update on his conversation with Attorney Bagley regarding the March executive session that we had and wanted to let everyone know there will be an email follow up. He added that we will need minutes and recording.

### **Adjourn:**

Trustee Jourdain made a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Trustee Lacoste. It was unanimously VOTED to conclude the meeting at 8:00 PM.

The next meeting will be a joint "virtual" meeting June 21, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathleen Denner, Acting Secretary for the Board of Trustees

### **Attachments:**

