

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING  
AND  
REGULAR SESSION MEETING OF  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY ADVOCATES  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
September 22, 2025**

*We create opportunities for people with developmental disabilities in Jefferson County to live fulfilling lives, by investing in services and building connections.*

*This meeting was held as a hybrid meeting in person with a virtual option through Microsoft Teams. The link and phone number to access the meeting virtually were posted more than 24 hours prior to the meeting per Missouri Sunshine Law.*

**PRESENT:** Dr. Marsha Mertens, Chairperson; Amie Merz, Vice-Chairperson; Scott Brothers, Treasurer; Randy Starkey, Secretary; Elizabeth Spaugh, Director; Tony Sokolic, Director; Danielle Moskop, Director; Jon Casey, Director; Stacey Ismail, Executive Director DD Advocates; Dave Weiler, Director of Administration DD Advocates; Dawn Warner, Executive Assistant DD Advocates.

**ABSENT:** Cara Pellerin, Director

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Emily Brouk, Jeff Niehaus, Nathan Patton and Brandi Gamm - DD Advocates; Bekah Manis Service Recipient; Beth Nickelace and Maria – Difference Makers; Scott Shelton - Lafayette Jeffco; Lori Taborek - Pony Bird; Jodi Woessner - Pathways to Independence; Christine Kennett - FACT.

- I. CALL TAX LEVY HEARING TO ORDER** – Dr. Mertens called to order the Public Hearing to set the rate for the 2025 Developmental Disability Advocates tax levy at 6:30 PM. The floor was opened for public comment. None of the public in attendance had comment to present on the tax levy rate.
- II. CLOSE TAX LEVY HEARING** – Dr. Mertens closed the public hearing for setting the rate for 2025 Developmental Disability Advocates tax levy at 6:31PM.
- III. OPEN and INTRODUCTIONS**– Dr. Mertens opened and led the regular session meeting of Developmental Disability Advocates Board of Directors at 6:32 p.m. Introductions of all in attendance were done at this time.
- IV. MISSION STATEMENT** – Tony Sokolic read the Mission Statement.
- V. MISSION MOMENT** - Emily Brouk introduced the mission moment presenters, Brandi Gamm, Service Coordinator for DD Advocates; Bekah Manis, Service Recipient and her care providers Beth and Maria from Difference Makers. Brandi began serving Bekah in April 2024. Bekah had a brain tumor removed at the age of 12 which resulted in hearing and vision loss and other challenges. She has additional tumors which are being monitored. Bekah has moved around a bit trying to find just the right fit for a home, including a couple of residential care facilities and skilled nursing facilities, none of which were a good fit for her. She has received a Medicaid comprehensive waiver this year which made her eligible for Individualized Supported Living (ISL), which is typically provided in a 3 bedroom home in the community with roommates and customized support for each person. Difference Makers is now providing care for Bekah in a new ISL in Jefferson County. Bekah is able to do more socialization and is happy in her new home. She is looking forward to having roommates and Difference Makers is working on matching Bekah up with a couple of compatible roommates.

VI. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – The Regular and Closed meeting minutes from August 25, 2025, were presented for approval. Scott Brothers made a motion to approve both the Regular and Closed meeting minutes from August 25, 2025, as presented. Jon Casey seconded. Motion carried and minutes approved.

## VII. **REPORTS**

a. **Service Coordination Report** – Emily Brouk, Director of Service Coordination, shared the following information:

- **Client Tally Report** – In August there were 22 new individuals transferred to us and 5 discharged for a net growth of 17. We are seeing growth trending back to pre-covid numbers. Currently, DDA is serving 1,165 individuals. 815 through targeted case management (TCM - Medicaid) and 350 through the Resource Specialist (non-Medicaid). It is anticipated that another large group of people between the ages of 15-18 (approximately 32) is to be transferred to DDA in October.
- **Personnel** – There have been no resignations since the last board meeting. There have been three service coordinators hired after a couple of great rounds of interviews. Miranda Aiello started on 9/8, Cambria Weaver will start on 9/29, and Kaitlyn Hayden had to give 30 days' notice to her current employer and will join DDA on 10/20. These hires allow for filling the recent vacancy and plan for the anticipated growth.
- **Logging** – August's team logging average was 80.7% (goal is 75%). This makes FY26 YTD at 80% which is a strong start. However, the team is very busy. Emily and her team are very thankful to be able to hire three great candidates to join the team. The FY25 Q4 billing review was completed. This is done every quarter as a CARF required activity. There were 139 log notes reviewed from 29 service coordinators. There were only 2 retractions. One retraction was due to a note where the service coordinator accidentally logged both billable and non-billable service in the same casenote. The other was a duplication which may have been a SETWorks glitch and is being reviewed further. Overall, this was a great review. Emily, Jeff and the Supervisors felt the notes were excellent.
- **Partnership for Hope Waiver** – The report shows that so far in FY26 we have had one slot awarded and terminated three. There are currently 89 active slots which funds 106 services with a budget of just over \$611,000. \$122,000 is our match portion of the Partnership for Hope waiver program. The trending decrease of the slots is mainly due to the cap of \$12,363. Service rates have been slowly increased over the past couple of years, so there is very little service that can be provided under the cap. This is being discussed at MACDDS and by DMH.
- **DMH Audits** – The Columbus Audit, which is an annual DMH TCM audit, began today. It went very well. Most of the information was submitted ahead of time. This morning was follow-up on those items. The auditor was very impressed with the new SETWorks ISP, DDA training program, and how support monitoring had increased in quality over the course of the year due to training we put in place based upon her prior recommendations. She will be back on-site Wednesday for the exit meeting. DMH attends the exit meeting as well.
- **DMH Update** - The DMH is internally piloting an electronic intake application. DDA is seeing significant issues with intake. DMH keeps stating this new electronic process will be available soon but has not been rolled out for our use yet. There have been several instances where families submitted their paperwork and waited only to find out that DMH had lost the paperwork, and they had to start over. The new electronic intake process should help eliminate this once it is rolled out for everyone to use. DMH is also internally piloting an electronic ISP. They call it a Person-Centered Support Plan (PCSP). Emily has not seen what it looks like however has requested a copy to see how it compares to the one DDA developed in SETWorks. Emily believes that our team may at some point be required to use this new DMH template.
- **SETWorks Updates** – Our ISP was updated to include back-up plans for specific services per DMH's request. This is a requirement from Medicaid for crisis prevention. The Service Coordination leadership team continues to participate in monthly webinars through SETWorks which contain lots of great information.

b. **Executive Director Report** – Stacey Ismail distributed her Executive Director report for review:

- **Update on Dave:** Dave joined the meeting online and gave a brief update. He was released from the hospital today. His recovery schedule is intact however they were not able to do all the things

intended with surgery, but things are good. He has a few follow up things to do while he recovers.

- **Legislative Update:** DDA joined the Missouri Special Districts Alliance at a cost of \$25. Cole Karr is coordinating this and getting local taxing districts, like DDA, together to discuss the threats to taxes in MO. Mr. Karr has a lot of legislative experience. Dave attended a session in DeSoto and Stacey attended one in Clayton. Senate Bill 3 is still being discussed. The Governor called two special sessions this summer - the first was intended for tornado recovery and KC stadium funding, but a property tax freeze was also added and became SB3. This is being challenged and lawsuits filed as being unconstitutional because property taxes were not one of the topics the session was called for. The second special session was called to discuss re-districting and initiative petition reform. During the second special session there were three joint resolutions filed about property taxes. HJR5, HJR6 and HJR7 are the documents in question and basically, they would change the property tax system to only allow real estate tax, eliminating personal property tax. Personal property taxes represent 23% of DDA's tax levy. It is not clear on how these would work with SB3 or how this will all play out. The special taxation reform committee appointed by the Governor is supposed to file legislation to fix the tax issues in Missouri by 12/31/25.
- Stacey shared with the board an email she sent to the service coordination team with a template MACDDS is using for storytelling and legislative advocacy this year.
- **DMH Update:** Emily provided a lot of DMH updates in her report. DDA is basically taking any individual they transfer. There is no consistency currently regarding transfers. There is also no clear information on any permanent changes at this point. DMH has acknowledged that they have lost intake applications and are hoping the new electronic application will fix that. DDA still does not have a new TCM contract. The contract which was to expire June 30<sup>th</sup> was extended through December. TCM agencies have been told that a new contract is being worked and should be provided in December to take effect January 1, 2026.
- **Property Updates:** We are still working on the transfer of the Pomme Apartments to Pony Bird. There have been challenges with the legal documents as it is an unusual transaction. It is a bit more complicated than originally anticipated however, both party's attorney's and the title company are working through the issues. Also, according to the title company there is still a lien on the property. The loan in question was paid off but the transfer of the deed was not filed with the county to release the lien. The people at the bank who handled that are no longer there, so we and the title company are both working on obtaining the needed documentation. The Lafayette Jeffco property donation is also being worked on. They would like to close in October. Dave has sent them a draft contract to review. Stacey is doing a tour of the Plass Campus with MO Mentor, a residential provider in our county. They would like to open a day program in Jefferson County. Sunnyhill recently opened a day program at the camp in Dittmer. This allows for year around use of the camp. Lafayette Industries opened a day program in Manchester. This is for individuals who retire from the workshop but still want something to do during the day. Lafayette Jeffco may look at doing something like that in Jefferson County as well.
- **Employee Appreciation Week:** Staff appreciation week is coming up October 6-10. That Friday, October 10<sup>th</sup> is our luncheon and service awards before a teambuilding event at the escape rooms in Festus. The board is invited and was asked to RSVP to Dawn if they would like to attend.
- **Committee Assignments:** At the last board meeting, committee membership was discussed, and each committee was assigned a chairperson. We wanted to take one more look at this tonight and have Jon Casey pick a committee to serve on. A revised copy will be sent to the board. The public awareness committee will be meeting soon.
- **Clarification on Board Binder:** Over the past couple of meetings, we have had good discussion about options to get materials to board members in a more effective and efficient manner. After weighing options and discussing how other boards operate, it seemed like the right first step would be to create a portal, likely through Sharepoint, that the board can log into to review meeting materials and house important documents like agency plans, org charts, reports, etc. The board agreed that this change makes sense. Paper packets will still be prepared for board

members who prefer them and we will still send the Fric message to remind the board of the Monday meeting. This will be up and running by the January meeting.

- **MODE flyer:** This flyer was shared for informational purposes. This group shares a lot of information regarding legislation especially related to school districts.

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- Adoption of Tax Levy Rate/Resolution:** Stacey Ismail presented a draft resolution recommending the Board set the tax levy rate at 0.0848 for 2025. This rate is based upon an aggregate assessed valuation in Jefferson County in the amount of \$4,624,922,549. Scott Brothers made a motion to approve the tax levy resolution with a tax rate of 0.0848 for 2025 as presented. Elizabeth Spaugh seconded. Motion carried.
- Risk Management Plan Review:** The Risk Management Plan was presented for review. It is a very comprehensive document. CARF suggested it be scaled back because it was too detailed. There are several items related to facilities/properties which will get removed/reduced due to the upcoming donations. The last column gets updated as needed. The items listed are all relevant items and potential risks. The AAIM HR project is included and continues. Job Descriptions, performance appraisals, succession plans, and training plans are being updated. The new Employee Handbook will be available soon for board approval. Stacey asked if there were any questions or concerns about the risk management plan. The board feels it is a through and well thought out plan and did not have any questions.
- Funding Priorities:** Part of the strategic plan is to develop funding priorities. Historically, DDA has had an open funding process meaning that any agency is allowed to submit a request for funding. Stacey and Dave meet with funded partners each year to discuss their upcoming funding requests. They review prior year requests and usage and upcoming plans to determine future requests. Any underutilization is discussed. There are occasionally new funding requests, however, many of those are agencies who are funded for a service by one of our ERA partners and they want to expand to offer it in Jefferson County. This was one of the reasons for joining the ERA. One strategy discussed by the strategic planning committee was that as tax dollars become limited should the board be more strategic and create a priority list that is published for the upcoming funding cycle. This document would get reviewed and updated each year if priorities change. Stacey provided some examples from other local boards and these were discussed. Also shared is a multi-page infographic needs assessment that was a partnership with the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (MODDC) and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) through UMKC. The main takeaway from it is that people want to be connected to other people and do things in the community. They want friends and to be social. Most boards gravitate towards more essential services, especially when dollars are limited. Essential services are what the waiver provides such as housing. SB40 boards do provide Independent Supported Living Assistance (ISLA) at 10 hours per week or less to someone in their own home. DDA does fund programs around socialization currently. DDA conducts an informal needs assessment annually through our satisfaction survey process, which will be presented in October. DDA's survey results will only have about a 25% return rate at best but we are aiming for 30%. These survey results also don't have input from people in the county who aren't currently being served by the organization. Previous board conversations have determined the direction of DDA funding to be more service driven than capitol request driven. This topic will be brought back at the October meeting for discussion.

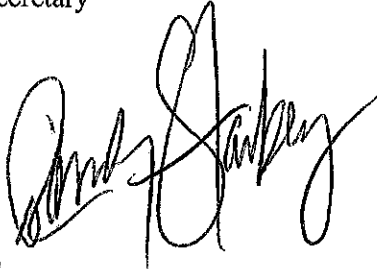
## IX. OLD BUSINESS

- Policy Approval – Suicide Awareness & Prevention** – Stacey and Amie were not able to meet in time to have this updated policy ready. It will be brought to the October meeting for review and approval.
- X. **APPROVAL OF REQUISITION** – The Requisition for October 2025 was presented for approval. This requisition is based upon the FY26 budget. Amie Merz made a motion to approve the October 2025 requisition as presented. Scott Brothers seconded. Motion carried.
- XI. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – There were no comments from the public in attendance.
- XII. **COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD** – There were no additional comments from the Board.

**XIII. ADJOURN** – Being no further business, Randy Starkey made a motion to adjourn the regular session at 7:46 pm. Tony Sokolic seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Starkey, Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Starkey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some overlapping letters.