

**Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.**  
**Board of Directors' Meeting**  
**April 24, 2025, 3:30 p.m.**  
**Neighborhood Center Card Room/Zoom Conference Call**

**Rocky Board Members present:** Kate Anderson, Dannai Clayborn, Bruce Day, Susan Geise, Debbie Havens, Andy Hunthausen, Paula Jacques, Trever Kirkland, Cory Kirsch, Charlie Lane, Lana Larson, Teri Lilletvedt, Erin Lyndes, Dan Rispens

**Rocky Board Members absent:** Jesse Swenson

**Others present:** Hayden Behm, MacKenzie Chatriand, Hannah Danzer, Mindy Diehl, Diane Edgar, Sadie Gooch, Joanna Halland, Jaymie Hazel, Taya Hovan, Lori Ladas, Jean Leischner, Samara Lynde, Jim Marks, Liz Mogstad, Ashley Peña-Larsen, Elizabeth Pullman, Tom Robel, Jonathan Schmitz, Melissa Valenta

**Call to Order/Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. and a quorum was present. Melissa Valenta provided public comment when requested, speaking on behalf of Whitehall Head Start parents, asking the Board to consider keeping Whitehall's Head Start location open for one more year to provide more time to prepare the community for the site's closure.

**Approval of Minutes**

**Bruce Day made the motion to approve the February 27, 2025, Board of Directors' meeting minutes and the December 19, 2024, Finance Committee meeting minutes. Erin Lyndes seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Rocky Mountain Preschool Center Program Presentation – Hannah Danzer**

Hannah provided an overview of the Rocky Mountain Preschool Center program. The center is licensed for 56 children, from infants to those ready to enter kindergarten. When fully staffed, the program employs eight teachers. One lead Teacher position is currently vacant. The majority of Rocky Mountain Preschool Center's funding comes through parent tuition. The current tuition rate for infants is \$1215 per month, with ages two and up charged a rate of \$1150 per month. The preschool participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which provides approximately \$1,000 per month in reimbursement for meals and snacks meeting program criteria. Rocky Mountain Preschool Center is a STAR 4 center in the STARS to Quality program. Hannah expects that the program will be fully enrolled in the fall, though the school district's new KinderSprouts program could provide some competition for slots.

Lori Ladas provided an update from the Preschool Ad-hoc Committee meeting held in March. She provided a FY2025 budget projection for the program, which remains fluid due to staffing changes. At this time, the program is expected to break even at the end of the fiscal year. Lori also presented a FY2026 budget projection, reflecting a variety of possible options moving forward and showing the financial impact of each. Options included a tuition increase, adding a full time Teacher Assistant, or adding a part time Teacher Assistant. The projection is also built with a 10% vacancy rate considered. These budgets will continue to be monitored as Rocky gets closer to fiscal year end on June 30.

**Susan Geise made the motion to approve the March 20, 2025, Ad-hoc Committee meeting minutes. Bruce Day seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Director's Report – Lori Ladas**

Lori invited Taya Hovan to speak about the annual *Rocky Presents Chopped* fundraiser. The event was held on April 5 and sold out for the fourth consecutive year. One hundred twenty-nine tickets were sold. The three chefs in the competition this year represented Eat Greekish, dear potato, and On Broadway. The Chopped champion was Shea Conley from dear potato. The estimated net income from the event is \$18,300, which is lower than last year. Financial sponsorships were down compared to last year, though in-kind donations increased.

Lori asked if there were any questions regarding her written report in Board packets. The current Federal funding situation was addressed, with Lori noting that Rocky continues to operate business as usual and will until there is reason to make a change. She mentioned that Rocky received notice from Payment Management Systems that additional justification will now be required when requesting a federal funding draw through that system. Next month, Lori will present a consultant contract to the Board, related to completion of the Community Needs Assessment.

**Finance Report – Lori Ladas**

Cash balance today is \$2,574,806, and account payable balance is \$27,622.78. Both amounts are current. Lori reported that Rocky is considering outsourcing the payroll position, due to limited success in filling that role. She has spoken with three potential vendors. The 990 report is in progress, and it will be e-mailed to all Board members in draft form before it is submitted.

Jonathan Schmitz highlighted information from Rocky's monthly reports. As of the end of February, Rocky had about 2 ¼ months cash on hand. The Statement of Activities reflects a year-to-date excess revenue of \$94,074, which is higher than budget projections. The Board was informed that the Head Start in-kind waiver request was approved. In reviewing the program details, Jonathan spoke about how most Rocky programs are reimbursement-based and are budgeted to zero out once reimbursements are made. He noted that the preschool, as of February 2025, showed a \$43,126 loss. The preschool is not reimbursement-based.

Lori spoke about the proposed agreement with WIPFLI for the upcoming year. WIPFLI will continue to produce monthly financial statements, and Jonathan will regularly present this information at Finance Committee and Board meetings during the year. Jonathan and Lori will continue to meet weekly, and meetings with Budget Analysts will be held monthly. Jonathan will also meet with Rocky's controller every two weeks to guide the month-end close process. WIPFLI will also evaluate the possibility of outsourcing the payroll position, and work on automation opportunities in Rocky's accounting system. The cost of these services will total \$5,500 per month, plus a 6% technology fee. The Finance Committee recommends approval of this agreement to the Board.

**Debbie Havens made the motion to approve the WIPFLI agreement for May 2025 through April 2026. Paula Jacques seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Approval of Revised Record Retention Policy**

Lori provided updates to the Record Retention Policy, which has been updated to include retention procedures for the video footage from the recently installed security cameras. Changes were highlighted and sent out in advance of the meeting for review.

**Erin Lyndes made the motion to approve the revised record retention policy. Bruce Day seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Sadie Gooch, Whitehall Head Start parent and Policy Council representative, spoke about the proposed closure of the Whitehall Head Start site. She expressed concerns about the timing of this closure and asked to the Board to consider keeping the Whitehall site open for one more year to help the community set up resources for children who will be displaced by the closure.

**Head Start Update – Lana Larson and Ashley Peña-Larsen**

Lana provided a Policy Council update. She reported that the Policy Council voted to approve Head Start's recommendation to close the Whitehall location, due to continuing struggles to meet federal requirements in that community.

Ashley reported that the grant budget is set to close in six days and is in good shape. Head Start received notice of partial funding for next year, totaling 50% of grant award. The remainder is historically received once the Federal budget is approved. Ashley noted that Head Start has been in the news recently, at both a local and national level. She mentioned that Head Start recently lost a grant partnership with ExplorationWorks, as the funding they received for the grant was stopped.

**Bruce Day made the motion to approve the Head Start Director's Program and Budget Report. Erin Lyndes seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

The minutes from the April 8, 2025, Ad-hoc Committee meeting were presented and the Board was given the opportunity to ask any questions.

**Erin Lyndes made the motion to approve the April 8, 2025, Ad-hoc Committee meeting minutes. Debbie Havens seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Ashley referenced the information provided in the Board packets regarding the proposed closure of the Whitehall Head Start site. She emphasized that the recommendation to close Head Start's Whitehall location is compliance-based; since 2017, the site has struggled to maintain a wait list and use of services has been limited. The site also consistently has the lowest attendance of all locations. Whitehall has a high enrollment of over-income children, which has been a trend for the past six years. In comparison, the Helena community has enough Head Start eligible children on a wait list to fill a classroom. The program recommends closing the Whitehall location and moving those slots to the Helena Housing Authority Head Start location. Ashley spoke about continuing to support the Whitehall community through assisting in creating partnerships with the school district and potentially creating a foundation to support families in Whitehall. Specific to the four Head Start eligible children planning to return to Whitehall Head Start in the fall, Ashley noted that their families can apply for Best Beginnings childcare scholarships to use at other childcare facilities. Head Start is willing to share supplies, and the facility currently in use by Head Start is already licensed for childcare. The Board thanked the individuals who provided public comment on the proposed Whitehall closure and expressed appreciation to Ashley for proactively researching ways to assist the Whitehall community in moving forward.

**Debbie Havens made the motion to approve the staff recommendation to close the Whitehall Head Start site at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. Erin Lyndes seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

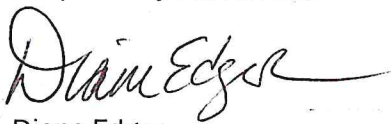
**Personnel Committee Report – Dannai Clayborn**

Dannai reported that the Personnel Committee met in March to review the Executive Director's appraisal forms and discussed ways to engage the Board members to complete the annual evaluation.

**Susan Geise made the motion to approve the March 12, 2025, Personnel Committee meeting minutes. Andy Hunthausen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

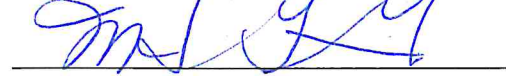
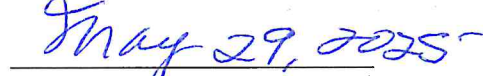
The meeting moved into a closed session at 4:42 p.m. to discuss the Executive Director's Performance Appraisal.

Respectfully Submitted,



Diane Edgar  
Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board of Directors:

  
Name  
Date