

Catawba CMHC Board Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2026

Meeting held by Zoom

Attendees:

BOARD MEMBERS	CATAWBA CMHC STAFF	SCBHDD OMH STAFF	GUESTS	ABSENT
Dr. Troy Fitzpatrick- Board Chair	Tamara Edrington- Executive Director	Deb Blalock- OMH Deputy Director		Melanie Saxon
Jeffrey Ellison- Board Vice-Chair	Michelle Mitcham- Administrator			Marija Mack
Jessica Schmittle	Elizabeth Schrum- Administrative Assistant			
Sandra Calhoun White				
Georgette Fuhr				
Janell Stevens				
Cherie Barton				
Virginia Bowman				
John Gregory III				

Topic	Discussion	Follow-Up
Welcome and Introductions	Dr. Troy Fitzpatrick, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM and welcomed Board members and guests present. The Board then prepared themselves for the business at hand by holding a moment of meditation.	

Approval of the Minutes	The March minutes were reviewed. There were no changes suggested. Mr. Jeff Ellison made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Chief John Gregory III seconded the motion. All were in favor and the March minutes were adopted as written.	
Presentation to the Board- Tamara Edrington	E.H.R. Go Live Update - The EHR system launched on April 13th. - Support for the launch included super users, who had been trained for approximately a year, and Net Smart staff, who were on-site for about three days. - The initial two days post-launch were described as "brutal," with staff experiencing stress and anxiety, but they adapted quickly. - The system is currently in a "much better place today than we were about a month ago," with continuous learning and ongoing development to add new features. Training and Reporting - New staff onboarding requires "super user training" specifically for the EHR system. - Reports are not yet generated in the same manner as the old system, with the central office slowly sending out reports. - Reports are reviewed collaboratively with QA and compliance to identify and correct issues, such as unsubmitted notes resulting from missed button presses. System Adaptation and Support - The new system is anticipated to be much easier than our old system once staff become proficient, despite the initial learning curve involving clicking and sliding tabs rather than text box entries. - The medical team, contrary to initial expectations of struggle, is adapting well to the new system. - Daily support and question resolution are managed through multiple Teams chats.	
Deputy Director's Report	Deb Blalock, OMH Deputy Director reported the following: Budget Presentation and Resolutions - Tamara and Michelle were commended for their budget presentation - Senate and House agreed to come back after the close of the session on May 14th at 5 p.m. to go to conference committee since they couldn't agree on the budget.	

	○ The House recommended \$21 million, the Senate recommended \$23 million. ○ Last year OMH alone got \$31 million in new dollars. ○ The maximum amount they can assign is \$23 million. 988 Call Centers • The Senate's money went to IT, with no coverage for 988 call centers. • Grants that support 988, \$2.7 million, sunset on September 30th. ○ Asked for the replenishing of that 2.7 to continue doing what they're doing. ○ Asked for almost 2 million to expand the call centers to make sure that they're answering 90% of the calls that emanate in South Carolina to answer them by a SC call taker. • Options if the General Assembly doesn't fund 988: ○ Rumors of a potential grant dropping from SAMHSA on May 29. ○ Use agency reserves or cut the services. Personnel Updates • Dr. Bank, OMH director, had his retirement party yesterday. ○ Last day in the office is May 28, and his last official day is June 1. • Office director position, the state facility director position, and the Medical Chief position will be posted on SC.gov on Friday May 22nd. • An interim office director will be announced on Tuesday, May 26. We are waiting anxiously to see who it will be. • New CFO for the agency started on Monday. • Positions currently hired for BHDD: HR Director, Finance Chief Financial Officer, a facility director (the buildings facility director) Hiring Issues and Restructuring • Lag in getting offers for people that have been identified by centers who the centers want to hire. ○ Most centers haven't had any response to that piece of the process since May 7th. • HR staff, IT staff, finance staff and physical plant staff are invited to attend a meeting here at the health campus in Cayce to learn about the restructuring of the administrative components. ○ If staff don't attend the meeting, they'll get all the materials that are shared in the meeting this Friday. ○ Deb plans to attend the meeting so she will know how to support staff. Communication and Staff Morale • There is no direct communication. • Morale is low due to anxiety, frustration, worry, and concern among staff. • Historically, centers and other divisions of OMH have had staff appreciation days, staff wellness days, Staff Retreats, etc. ○ By statute, a state agency these days can spend \$50 per person per year.	
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	○ OMH historically is allowed \$15 per person per year for these events. • If you haven't had your event, you don't get to have your event. BHDD will now take over the organization of all staff appreciation gifts and events for the agency. Leadership and Culture • Chief Gregory expressed concern about building leadership and culture under current conditions. • Difficulty in making final offers to people due to uncertainties. Budget and Services • Agency requested over \$50 million in new dollars during budget presentations to the House, Senate, and governor's office. • The agency's total budget is about \$1.5 billion. • There is no duplication of services because they are treating different populations. ○ Potential duplication on the administrative side (e.g., three HR directors). ○ Shortage of billers and clinical staff. • DOA and the governor's office believe there is duplication on the administrative side. Restructuring Plan and Communication • Deb hasn't seen the restructuring plan • The merger of the three agencies is a good idea but requires a director. • The agency has been without a director for a year. Communication and Support • Communication with staff is important: ○ Staff need to know what to expect. ○ Staff need to know their feelings are valid and that their concerns are being	
Budget Presentation	Michelle Mitcham reported the following: Fiscal Year 27 Budget and Restructuring • The Fiscal Year 27 budget is not final due to significant unknowns related to the merger and restructuring. • Approval for the FY27 budget is not expected at this time. • Concerns were raised regarding departments currently funded at the "center level" and how budgets will follow personnel, especially if not state or center-funded. • Information regarding these restructuring and funding questions is anticipated from the Department of Admin. Fiscal Year 26 Revenue Challenges and Billing System Disruptions • Revenue is the biggest unknown for Fiscal Year 26, with less than 45 days remaining in the fiscal year.	

	• No revenue has been received for appointments or services provided since the Avatar system went live. ◦ Partners in Region A, live with Avatar since February, have also not received revenue from private insurances and most payer sources; only Medicaid has been tested. ◦ The largest collections, generated by clinicians, are not being received, and there is no indication of when this issue will be resolved. • The new system's reporting mechanism is not live, making it impossible to determine the dollar impact of unbillable appointments. ◦ Some private insurances, such as UnitedHealthcare, have strict billing timelines (e.g., 30 days) after which appointments are no longer billable. • Mobile Crisis reimbursements (since December 31st) are hopefully coming through soon from DHHS, helping offset costs for after-hours programs and three full-time mobile crisis employees. Contract payments are also expected soon, with invoices having been sent out today. Financial Stability and Mitigation Efforts • Catawba has prepared for billing disruptions with a healthy carry forward fund for Fiscal Year 26. ◦ Anticipating a need for "somewhere around 4 to \$500,000" from savings to cover potential shortfalls. • The plan is to fully bank the block grant, with final deposits received, totaling \$713,000 for Catawba, achieved by banking 100% (vs. typical 25%) through "multiple years of slowly cutting back expenditures." • The Center is not concerned about a deficit for Fiscal Year 26, citing the block grant and savings account as safety nets. • The current budget presentation reflects projections based on the assumption that billing issues are resolved and billing continues as planned. Central Office Meeting on Billing Issues • A meeting is scheduled at the central office to address the statewide billing issues. • A request to move the meeting virtually due to fleet vehicle shortage was denied, with mileage offered, despite the speaker preferring virtual to reduce costs (e.g., York County reimbursement is approximately \$140 per employee). Chester Clinic Project Status	
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	• The purchase order for the Chester Clinic was paused out of an abundance of caution due to potential revenue disruptions. • The project is not canceled, and discussions with the vendor are ongoing. • Invoicing for the project was pushed back to next year's budget. County Appropriations Update • Chester County: No indication of changes to their recurring appropriation of \$3,000 per year. • Lancaster County: The agency was the "only nonprofit that requested money that did not receive any county funding from Lancaster County," with no recommendation or feedback provided. • York County: Recommended the "same recurring 125,000" which will continue to support York County-specific programs like mental health court, court liaison, and designated exams. ◦ This funding has been crucial for growing programs and dedicating staff to robust needs. • For Fiscal Year 27, county budgets are not yet finalized, but it does not appear that there's going to be any changes regarding county appropriations, and approved funds will remain dedicated to the specific county.	
Executive Director's Report Presented by: Tamara Edrington	Tamara Edrington, Executive Director, reported the following: Funding and Budget Allocations • Lancaster County did not fund the \$85,000 request for a joint MUSC Lancaster and Catawba inpatient/outpatient mental health liaison position, leading to the initiative being paused. ◦ Tamara plans to engage county officials at an upcoming police department award ceremony to discuss future support, and the request will be re-submitted annually. • York County has recommended a budget allocation of \$125,000, while Chester County has recommended \$3,000. ◦ York County's budget process involved an open forum at the County Council meeting with an eight-minute speaking limit. • Current revenue is unknown due to the new system's inability to generate necessary billing reports. System Transition and Performance Metrics • Access standards were met across all counties in March: York (4 days routine, 2 urgent, same-day emergent), Chester (4 days routine, 1 urgent, same-day emergent), and Lancaster (3 days routine, 1 urgent, 0 emergent). ◦ Collaborative documentation achieved 82% for March, meeting the state standard.	

	• Medical team appointments (nursing and psychiatrists) were extended by 15 minutes in April to accommodate prescription management and ensure patient safety during the AVATAR system transition. ◦ This adjustment led to fewer appointments being scheduled in the first week of April, with initial PMAs receiving 15-30 additional minutes and follow-up appointments receiving 15 additional minutes. • The EHR launch included a "spirit week" with staff dressing as superheroes, which was appreciated by staff and aimed at boosting staff morale during the system transition. Staffing and Vacancy Challenges • The hiring process is experiencing delays due to slow feedback from the Governor's office on identified candidates, risking the loss of candidates for positions like an office manager and a critical detention center role. ◦ A Clinic Director position in York County became vacant on May 1st, requiring the Executive Director to cover the role until the vacancy is filled. • Contract nursing agencies are being utilized due to long approval waits for permanent nurse positions, despite being less cost-efficient than permanent full-time employees. • Interviews are underway for ACT Team lead and substance abuse counselor positions, with one interview conducted last week and another scheduled for this week. Community Programs and Patient Impact • The organization is now a Narcan dispensary for York (400 vials) and Lancaster (50 vials) Counties, with training underway for tracking, dispensing, and ordering. ◦ Narcan will be distributed to "anyone in the community, not just patients of Catawba" who are in need, with ordering expected by the end of June. • Mental Health Awareness Month in May included various activities, vendor events, participation in the 7/11 golf tournament for the American Suicide Foundation, and a full dress down month encouraging staff to wear green. • The end of York County's free transit system on May 21st is anticipated to have a huge impact on our patients, potentially causing a dip in our show rates due to the new paid system requiring advance appointments. ◦ Peer support specialists are tasked with assisting patients in learning the new transit system, and staff are encouraged to conduct more home visits to mitigate the impact.	
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	School Contracts and Stakeholder Engagement • Most school contracts are set to renew at the same dollar amount, with the exception of York Preparatory Academy, which is not renewing due to internal budget issues. ◦ Letters have been sent to affected students/patients, advising them to transition services to other clinics, with clinical closing procedures initiated for those not continuing services • The Center plans to request an increased rate for the upcoming Riverwalk Academy contract to offset rising costs. • The second annual Chester stakeholder meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 25 at the Chester Library, with invitations being sent to gather RSVPs and update stakeholders on services and activities. Employee Recognition • A new "Employee of the Month" program has been implemented to honor staff. ◦ Carol Cochran, Lancaster Clinic Director and EHR super user, was recognized for March. ◦ Jason Laboe, EHR super user for compliance and quality assurance, was recognized for April.	
Public Announcements All Board Members	There were no public announcements for May.	
Old Business Status of Applications	Elizabeth Schrum, Board Secretary, discussed the following: Board Seats and Vacancies • There are 15 board seats in total with four vacancies. ◦ Two vacancies are in York County. ◦ Two vacancies are in Lancaster County. • We still need a medical doctor to serve on the board to fulfill the state statute.	
New Business	Subcommittee Reports: <u>Strategic Planning Committee-</u> no new report <u>Employee Incentives Committee-</u> no new report <u>Community Events Committee-</u> no new report	

	On behalf of Catawba CMHC staff, we wish to thank our Board members for supporting staff by providing lunches and stacks during the new Electronic Health Record launch. Your thoughtfulness and generosity boosted staff morale considerably during this time! Thank you so very much! <u>Write Off Report:</u> The Write Off report for April was \$16, 203.68. The Write Off report for May was \$51, 789.55. These accounts are uncollectible due to non-payment for a time greater than 24 months, inability to debt-set, bad addresses/patient homeless, or patient incarcerated. All possible efforts have been pursued to collect.	
Adjournment	The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM	