GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
1000 Pavilions Circle, Traverse City, MI 49684

MINUTES OF THE JULY 30, 2026 MEETING

PRESENT:	Carol Crawford, Karen Griggs, Mary Marois	Board
	Darrell Lavender, Dave Hautamaki, Kory Hansen, Darcey Gratton	Staff
	TJ Andrews	Commission
ABESENT:		
GUESTS:	Kim Weckesser, Human Resources Director	

The regular meeting of the Grand Traverse County Department of Health and Human Services Board was called to order at 9:00am by Board Chair Carol Crawford at Garfield Township's Feiger Room.

Roll Call - Crawford – yes, Marois – yes, Griggs – yes

First Public Comment – None.

County Liaison Report – Commissioner Andrews provided an update on county matters and thanked Grand Traverse Pavilions for hosting the recent strategic planning session, noting that the meeting was valuable, insightful, and well attended. She shared that many of the challenges facing the county are similar to those experienced by other public service organizations, including aging infrastructure, significant facility investment needs, and workforce challenges.

Andrews discussed the ongoing difficulty of balancing increased service demands with available resources, highlighting workforce shortages across county departments. She noted that staffing challenges, including a shortage of probation officers, have resulted in the closure of diversion courts to new participants and increased pressure on the county jail system. She emphasized the impact of rising costs of living and the challenge of attracting and retaining employees when public sector wages struggle to remain competitive.

Andrews acknowledged the shared challenges facing public organizations, including Grand Traverse Pavilions, and expressed appreciation for the continued partnership and service provided by board members.

Andrews also provided clarification regarding the upcoming appointment process for the DHHS Board. She explained that Board member Griggs current term expires at the end of October; however, she will continue serving until a successor is appointed. She noted that Griggs has reapplied for the position, and the County Board of Commissioners will follow its standard appointment process, including committee review unless she is the only applicant and the Chair determines further review is unnecessary.

Approval of Agenda – Chair Crawford asked if there were additions, changes or corrections to the agenda.

> **Motion** was made by Marois to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Griggs and carried unanimously.

The purpose of the Consent Calendar is to expedite business by grouping items to be dealt with by one Board motion without discussion. Any member of the Board or staff may ask that any item on the Consent Calendar be removed and placed elsewhere on the agenda for discussion. Such requests will be automatically respected.

REVIEW AND FILE

(1) Draft Minutes of the 06/25/26 Board Meeting
(2) Draft Minutes of the 07/23/26 Study Session
(3) June Resident Council Minutes
(4) June Let's Talk Food Minutes

Motion was made by Crawford to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. Seconded by Marois and carried unanimously. Marois commented on the June Resident Council and *Let's Talk Food* meeting minutes, noting increased resident participation and engagement in the meetings. Marois also noted a more positive tone in resident feedback, with improved satisfaction regarding call light response, snacks, quietness, and food services. Appreciation was expressed for the responsiveness of the Culinary team in addressing resident requests, and the Board recognized the positive progress reflected in the resident feedback and overall meeting discussions.

Items Removed From Consent Calendar – None.

Chairman Report – Crawford expressed her appreciation to Lavender and everyone involved in planning the recent strategic planning session. She described the session as well-organized, concise, informative, and efficient use of participants' time. She noted that the pre-work materials helped attendees arrive prepared, allowing for more productive discussions and meaningful input from board members, county leaders, community leaders, and other stakeholders. Chair Crawford stated that the feedback gathered will be used to develop a comprehensive strategic plan that will be brought back for further Board review and discussion. Crawford also announced that she would be absent from the August Board meeting and will be led by Vice Chair Marois. The Board took a moment to recognize CEO Darrell Lavender's one-year anniversary with Grand Traverse Pavilions and noted that the Board plans to conduct a formal performance evaluation in recognition of his first year of leadership.

Foundation Board Report – None

Service Excellence Awards – Crawford reviewed June's Service Excellence Awards. Amber Pelton, CNA, won the Employee of the Month for June.

Director Presentation – Kim Weckesser, Human Resources Director – Weckesser provided an overview of Human Resources initiatives and organizational priorities after joining Grand Traverse Pavilions in late February. She reported that, despite the fast-paced environment and a small HR team, progress has been made on several key scorecard initiatives. Weckesser highlighted the successful revision of the organization's earned time off policy to ensure compliance with Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA) while maintaining the existing benefit structure for non-union employees. She also discussed efforts to strengthen workers' compensation management, improve recruitment and position management processes, enhance employee engagement through updated survey tools, and focus on employee retention, survey readiness, and operational performance. She noted that the department is actively recruiting to fill a vacant Human Resources Generalist position.

Board members discussed the organization's planned employee safety culture survey, which will measure staff perceptions related to communication, teamwork, reporting of safety concerns, and overall workplace safety. Leadership explained that survey results will be used to identify improvement opportunities, develop targeted action plans, and strengthen the organization's culture of safety through initiatives such as daily huddles, enhanced communication, and leadership accountability. The discussion also addressed the importance of fostering a respectful workplace culture, improving collaboration among employees of varying experience levels, and updating policies to reinforce professionalism, accountability, and effective communication in support of resident care and employee safety.

Weckesser out 9:42 a.m.

Chief Executive Officer Board Report – Lavender reviewed the Organizational Scorecard through June 2026, reporting that progress continues across several strategic priorities. While some goals remain in progress, he noted continued improvement in key financial indicators, including increased days cash on hand and reduced accounts receivable days. Six organizational priorities remain near target and will be considered complete once fully implemented.

Lavender recognized Interim Administrator Dave Hautamaki for his leadership and service over the past year and a half, thanking him for his contributions to the organization and his support during the leadership transition. He announced that Dave's final day will be August 14 following a transition period with incoming Administrator Mellissa Johnson. He also announced a community open house on August 26 to welcome Ms. Johnson, introduce the new Center for Rehabilitation branding, and provide campus tours.

Lavender informed the Board that Grand Traverse Pavilions' CMS 5- star staffing rating temporarily dropped to one star due to a rejected Payroll-Based Journal (PBJ) data submission rather than changes in staffing performance. Information Services has verified subsequent submissions and implemented additional verification procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

As part of leadership development efforts, Lavender reported that the Director of Development and Community Relations has applied to participate in the Leadership Grand Traverse program, noting its value for professional growth, community engagement, and succession planning. He also shared that resident satisfaction surveys have been completed and results will be presented at a future meeting after required state and federal reporting. Additionally, he highlighted the success of the July 22 Employee Appreciation Picnic and thanked employees, volunteers, and county commissioners who attended. He also expressed appreciation to participants in the July 23 strategic planning session and stated that the organization is developing a comprehensive plan to guide Grand Traverse Pavilions from stabilization to future growth.

Lavender reviewed key operational statistics, reporting a skilled nursing census of 187 residents and a cottages census of 65. He noted that cash reserves increased to approximately $4 million while accounts receivable days continued to decline. Wellness Center activity remained strong with increased outpatient therapy visits and consistent rehabilitation volumes. Staffing activity for the month included 13 new hires and nine resignations.

During Board discussion, members asked for clarification regarding fluctuations in reported workforce totals, and Lavender agreed to provide additional information at a future meeting. Board members also acknowledged the continued improvement in cash balances, increasing daily census, and strong occupancy within the cottages, recognizing the positive operational progress being made.

Interim Administrator Dave Hautamaki reflected on his tenure serving as CEO/Administrator, highlighting the significant organizational progress achieved during a year and a half of leadership transition. He noted key accomplishments, including leadership changes within Clinical Services and Finance, completion of the Aspen Hall renovation, implementation of operational improvements, and the use of mock surveys and performance measurement tools to strengthen organizational readiness. He also recognized CEO Darrell Lavender's arrival and the successful transition to a revised leadership structure with clearer organizational roles and responsibilities. Hautamaki emphasized that quality, safety, and resident-centered care remains the organization's highest priorities. He highlighted improvements in census, staff education, quality initiatives, and financial stewardship through enhanced operational oversight. He concluded by expressing confidence that Grand Traverse Pavilions is well-positioned for continued success, with a strong foundation for ongoing improvements in resident care, regulatory performance, and financial stability.

Board members expressed their sincere appreciation to Hautamaki for his exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment during a pivotal period for Grand Traverse Pavilions. They credited him with bringing stability, strengthening the leadership team, improving organizational morale, and guiding meaningful operational changes that positioned the organization for long-term success. Members recognized that he stepped into a challenging environment with professionalism, optimism, and a solutions-focused approach, serving as a transformational leader rather than simply maintaining day-to-day operations.

The Board also acknowledged Hautamaki's willingness to return and lead the organization (2025-present) during an unexpected leadership transition, praising his dedication, steady guidance, and lasting impact on the organization. Members expressed their gratitude for the strong foundation he helped establish and recognized his contributions and the positive direction of Grand Traverse Pavilions moving forward.

Business

(1) **June Financial Report** – Hansen presented the June 2026 financial operations report noting that combined operating revenue totaled approximately $3.22 million, slightly exceeding budget, while expenses were above budget, resulting in a net operating loss of approximately $131,000 for the month. Cash on hand increased to nearly $4.0 million, primarily due to continued collections of outstanding accounts receivable. He also advised the Board that July’s cash balance would be impacted by a three-payroll month and higher scheduled expenditures. The Medical Care Facility experienced a monthly loss due to census remaining slightly below budget, unbudgeted insurance settlement costs, increased staffing expenses associated with higher resident volumes, vaccine purchases, and building repairs. Accounts receivable days continued to improve, declining to 66 days outstanding. The Cottages maintained strong occupancy, generated revenue close to budget, remained under budget on expenses, and recorded a small positive net income for the month.

During Board discussion, members reviewed how cost-based Medicaid reimbursement is influenced by organizational spending and the timing of reimbursement adjustments.

Hansen explained that while allowable expenditures can increase future reimbursement rates, those adjustments typically occur 18 to 24 months later, requiring careful financial planning. Board members noted that prior operational improvements have significantly strengthened the organization's financial position compared to previous years and acknowledged that Grand Traverse Pavilions is now operating from a much stronger financial foundation while continuing to monitor opportunities for long-term sustainability.

Motion made by Crawford to accept the financial operations report for May as presented. Seconded by Marois and carried unanimously.
Roll Call - Crawford – yes, Marois – yes, Griggs – yes

(2) **GTP Foundation Board of Trustees 2026-2027** – Crawford reviewed the need for approval of the 2026-2027 Grand Traverse Pavilions Foundation membership roster. As indicated in the Foundation Bylaws, the DHHS appoints annually.

Motion was made by Marois to appoint the Grand Traverse Pavilions Foundation Board of Trustees membership roster for a one-year term for 2026-2027 as presented, seconded by Griggs and carried unanimously.

Medical Staff

(1) **Jack Daniels Ip, MD – Sound Physician** - Crawford reviewed the request for Jack Ip, MD from Sound Physician, to have consulting privileges as recommended by Medical Director Dr. April Kurkowski, DO.

Motion was made by Marois to approve consulting privileges for Jack Ip, MD as presented to the board. Seconded by Griggs. Motion carried.

Grand Traverse Pavilions Announcements

(1) August 27, 2026 @ 9:00am – Regular Board Meeting @ Garfield Township

(2) Upcoming Concerts on the Lawn:
July 27, 2026 @ 7:00pm – Petoskey Steel Drum Band
August 6, 2026 @ 7:00pm – Remembering patsy Cline Featuring Judy Harrison
August 13, 2026 @ 7:00pm – Backroom Gang
August 20, 2026 @ 7:00pm – K. Jones and the Benzie Playboys
September 3, 2026 @ 7:00pm – Re-scheduled Elvis Tribute Artist – Jake Slater

Second Public Comment – None

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Signatures:

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Mary Marois – Vice Chair
Grand Traverse County Department of Health and Human Services Board

Date: August 27, 2026 Approved
__________________ Corrected and Approved