

**GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE JULY 23, 2026  
STUDY SESSION**

**PRESENT:** DHHS Board

Carol Crawford, DHHS Board Chair  
Mary Marois, DHHS Board Vice Chair  
Karen Griggs, DHHS Board Member

Grand Traverse Pavilions Foundation Executive Advisory Committee  
Cindy Klingler, Foundation Board Treasurer

Grand Traverse Pavilions Staff

Darrell Lavender, CEO

- Christian Anderson, Forefront Director of Culinary
- Ty Antkoviak, Quality Safety Director
- Dan Butler, Information Systems Director
- Holly Edmondson, Director of Nursing
- Jaime Griffis, Director of Development and Community Relations
- Darcey Gratton, Administrative Services Director
- Dave Hautamaki, Administrator
- Ryan Hutchins, Environmental Services Director
- Ann McMann, Residential Services Director
- Kristen Semeyn, Wellness Services Director
- Kim Weckesser, Human Resources

Grand Traverse County Representatives

TJ Andrews, County Commission Liaison  
Nate Alger, County Administrator  
Dean Bott, County Finance Director

**ABSENT:** Deb Jackson, Foundation Board President  
Jan Warren, Foundation Board Vice President  
Kory Hansen, GTP Finance Director

**GUESTS:** Jon Lanczak & Samantha Henwood, Plante Moran  
Curt Penny, Eckert Wordell  
Roger Swets, Dickinson Wright Law Firm (virtual)  
Mellissa Hilliard-Johnson, Incoming Administrator (effective August 2026)

The Study Session of the Grand Traverse County Department of Health and Human Services Board was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Board Chair Carol Crawford in the Multi-Purpose Room at Grand Traverse Pavilions.

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

**Public Comment** - none

**Discussion**

- a. Strategic Planning

The DHHS Board conducted a strategic planning study session focused on positioning Grand Traverse Pavilions for long-term sustainability, responsible growth, and continued excellence in resident care. The session theme, "From Stabilization to Strategic Repositioning and Growth," emphasized building upon the organization's recent operational and financial stabilization while identifying strategic priorities for the future.

Participants reviewed six interconnected strategic focus areas: campus and capital improvements, Medicare Advantage and value-based care, financial sustainability, service line and referral growth, workforce development, and stronger alignment with the Board, County, and community partners. Discussion centered on maintaining the organization's mission while adapting to changing resident expectations, workforce challenges, and the evolving healthcare environment.

Jamie Griffiths, Director of Development and Community Relations, presented a community engagement strategy focused on strengthening the Grand Traverse Pavilions brand, increasing public awareness, foundation revenue, and building long-term community relationships. She noted that while those familiar with the organization have a strong appreciation for its services, many community members remain unaware of the full continuum of care available. Discussion highlighted the importance of proactively sharing positive resident and employee stories, improving community outreach, strengthening philanthropy, expanding volunteer and partnership opportunities, enhancing digital communications, and positioning the Pavilions as a trusted community resource rather than solely a skilled nursing facility. Success measures will include growth in philanthropy, volunteer engagement, community partnerships, public awareness, and stakeholder confidence.

Jon Lanczak of Plant Moran provided an overview of national and state trends affecting skilled nursing facilities, including the continued growth of Medicare Advantage, value-based care, reimbursement challenges, workforce shortages, Medicaid funding uncertainty, and increasing emphasis on quality outcomes. He reviewed benchmarking data comparing Grand Traverse Pavilions to statewide peers and noted improvements in occupancy, and financial performance while recognizing the organization's advantage as a Class III county medical care facility. When compared to all peer groups, GTP's investment in staff, wages and benefits, is notably higher. Discussion also included opportunities to strengthen managed care contract negotiations, diversify revenue sources, maintain strong quality outcomes to support referrals, and prepare for future changes in Medicaid reimbursement and occupancy regulations. Lanczak also revisited previous discussions regarding the organizational structure of the Cottages, noting that while separating the Cottages had previously been explored as a potential financial strategy, improved occupancy and changing reimbursement dynamics have reduced the potential benefits of that approach.

Curt Penny of Eckert Wordell reviewed the previously completed Cottages renovation master plan and discussed the importance of preserving the historic campus while modernizing facilities to meet future resident expectations. He outlined renovation concepts focused on improving building infrastructure, mechanical and electrical systems, resident and staff amenities, accessibility, and overall aesthetics while maintaining approximately 80 residential units. Estimated renovation costs remain approximately \$18 million, compared with an estimated \$28 million to construct a comparable new assisted living facility elsewhere on campus. Discussion emphasized that the Cottages are approaching a point where significant investment will be necessary to preserve the historic buildings, improve resident experience, and remain competitive in the senior living market.

Roger Swets of Dickinson Wright provided an overview of potential financing strategies for future capital improvements. He explained that any significant capital project would require partnership with Grand Traverse County, which would serve as the issuing authority for bonds. Financing options discussed included traditional county-backed bonds supported through Pavilion revenues, potential voter-approved millage support for capital improvements, phased financing approaches, grant opportunities, foundation



