

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Thursday, October 14, 2021, 9-11AM

Board Members in Attendance via Electronic Device: Eva Bermudez Zimmerman, Easha Canada, Adrienne Cochrane, Brit-Marie Cole-Johnson, Daryle Dudzinski, Josh Geballe, Sal Luciano, Fran Pastore, Paul Potamianos, Mike Soltis, Glendowlyn Thames, Molly Weston Williamson, Justin Zartman

Board Members Absent: Alexander Marcellino, John Scott

Authority Staff in Attendance via Electronic Device: Nancy Barrow, Andrea Barton Reeves, Erin Choquette, Michael Cisar, Laure Dickson, Amber Forrest, Walter Hay, Amer Khan, Dave Marcone, Kathy Mychajluk, Loc Pho, Ivette Robinson, John Simonetti, Jennifer Simpson, Amy Stuart, Jessica Vargas

1. Welcome & Call to Order

Board Vice Chair, Fran Pastore called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM.
Amber Forrest took attendance by roll call and confirmed the existence of a quorum.
Vice Chair acknowledged members of the public.

2. Review & approval of the [September 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes](#)

Vice Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Adrienne Cochrane motioned, Mike Soltis seconded. All were in favor, none were against, two abstentions. The motion carried.

3. Discussion and vote to authorize public posting of the draft revisions to the employee handbook

Erin Choquette led the board in a discussion on the draft revisions to the employee handbook. Among the revisions are changes to redirect to agency staff the many reporting functions that were going to the board when the agency had only one employee. The Authority would also like to align agency policies more closely with State policies. The updated employee handbook **will be posted** for public comment for 30 days and returned to the board after that comment period to request a vote for full adoption. Comments were received from the Policy and Personnel Committee Which will be included in the summary of public comments that will be provided to the Board after the public comment period ends.

Vice Chair asked the Board for a motion to authorize the updated employee handbook to be posted for public comment in the Connecticut Law Journal.
Justin Zartman motioned, Mike Soltis seconded, all were in favor, none were against, there were no abstentions. The motion carried.



4. Discussion and vote to authorize public posting of the consolidated policy documents

Michael Cisar, Associate General Counsel, summarized the consolidated policy document, noting that it includes claims administration practices, timeframes, supporting evidence, contributions, and penalties. He reported that these documents were provided to the Policy and Personnel Committee and those suggestions will be included in the summary of public comments the staff will provide to the Board after the public comment period ends.

Vice Chair asked the Board for a motion to authorize the Authority to post the consolidated policy document in the Connecticut Law Journal for public comment. Mike Soltis motioned, Daryle Dudzinski seconded. All were in favor, none were against, there were no abstentions. The motion carried.

5. Discussion and vote to authorize the Authority to negotiate and execute a renewal of the United Way/211 contract

Andrea Barton Reeves & Erin Choquette led the board in discussion of the present terms of UW contract and asked the board for a vote to authorize the Authority to negotiate and execute a renewal of the United Way/211 contract. Andrea Barton Reeves highlighted that United Way has done a fantastic job handling the approximate 30,000 inquiries to date. She also noted that other offices of the state contract with United Way for similar work and suggested that a multiyear contract may benefit the Authority. She clarified that Aflac is the vendor that will handle questions about claims and United Way is the vendor that will support employers and individuals with more general questions about CT PL in addition to other specialized projects.

Vice Chair asked the Board for a motion to authorize the Authority to negotiate and execute a renewal of the United Way/211 contract.

Paul Potamianos motioned, Daryle Dudzinski seconded. All were in favor, none were against, there were no abstentions. The motion carried.

6. Update on Claims Administration

Andrea Barton Reeves provided an update on Claims Administration, highlighting that all claims' forms are completed and directions on the claims process have been launched on the website. Aflac has completed hiring the 2nd cohort which is just starting training and the 1st cohort is just finishing training. She also reported the Authority has hired a business support team.

Kathy Mychajluk, Benefits Process Lead for the Authority, reiterated the completion of all claim's forms, noting they have been approved and are in production. The Authority is



working with Aflac on testing and other pre-production issues to ensure that the call center and the claims system will be ready to go live on schedule.

7. Discussion on hiring remote workers

Andrea Barton Reeves led a discussion on a possible personnel policy change to permit hiring fully remote workers. Months-long efforts to recruit and hire for critical IT positions, in particular, have not yielded viable qualified candidates that live in Connecticut or in adjacent states (where other current State of Connecticut employees may live). This is an issue because under existing practice, employees need to be able to report to their official workplace at least some of the time. As an example, the Authority is actively looking for MuleSoft Developer, a position which has been posted three times, with no qualified applications received. There is a significant challenge in attracting candidates, especially for information technology roles, as candidates are unwilling to relocate for work and are fielding offers from other employers that do allow fully remote work.

Daryle Dudzinski, the Policy and Personnel Committee Chair, reported that this topic was discussed in the last committee meeting and the committee is in favor of allowing for the possibility of fully remote workers if necessary to meet hiring needs, recognizing, however, the Authority's strong preference to hire workers in Connecticut. The Authority will follow all applicable employment laws, as it does now.

Board Chair, Josh Geballe agreed that allowing fully remote workers may be appropriate as a last resort after we have exhausted our efforts to find qualified workers in Connecticut. Josh Geballe noted that this may be a short-term issue given the state's efforts to recruit and train workers but at least in the current job market where workers with highly specialized skills will not always reside in Connecticut or close enough to CT to commute in to work. This requested change to the Authority's policy seems like an appropriate accommodation provided that it is considered to be an exception and simply one tool in our toolkit for to meet the Authority's staffing needs.

Erin Choquette noted that because some of the Authority employees will become classified unionized state employees in January, the Authority recognizes that it will need to work with the Office of Labor Relations within the Office of Policy and Management to be able to put this policy change into practice but that it is necessary for the Board to agree to the possibility of fully remote workers in order to even begin those conversations.

Andrea Barton Reeves also noted that the delay in hiring these IT specific professionals will not delay the Authority's Launch, as these roles are to continue to support our website, registration, and contribution portals.



Vice Chair asked the Board for a motion to authorize the Authority to revise the Employee Handbook to allow for the possibility of remote only work.

Mike Soltis motioned, Daryle Dudzinski seconded. All were in favor, none were against, there was one abstention. The motion carried.

8. Update on the DOL appeals process

Andrea Barton Reeves provide an update on the appeals process which is well underway. DOL has selected a vendor to build system for the receiving and processing CT FMLA and CT PL complaints and appeals.

That vendor is Slalom. They will begin this week and will deliver the MVP (Minimum Viable Product) by December 20th.

9. Registration & Contribution Portal Project Update

Jess Vargas provided a PowerPoint presentation of the updates on the registration and contribution portal project.

10. Committee Reports

- **Policy & Personnel Committee**

- Committee Chair, Daryle Dudzinski reported that the committee met this month but did not have a quorum. The committee discussed the remote work, handbook revisions, consolidated policy document, and United Way contract. **Outreach & Engagement Committee**

Committee Chair, Molly Weston Williamson reported that the committee met last month, and updates were provided as part of Jessica's presentation to the board.

- **Finance Committee**

Committee Chair, Paul Potamianos reported that the committee met last month and reviewed the budget spending to date and received an update on the status of the audit and staff hires. The committee also discussed the funding the Imprest account for benefits payments, which the Board discussed after Dave Marcone's reports on the Authority's financials.

Dave Marcone provided the financial reports for the month of August which included: Budget vs. Actual, Cumulative Budget vs. Actual highlighting the Authority is \$16.2M ahead of budget due to less bond spending than budgeted, Bond Fund Use, Contribution Budget vs. Actual, Cumulative Contribution Budget vs. Actual, and September Draft Expenditures.

Dave Marcone provided a hiring update, noting that the Authority has hired a Contribution Examiner who will be reporting to Walter Hay, who was promoted to Contribution Manager. To replace his role, the Authority has posted that position and hopes to fill that role soon.

Dave Marcone provided an Audit update, noting the fieldwork is done and the Authority is reviewing the drafts audited financial statements. The Authority expects the auditors to present their findings at next week's Finance and Audit Committee meeting.

11. Discussion and vote to authorize a change to the contribution budget to include payment into the Imprest Account

Dave Marcone led the Board in discussion on a proposed change to the contribution budget for the Imprest account. The account creates a reserve for benefit payments for Aflac and is part of the Authority's contractual obligation to appropriately fund benefits payments. The \$20M reserve is a conservative estimate, representing approximately two weeks of benefit payments in a worst-case scenario. As the Authority develops a history of payments, the reserve amount may be changed as appropriate, and as determined by the contract between the Authority and Aflac. Dave Marcone emphasized that the \$20M is not an additional expense.

Committee Chair, Paul Potamianos noted that this issue was discussed at the last Finance and Audit Committee Meeting and the committee recommends that the Board approve the change to the contribution budget.

Vice Chair asked the Board for a motion to authorize the change to the Authority's contribution budget to include payment into the Imprest account.

Paul Potamianos motioned, Mike Soltis seconded. All were in favor, none were against, there were no abstentions. The motion carried.

12. CEO Report

Andrea Barton Reeves highlighted that CT Paid Leave go live is 46 days away. reported that Amber Forrest will provide the published webinar schedule with links to the Board. She noted that these webinars paint a broader picture of how FMLA and CTPL work together)

Amer Khan, Business Systems Manager to the Authority, introduced the 4 new staff member that will be handling business support and quality control which include a Quality Assurance Manager, which will supervise the Aflac team, and 3 new Quality Control Reviewers who will work with that manager to monitor the quality of the cases processed. Kathy Mychajluk, the Authority's benefit process lead, will oversee support for employers and new staff joining the team.

13. New Business

Board Chair, Josh Geballe, offered thanks to Authority team for the great work they have done and to the new team members who have joined.

14. Old Business- none



15. Adjournment

Vice Chair asked the Board for a motion to adjourn.

Sal Luciano motioned, Daryle Dudzinski seconded. All were in favor, none were against, there were no abstentions. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM

Webinar Recording At: [Connecticut Paid Leave - YouTube](#)

