Lifeline, Inc. Board of Directors
April 16, 2025

Call to Order: Brittany Sustar called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Personal Moment of Silence Observed

In Attendance: Matt Armand, René Aston, Aaron Burko, Mike Cosmo, Pam Fraser, Sharon Luning, Susan McGuinness, Michelle Pirc, Mariam Shamszad, Christine Shoop, Brittany Sustar, Christopher Tucci

Excused: John Anderson, Adam Litke, Matt Maier, Ryan McGinnis, Joyce Taylor, Sarah Welch

Absent/Unexcused:

Guest:

Staff: Carrie Dotson, Adam Hunt, Rebekah Jones, Tonya Mullen

Quorum Determination: Quorum Achieved

Additions or Amendments to the Agenda: None

Approval of Minutes: Christopher Tucci made a motion to approve the March 19, 2025 Board meeting minutes. Sharon Luning seconded. Matt Armand, Pam Fraser, and Christine Shoop abstained. **Motion carried.**

Public Comment/Introduction of Guests:

Committee Reports:

- **Programs & Planning:**
  - **Staff Presentation: Tonya Mullen, HCRP & Payee Programs:** Tonya summarized the HCRP & Representative Payee Programs. She stated that there are 28 clients currently enrolled in the HCRP program and 35 in the Representative Payee program. Tonya shared two success stories from each program, including one individual who was experiencing challenges from their independent provider and was facing eviction. Thanks to several Lifeline programs, she could assist the client and help him get back on track. The client stated that he no longer feels so stressed, knowing that he will not be evicted from his home. She concluded that there is hope to increase the sustainability of the Representative Payee Program by charging a modest fee commensurate to the client's needs and circumstances.

  - **Year End 2024 Presentation:** Carrie distributed the 2024 Year End Outcomes packet to the Board and reviewed the documents, including the 2024 Demographics and outcomes report for Lake and Geauga, the 211 data report, the 2024 Geauga County Impact Data report, the 2024 LC Imagination Library Impact Report, and the 2024 success stories. Christine Shoop made a motion to approve the Year End 2024 Outcomes Presentation. Matt Armand seconded. **Motion carried.**

- **Governance:**

  - **May Board Training: Messaging/Elevator Speeches with Kathryn Clausen, OACAA:** Carrie stated that the May Board meeting would be brief to allow adequate time for the training, which would discuss messaging and elevator speeches, and would be no longer than 90 minutes. Additionally, as it will be a critical phase in the federal budget, Kathryn has been trained in language and communication that are well received by legislators and will share this knowledge with the Board. She stated that relevant staff would have the same training in partnership with Ashtabula's CAA the next morning.

  - **Corrected Board Meeting Minutes: September 2024 – February 2025:** Carrie stated that when preparing for the Organizational standards, an error was noted in the minutes where the five-word sentence regarding the balance sheets/statement of financial position was not included in the minutes, though the reports were shared with and reviewed by the Board, in harmony with CSBG Standard 8.7. The minutes have been corrected to reflect the completion of this standard. Aaron Burko made a motion to approve the corrected Board meeting minutes for September 2024 – February 2025. René Aston seconded. **Motion carried.**

- **Finance:** Carrie stated that the agency-wide audit would take place the week of May 5, and the committee could expect to review this in August. She concluded that this year was a risk assessment year and this assessment would be completed in

the next couple of months and reviewed with the Finance Committee.

- **Human Resources:** No report.

- **Fundraising:**

    - **2024-25 Annual Campaign Updates:** Carrie stated that the campaign updates were included in her Directors' report. She stated that the campaign would close out at the end of the month. She encouraged those who haven't given to the campaign to do so to achieve 100% Board giving.

    - **Imagination Library Girls Night Out:** Carrie shared flyers for the Girls Night Out event to support the Lake County Imagination Library. She stated that the goal is to sell out and that the event would feature fun games, musical bingo, and fundraising activities for the library. She concluded that everyone was welcome to attend.

    - **Dancing Under the Stars:** Carrie encouraged the Board to save the date for Friday, August 1, at the Cleveland Marriot East in Beachwood. She stated that the cast was pretty much set and that everyone is excited to begin dancing.

- **Ad Hoc Facilities:** Carrie stated that the facilities committee has not met and has no official report at this time. She stated that Lifeline had received a draft of the lease from Marous and that Charles Iyahen had agreed to negotiate on behalf of Lifeline. She stated that they have meeting next month and a facilities committee would be scheduled later to review.

- **Finance Reports:** Adam thanked the Board for their patience and referred them to their packets for the March 2025 organization-wide report on revenue and expenditures that compares budget to actual, categorized by program, as well as the balance sheets/statement of financial position. He highlighted where the assets, liabilities, and projects are reconciled and stated that there are a couple of programs of note, such as the Imagination Library which requires heavy funding/fundraising.

- **Directors Report:**
    - **Directors Updates:** Carrie gave a brief update on the federal funding for the HEAP program and shared Lifeline's thoughts on our local program. She stated that it is hard to say what is going to happen due to the uncertainty of funding. The Community Action Network is being asked to work with legislators to and demonstrate the positive outcomes and impact associated with the HEAP program through impact statements and information from local elected officials and stakeholders on how the community would be affected without the HEAP program. She stated that she would keep the Board updated on any changes.

    - **FY 25 Home Placement Grant:** Carrie informed the Board that the rental assistance program helps with security deposits and first month's rent, which assists eligible persons to acquire safe and affordable housing. In FY 22 we received $140,000; in FY 23, we received $60,000; and in FY 24 we received $70,714. For FY 2025, Carrie recommends an ask of $140,000--this breaks down to $125,000 for financial assistance with deposits and first month's rent and $15,000 for staff salary. With no COVID funding remaining, there is no eviction prevention safety net funding, so this program is seeing more movement than it has in quite a few years. This grant is due May 9 and does require Board approval. Christine Shoop made a motion to approve the FY 25 Lake County Home Placement Grant Proposal. Christopher Tucci Seconded. **Motion carried.**

    - **FY 25 Home Subsidy Grant:** Carrie informed the Board that this grant is for long-term rent subsidy for special populations. In the past, it has only funded our supportive housing program, which is for adults who are enrolled in school or job training that are working towards a degree. We subsidize rent while they are in school so that they can focus on learning. The program provides regular case management and helps them to achieve goals and remove barriers to self-sufficiency. The program would be a scattered site program, meaning that the participants can choose where they live in private rental stock throughout Lake County. For FY 21, we received $27,000, which is all rent subsidy on behalf of the participants and for FY 22, we received $30,000 and for FY 23 and FY 24 we received $50,000 each. For FY 2025, Carrie recommends asking for $60,000. This grant is due May 9 and does require Board approval. Christine Shoop made a motion to approve the FY 25 Home Subsidy Grant Proposal. Pam Fraser seconded. **Motion carried.**

    - **FY 25 Lake CDBG Grant:** Carrie informed the Board that with the Lake County CDBG Grant, each year we are required to apply for a different program than the year before. In 2020, they funded our 211 operations at $20,000; in 2021 they funded our Representative Payee Program operations at $20,000; in 2022 they funded our VITA Tax Clinics at $20,000; in 2023 they supported our Helping Hands for Seniors Program at $20,000; and in 2024 they supported our VITA tax clinics at $23,000. For FY 2025, it was recommended asking for $25,000 towards the expansion and modernization/digitization of our financial literacy/financial empowerment programming. This grant is due May 9 and does require Board approval. Mike Cosmo made a motion to approve the FY 25 Lake CDBG Grant Proposal. Susan McGuinness seconded. **Motion carried.**

    - **FY 25 Mentor CDBG Grant:** Carrie informed the Board that for FY23 and FY24, we received $5,000 for 211 operations. For FY25, Carrie recommends that we ask again for $5,000 for 211 operations, which is equivalent to 319 hours of staff

time. This grant is due May 5 and does require Board approval. Christine Shoop made a motion to approve the FY 25 Mentor CDBG Grant Proposal. Michele seconded**. Motion carried.**

- **FY 25 HOME ARP Reentry Grant:** Carrie shared that the County has issued new RFPs for their allocation of federal HOME ARPA funding. We will be submitting two proposals. These proposals must have a focus on serving those who are homeless or are precariously housed. Our first proposal will focus on tenant-based rental assistance for reentry housing. As the housing market has become more challenging, our reentry clients have struggled tremendously with finding and securing housing upon release from jail or prison. Inventory is low, demand is high and when landlords can rent to tenants without a criminal record, they obviously do. The goal of this program would be to provide a short-term rental subsidy to our reentry clients to help them secure and maintain housing for at least six months while they work to secure employment and rebuild community connections. During that timeframe, they will also participate in our financial empowerment program and meet regularly with our reentry coordinator. For FY 24 we received $56,250 in funding. For FY 2025 Carrie recommends asking for $80,000—this would include $67,500 to assist up to 20 reentry clients with housing for six months and $12,500 towards salaries/fringes. This grant is due May 9 and does require Board approval. Christine Shoop made a motion to approve the FY 25 Home ARP Grant Proposal. Pam Fraser seconded. **Motion carried.**

- **FY 25 HOME ARP Coordinated Entry Grant:** Carrie shared that the County has issued RFPs for their allocation of federal HOME ARPA funding. We will be submitting two proposals. These proposals must have a focus on serving those who are homeless or are precariously housed. Our second proposal is a bit unique and is a joint proposal with Forbes House and Extended Housing, with Lifeline acting as the lead entity. Coordinated Entry is the national term used to process and move homeless individuals and families through the system. In each Ohio county, access points have been designated for how these homeless residents can enter the system—in Lake County it's through Lifeline's 211, Extended Housing's PATH outreach team and through Forbes House for DV survivors. While this process has been mandated for years, with reporting and data entry requirements, there has never been any funding for it, and so no formal process has ever been adopted. This funding would allow us to develop a formal plan and fund our three agency's CE efforts. For FY 24 we received $292,000. We don't yet have a collective total on what we will be applying for, but the structure of the grant will remain the same as the current fiscal year. This grant is due May 9 and does require Board approval. Christine Shoop made a motion to approve the FY 25 Home ARP Coordinated Entry Grant Proposal. Susan McGuinness seconded. **Motion carried.**

- **AFFH Resolution:** Carrie informed the Board that one of the requirements of the Mentor CDBG Grant, the Lake County CDBG grant, the two HOME ARPA grants and the two HOME funds grants is that the Board adopts a resolution supporting Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing efforts in Lake County and pledging that the agency will do their part to do so as well. Carrie reviewed the proposed resolution with the Board and assured the Board that the agency is doing all it can to support Fair Housing, including promotion, education, and staff training. Christine Shoop made a motion to adopt the AFFH Resolution. Aaron Burko seconded. **Motion carried.**

- **Program Report:** Carrie shared that Jennie mentioned that the Board would be receiving invitations to represent their respective agencies for the Community Needs Assessment at the scheduled focus groups. She continued that VITA season concluded on Monday, and achieve the highest number of returns ever this season. 380 returns were processed, 54 received EITC, and a total return amount of $265,702. Our 16 volunteers completed 503 volunteer hours this year. This brings our 16-year totals to 3,140 people have received tax preparation assistance through our VITA program, $3,555,476 in returns over 16 seasons, and 6,458 volunteer hours have been given over 16 seasons. HEAP Winter Crisis season ended on March 31, and 497 households received assistance and $141,108 feral HEAP funds were spent in Lake County.

- **ODMHAS—Quality Assurance Activities:** No report.

- **Client Rights Activities/Grievances:** No report.

Old Business: No report.

New Business: No report.

General Board Discussion: Pam Fraser shared a WRJSL fundraiser with the Board and welcomed their support and attendance.

Adjournment: Christine Shoop made a motion to adjourn at 7:15 PM. Pam Fraser seconded. **Motion carried.**

Board Orientation for new Board members to follow immediately after the Board meeting.