



Our Mission: We disrupt generational poverty by supporting, preparing, and empowering young people at distinct stages of life to break down barriers on their path to success in adulthood.

**Northwestern University Settlement Association
Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes**

**1400 W. Augusta Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60642
Guild Hall**

In-Person Meeting – Mask Wearing Optional

Present:

Robert Best
Virginia Burnstine
Kathleen Elliott
Sami ElSaden
Lieke Hakkenberg
Tracy Heilman
Christine Jacobek
Kurt Mueller
Sarah Shumway
Andrew Stevens
Hollis Sunshine
Chantel Varnado
William Welnhofer
Claire Winnard

Staff:

Carole Wood
Danielle LaPointe
Edison Ureña
Jamie Merchant
Jason Smith
Alison Armstead

1. Public Comment Amy O'Donnell

2. Board Chair Report Amy O'Donnell
 - a. [Universal Calendar](#)

After welcoming the members, Amy welcomed Chantel Varnado, the Rowe Parent Representative, to her first Board of Directors meeting, and expressed gratitude to the staff and volunteers for their efforts in decorating, taking minutes, and organizing events such as the holiday food distribution.

Amy acknowledged and thanked those who attended or donated to events such as the North Shore Gala and Winnetka Casino Night, as well as the Thanksgiving food distribution that benefited hundreds of families.



Amy addressed two important business matters to be voted on: the approval of a grant application for up to \$50,000 to explore a potential merger (through Forefront) and the election of Bill Rowe to the Board of Directors.

Carole explained the purpose of the Forefront grant application, emphasizing that it was to fund a consultant for due diligence for potential mergers. Bob motioned to approve the staff applying for this grant. Ginny seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

Kathy presented Bill Rowe as a candidate for the Board of Directors, highlighting his connection to the organization through his family and his expressed interest in joining. Kathy explained that once approved, new board members can start immediately. Bill Rowe's term would begin the following month and he would serve a term of two and a half years. Kathy motioned to approve the election of Bill Rowe to the Board of Directors. Kurt seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

3. CEO's Report

Carole Wood

- a. DEI Overview with Social Current
 - i. [DEI Agenda](#)
- b. [CEO's Report](#)
- c. Approval of Forefront Grant Application

Carole began by introducing the members from Social Current, who were in attendance to discuss equity, diversity, and inclusion (DEI) with the Board of Directors. Carole explained that Social Current was currently working with the staff and agreed to extend their engagement to the board. The presentation on DEI was seen as a meaningful first step for both the board and the organization as a whole in advancing the DEI journey. Amy provided some organizational background, explaining that before the onset of COVID, the organization had initiated a board committee focused on DEI. A corresponding component existed on the staff side as well. However, due to the challenges posed by the pandemic, the resignation of the CEO, and subsequent CEO search and onboarding, the DEI initiatives were deprioritized. With Carole having been in her role for some time now, there is a recognized need to readdress these initiatives, with the staff having already begun working on them.

The staff has been working with Social Current for almost a year on their DEI journey. Undraye Howard, the Vice President of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement for Social Current, introduces the team and emphasizes the importance of the equity journey for both the board and the organization.

The organization, formerly known as the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, recently became Social Current. They operate across the country, working on various aspects, including equity, workforce resilience, brain sciences, physical health, and well-being.



The team from Social Current discusses their approach to DEI, emphasizing growth in three major areas: individual, organizational, and systems levels. They stress the importance of understanding and supporting each other throughout the journey, acknowledging that it can be challenging but is essential for fostering an inclusive environment.

The discussion shifts to the board's role in the equity journey. Undraye mentions the need for collaboration, positive conflict, and building trust among board members. The team encourages small steps, open conversations, and an onboarding process that considers diversity and equity.

Board members share their perspectives on the organization's history, challenges faced in previous DEI initiatives, and the need to re-engage in the equity journey. They express a commitment to making progress, acknowledging the complexity of the task.

The conversation touches on the difficulty of finding diverse board members, the importance of onboarding processes, and the significance of recognizing and valuing the diversity of experiences among board members.

The presentation concluded with the introduction of an intercultural development inventory assessment, which aims to help board members understand their intercultural competence. The board is encouraged to be open to the assessment, recognizing it as a starting point in their DEI journey.

Carole's report began by highlighting various aspects of the organization's recent activities. Since the last meeting, the organization held several activities, including the Thanksgiving and pre-Christmas food distributions, the Adopt a Family program, and noted that the food pantry has continued its ongoing support as the largest food distribution point in the West Town community.

Regarding House In The Wood, five schools participated in fall outdoor education, with positive feedback. Although fewer schools attended than anticipated, those that did had an excellent experience, prompting some to request a return. Carole mentioned securing another grant from IMC to support outdoor education and preparations for upcoming summer camps. The discussion also touched on inviting local Wisconsin schools to participate to expand outdoor education's scope and potentially generate revenue.

Carole emphasized positive progress Rowe has made, particularly in ISBE summative scores, transitioning from targeted to a commendable school.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) currently serves 71 children but faces funding challenges. The focus in the coming months will be on restructuring ECE to ensure adequate funding and to guarantee that every child leaving the program is kindergarten-ready.



Jason and Carole addressed concerns about kindergarten readiness, citing literacy and basic skills deficiencies among incoming students. Efforts to improve connections between ECE and kindergarten teachers were discussed, with the aim of better preparing children for kindergarten.

Carole updated on the After-School Program's success, with approximately 176 kids and the recent addition of Elizabeth Howard as the new Alvin H. Baum Vice President of Youth and Young Adult Services. Development efforts are on track, having achieved 52% of the \$3.1 million goal. Carole expressed confidence in reaching the target and highlighted ongoing prospecting and grant applications.

Carole discussed communication initiatives, including the new prospective donor booklet, social media engagement, and increased visibility through press releases. Carole touched on the perennial challenge of staff turnover, ongoing recruitment efforts, and the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, evident in the budget and organizational chart updates.

Holly inquired about a potential name change for Family Cares, to which Carole responded that the name will remain, but that we are rededicating the program based on our new designation as a Community Mental Health Center. The organization is rededicating itself based on this license, updating signage, and planning a dedication event. While Brightpoint (formerly Children's Home & Aid) remains a partner, they are no longer the primary partner, in addition to having a new name. Carole explained that the new designation helps with funding.

Amy sought clarification on the nature of the mental health designation, questioning if it was granted by the state or the city. Carole explained that it is obtained through an application process, and she believes it is granted by the Department of Children and Family Services.

Sarah asked about any obligations resulting from the designation to broaden the recipients of services. Carole explained that the goal is to broaden the scope of services, especially for families affected by trauma. The organization aims to offer services beyond just children, addressing family trauma and broader community needs. The community mental health designation enhances credibility and allows them to do more.

Sarah raised a question about tracking data and its impact on patient breadth. Carole mentioned that they are intensifying data tracking efforts, with family specialists and case managers handling intake work. The organization aims to track service utilization, entry points, and duration to better understand and improve their services. Carole emphasized a growing focus on becoming a more data-driven organization.



4. Consent Agenda

Amy O'Donnell

- a. Approval of Board of Directors meeting minutes
 - i. [Board of Directors meeting minutes September 25, 2023](#)
- b. Executive Committee Report
 - i. [Minutes November 20, 2023](#)
- c. Head Start Report
 - i. [August Monthly Narrative Report](#)
 - ii. [September Monthly Narrative Report](#)
 - iii. [October Monthly Narrative Report](#)
 - iv. November Monthly Narrative Report

Amy called for a motion to approve all items in the consent agenda. Bob motioned to approve the consent agenda. Kathy seconded the motion. All in favor.

Note: With the unanimous consent of the Board, the Consent Agenda shall be acted upon by a single omnibus vote. Any Board member may request that any item on the Consent Agenda be removed and not included in that vote.

5. Audit & Finance/Financials

Bill Welnhofner, Edison Ureña

- a. Financials
 - i. [NUSA Consolidated Board Budget Report as of November 2023](#)
 - ii. [NUSA Balance Sheet as of November 30, 2023](#)
 - iii. [Endowment Reports](#)
 - 1. [Evanston Board Endowment and Family Funds Summary Report as of November 2023 \(Chicago Partners\)](#)
 - 2. [NUSA Main Endowment Report as of November 2023 \(William Blair\)](#)

Bill provided a finance report, covering the balance sheet, income statement, and the organization's financial situation with partners. The balance sheet was described as strong, with ample cash reserves of approximately \$1.8 million. However, the income statement presented challenges, particularly related to the debt service coverage ratio. The decline in enrollment over several years has made it increasingly challenging to generate sufficient income to cover debt service and capital expenditures.

Bill highlighted a significant shortfall in the quarter ending September 30, 2023, compared to the prior year, leading to non-compliance with the debt service coverage ratio. Although efforts are underway to work with Wintrust and regain compliance by the end of the fiscal year, it was noted that the Settlement would



remain non-compliant through March, creating a nine-month period of non-compliance.

The financial challenges are exacerbated by the need to refinance \$8.5 million in debt incurred to build the middle school, a task scheduled for July. Bill acknowledged tough decisions ahead and mentioned ongoing efforts to commission a long-term financial forecasting process with PKF Mueller, aiming to present a comprehensive forecast to the board by the end of January. The declining enrollment and the exhaustion of COVID-related funding further compound the financial difficulties faced by the organization. Bill emphasized the importance of the upcoming forecast in providing clarity on the Settlement's financial outlook.

6. Committee Reports

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| a. Governance Committee Report | Kathy Elliott |
| i. Election of William Rowe to the Board of Directors | |
| ii. Report on Process for Considering Mergers | |
| b. General Counsel Update | Bob Best |
| c. Education Committee Report | Alice Schaff |
| d. Program Integration Committee Report | Tracy Heilman |

The Governance Committee, led by Kathy, provided updates on their ongoing discussions. Two key topics were highlighted: the first involved the board's self-evaluation process, with Kathy encouraging members to share suggestions for improvement. The second topic focused on the strategic growth of the Settlement through partnerships, potential mergers, and other avenues. Bob and Ginny from the Governance Committee outlined preliminary thoughts on the process of approaching mergers. They discussed various aspects, including definitions (mergers vs. acquisitions), intended goals of mergers, potential reasons for merging, and the importance of due diligence.

Ginny emphasized the significance of due diligence, transparency, and synergy in the merger process. She highlighted the potential goals of mergers, such as strategic growth, financial stability, and increased community impact. The presentation delved into cultural integration, programming alignment, location considerations, staff impact, and board composition. The complexities of donor relationships, communications, and fundraising were also discussed.

Bob added that the board plays a crucial role in decision-making for mergers, as only the board has the authority to approve such endeavors. He emphasized the need for thorough due diligence, addressing financial positions, staff considerations, program alignment, and potential legal issues. Bob also noted the challenges posed by the Open Meetings Act, which restricts certain discussions related to mergers from being held in closed sessions.



Amy reiterated that, while there are no imminent merger discussions, the committee's research and preparation were essential for the organization's readiness in the event such discussions arise. She emphasized the importance of adhering to best practices, having consultants, and involving multiple committees throughout the process.

In the General Counsel update, Bob reminded board members of the annual training requirements, specifying that two hours of training are needed every year, and four hours are required in the first year on the board. The update stressed the importance of compliance, especially as the organization enters the charter renewal process. The report concluded with the reminder that Danielle would follow up on training, and Bob expressed readiness to assist any members facing difficulties in accessing the required training.

Tracy provided an update on the activities of the Program Integration Committee, highlighting the formation of two subcommittees. The first subcommittee focuses on organizational data strategy, aiming to support internal efforts and reviewing the Quantified Labs' measurement framework established a couple of years ago. The committee will assess the existing metrics and align them with internal initiatives, emphasizing the need to capture essential data elements that demonstrate impact and success.

The second subcommittee, chaired by Bryan Heidel, concentrates on the Community Mental Health Center. Tracy outlined the various areas of support this subcommittee aims to provide, including assistance with policy and procedure development, legal review, research, Medicaid compliance, and efforts related to program sustainability, funding strategy, and partnerships.

Tracy mentioned that both subcommittees have started their work, holding initial meetings, and the overall committee plans to convene monthly or bi-monthly for check-ins. The update reflects the committee's commitment to enhancing organizational data practices and supporting the Community Mental Health Center in various aspects of its operation and growth.

Due to the absence of Chairperson Alice Schaff, Principal Jason Smith delivered the Education Committee report. Jason highlighted the significant achievement of moving into the commendable category from the previous ISBE designation. He expressed excitement about this accomplishment but acknowledged the ongoing challenge of maintaining the commendable status. The committee plans to leverage marketing strategies and recruitment efforts to communicate their positive standing to families, potential students, and teachers.



Jason mentioned the lively atmosphere at the school in the week before winter break, with an energy of anticipation among students and families. He shared details about the first-ever Veterans Day assembly, which featured a message from Senator Duckworth, performances by the brand-new middle school choir, and student speakers.

Additionally, Jason mentioned that eighth graders completed high school testing, and after winter break, administrative tasks will be addressed as they transition into the winter assessment season with Access testing and MAP testing.

The members are pleased with the positive changes brought about by new teachers, contributing to a shift in the energy at both campuses. Jason expressed gratitude for the hard work of the staff and emphasized the commitment to ongoing improvements at the school. The commendable ranking represents a significant accomplishment, and Jason sees it as the beginning of positive developments for the school.

7. Auxiliary Board Updates

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| a. Emerging Leaders Chicago Board | Sydney Browning |
| b. Evanston Woman's Board | Hollis Sunshine |
| c. North Shore Board | Gina Gooden |
| d. Winnetka Board | Lieke Hakkenberg |

Due to the absence of the President Sydney Browning, Amy delivered the Emerging Leaders Chicago Board report. The recent give-back event topic was Board Service and featured guest speakers Philip Maziarz, Director at Protiviti, Ivy Hall, Chief of Staff at Advanced Group, and Amy herself. The event, moderated by Emerging Leader member Brett, was sponsored by Provare, a locally owned Italian creole restaurant, and Hennessey. Approximately 15-20 guests attended, enjoying the salmon egg rolls and crafted cocktails while receiving headshots from Emerging Leader member Melvin.

Amy expressed the EL Boards gratitude to the Development staff, Lakesha and Hayley, for their support. The event earned \$2,020, contributing to their \$22,000 goal for the year.

Amy shared upcoming events, including a Sip & Paint in February, Trivia Night in April, and Spring Smash in June, encouraging everyone to save the dates. Additionally, there's a coat drive in partnership with Industrious, a co-working space in the loop. Amy concluded the report by stating there has been ongoing board recruitment efforts with several meet-and-greets lined up to expand their board, currently comprising around 15 members.



Holly Sunshine provided an update on the Evanston Woman's Board's ongoing Dollar Letter campaign, where members write letters to raise funds. They have achieved approximately half of their \$40,000 goal, having raised over \$20,000, which is similar to last year's progress. Holly mentioned a tweak in membership responsibilities, setting a threshold for contributions, leading to some unintended consequences. While some members who initially did not contribute started giving money, they stopped writing letters. The board plans to analyze the impact at the end of the year to determine whether this change was beneficial or if adjustments are needed.

Holly emphasized the goal of increasing membership and mentioned the addition of two new members. Increasing membership is crucial as fundraising efforts are tied to the membership's financial contributions. Holly expressed excitement about the enthusiasm of the targeted members who actively engage in the work.

In absence of North Shore Board President Gina Gooden, Claire Winnard provided an update on the North Shore Board, highlighting the successful fall fundraising gala held in November. Despite challenges in recent years, the event was deemed a success and tracked well with pre-2022 trends. Payments are still being processed, and the board is working on finalizing details for their annual meeting in January.

The North Shore Board is actively planning upcoming events, such as the kickoff luncheon on May 22 at the Skokie Country Club. They are also in the process of recruiting new members who will join after the annual meeting. Claire mentioned the March board meeting is scheduled for March 12 and plan to bring back Golden Agers bingo the same day. The April board meeting is scheduled to take place at camp.

Looking ahead, the North Shore Board is already preparing for the 2024 House In The Wood Gala on November 9, 2024. Additionally, the committee is exploring event spaces for 2025 and have already secured two chairs for that year. Claire also shared that board members visited ECE on Friday, December 15 with Santa and delivered gifts for the children.

Lieke Hakkenberg began the Winnetka Board report by discussing the Casino Night event which was held in October. Lieke mentioned that they plan to bring a vote to transfer \$50,000 to the Settlement in January.

The upcoming Wine Tasting event is scheduled for April 19th and the board is actively working on identifying additional fundraising opportunities. Lieke emphasized the board's commitment to supporting meaningful events, such as Adopt a Family, where about 15 families were adopted. Lieke acknowledged the resignation of some newer members due to workload and post-COVID challenges,



leading the board to discuss strategies for creating a better balance to prevent overwhelming board members. This discussion is part of their efforts to retain and support newer members amid changing circumstances.

8. Questions/Other

Amy O'Donnell

a. Next Regular Meeting: Monday, March 25, Noon | In-person | Guild Hall

Amy informs the members that the next regular meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled for Monday, March 25, and that all Board of Directors meetings are in person. Questions, comments, or concerns are encouraged to be communicated to Carole, Danielle, and Alison. The Special Audit and Finance committee and Executive Committee meetings are planned for January and February, respectively, with updates to be provided at the March Board of Directors Meeting. Amy concludes the meeting with holiday wishes and calls for a motion to adjourn. Kathy motioned, Ginny seconded. The meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Alison Armstead

The public is welcome to attend the meeting.

Discrimination based on disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, marital status, or need for special education services is prohibited.