

*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**

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

**In-Person Meeting – Mask Wearing Optional**

Board of Directors members present in person: Chair Amy O'Donnell, Robert Best, William Welnhofner, Kathleen Elliott, Sami ElSaden, Virginia Burnstine, Melissa Gibson, Lieke Hakkenberg, Tracy Heilman, Christine Jacobek, Kurt Mueller, John Relias, William Rowe, Alice Schaff, Sarah Shumway, Hollis Sunshine, Claire Winnard.

Staff present in person: CEO Carole Wood, CFOO Christian Feaman, Chief of Staff Danielle LaPointe, Vice President of Family Cares Bryan Heidel, Rowe Principal, Jason Smith, Rowe Assistant Principal Diana Smith, Director Board Relations Alison Armstead.

Amy O'Donnell, Chair, called the meeting to order 12:20 PM.

Amy requested for the Assistant Secretary Alison Armstead to take the roll.

Public Comment

Amy acknowledged that there were no members of the public present.

Rowe Assistant Principle Diana Smith, asked to share her experiences and observations as leader of the Upper School Campus since she resigned the previous month and her last day with Rowe was approaching. Diana expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to work at Rowe and presented her opinion on the challenges of teacher and administrator retention, emphasizing the need for competitive salaries and support staff.

Amy expressed gratitude to Diana for attending, thanking her on behalf of Rowe and acknowledging her contributions to the kids and families. She concluded by wishing Diana well in her next chapter and noting that she would be missed.

Board Chair Report

Amy delivered the Board Chair report, beginning with expressions of gratitude. She thanked everyone involved in the Better Futures luncheon, including donors, attendees, and staff, while deferring detailed discussions to later in the meeting. She acknowledged the North Shore board for organizing successful events like the Witches Ride and the Gala. Amy also highlighted the recent Fall Fest and Thanksgiving Food Distribution, commending the staff's organization and noting the joy of seeing families and board members participate.

Amy reminded the board about upcoming holiday initiatives, including Adopt a Family and year-end giving, emphasizing the importance of meeting the debt coverage ratio. She addressed two key orders of business: the conflict of interest forms, urging board members to complete and return them promptly, and the board-staff communication policy, requesting that members cc or communicate through Carole for staff requests to ensure proper follow-up.

Lastly, she discussed the importance of completing board training hours, noting non-compliance in the recent audit. She urged members to check their status via the provided link and sign up for any required training, offering support if needed.

The public is welcome to attend the meeting.

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### CEO's Report

Carole Wood delivered the CEO report, highlighting recent accomplishments and updates. The organization served 361 families during the Thanksgiving food distribution event, with leftover food continuing to be distributed throughout the week. This effort aimed to support families as Thanksgiving approached.

The Outdoor Education Program was highly successful, hosting 141 students from three schools (one visited twice) and eight school staff members. The curriculum, upgraded a year ago, has enhanced the program's quality. Carole noted increased interest from schools previously associated with another outdoor education provider that closed.

The after-school and teen programs now serve over 200 young people, from kindergarten through age 15. Fall Fest was conducted in partnership with Lights on Afterschool, was a new initiative open to the broader community and included Walgreens-sponsored vaccinations.

An additional 11 children were enrolled in early childhood programs, though some vacancies remained due to income verification requirements. The program received high recognition, including accreditation, for its quality.

As of October 31, development efforts had reached 23% of the annual goal. A significant funding increase from IMC was noted, with \$500,000 allocated this year, reflecting the program's strong performance and potential for additional funding.

The Better Futures Luncheon achieved a 65% increase in gross revenue compared to the previous year, raising \$124,000. This included nearly \$50,000 in sponsorships, \$45,000 in table sales, \$7,300 in ticket sales, \$4,000 in other donations, and a 50% increase in funding needs to \$11,000. Attendees responded positively to the honorees and the event's impact.

The Rowe Elementary School report was delivered by Principal Jason Smith. Jason Smith began his report by updating the members on the school's charter renewal process. He shared that the official visit for the charter renewal had begun, with auditors conducting interviews, reviewing files, and performing various assessments. The leadership team had worked hard to ensure all required documentation and reports were submitted on time. Carole emphasized the importance of advocacy and community support during the charter renewal process.

Jason reported on several key updates for the school, including a successful Professional Development Day and report card pick-up, as well as a productive parent-teacher conference in November. Fall athletics had concluded with the boys' soccer team winning the championship, while winter sports, such as basketball, were beginning with tryouts underway.

He also shared that the school would re-enter the Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) process, driven by state evaluation data. This plan, focused on school improvement, would be aligned with efforts for charter renewal. Smith highlighted that the school had moved from commendable to targeted status due to one key factor—students with disabilities not meeting the required performance thresholds. This subgroup's performance had caused the drop, despite overall improvements in other areas.

In terms of staffing, the school had made strides. While down to one or two special education teachers, efforts had been made to hire and transition new staff, including a new third-grade teacher and a bilingual kindergarten teacher. The school was working on filling a few remaining vacancies, including positions for a PE teacher and a science teacher at the upper school. The school was moving closer to being fully staffed, which was expected to have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Bryan Heidel delivered the Family Cares report, explaining the various programs and support services they provide. He discussed the expansion of the community mental health center, which started last year with Senator Durbin's support. The Family Cares team, currently serves 71 students with an additional 12 undergoing intake, totaling 83 students, with a waitlist

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of five. They provide individual and family therapy, including specialized services for students at multiple schools. They also run small group therapy for students, especially newcomers, addressing trauma and helping them adapt to life in the U.S.

Additionally, they've launched a peer mediation council to help students resolve conflicts. Family Cares is also collaborating with the Collaborative for Trauma-Informed Chicago, aiming to contribute to the city's efforts on violence prevention and creating a safer environment.

Bryan discussed the challenges of billing Medicaid and the need to increase their caseload to sustain the program. Attendance and student transitions between schools are significant challenges for the program's stability. Family Cares is also preparing for potential legal issues related to immigration, offering legal referrals to families.

The budget for fiscal year 25 was \$872,000, with substantial funding from government and foundation grants. However, these grants are expiring, and the program is working hard to secure new funding sources, focusing on both federal and state grants. The team is committed to ensuring the program's sustainability through Medicaid reimbursement and development efforts, while maintaining focus on providing effective services to students and families. The board members expressed support for the program and discussed the importance of mental health services for students.

#### Financial Report and Budget

Bill Welnhofner and Christian Feaman delivered the financial report, highlighting positive outcomes from the recent audit and ongoing challenges. They acknowledged the clean audit conducted by a new mid-sized accounting firm, noting a smoother process and improved relationships. However, minor issues included legislative compliance regarding student notifications and board member training timelines.

They detailed the impact of reduced funding, balancing the budget, and maintaining essential programs. Despite current liquidity of \$1.6 million and immediate fiscal stability, long-term challenges were projected. Declining student enrollment was emphasized as a critical concern, with funding anticipated to drop significantly next year due to enrollment reductions. This could result in a projected \$1.3 million deficit for the next fiscal year.

Board members also discussed teacher salaries, with a proposed increase of \$300,000 across the board to address retention challenges. Even with the increase, teacher salaries would remain below CPS levels. The board highlighted the ongoing need for grants and donations to support essential programs, acknowledging the significant budget cuts already implemented to maintain operations.

Despite the current positive outlook, they emphasized the necessity of addressing structural challenges to ensure long-term sustainability.

#### Consent Agenda

Board Chair Amy O'Donnell introduced the Consent Agenda for approval, stating that it would proceed with a single, unanimous vote unless any member wished to remove an item for individual discussion. Kathy Elliott made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Alice Schaff seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

#### Governance Committee Report

Kathy Elliott began the report by informing members that Christian collaborated with the Governance Committee to draft partnership procedures, aiming to establish a clear framework for evaluating and managing future partnerships. The draft includes a definition distinguishing vendors from partners. The finalized procedures will be presented for review and discussion at the January meeting.

The committee proposed adding Larry Withers, a seasoned professional with extensive financial services experience, to the board. Larry has met with key members and expressed enthusiasm for joining. The Governance Committee unanimously

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supported his nomination. Bob made a motion for Larry to join the board for a three-year term expiring June 30, 2027. Kurt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

#### Program Integration Committee Report

Tracy Heilman reported on the committee's progress in leveraging data to tell a compelling impact story aligned with the organization's mission. Thanks to Danielle's efforts, the data was successfully integrated into the system, allowing the team to begin exploring its use for storytelling.

The committee drafted a "niche impact story" framework targeting different audiences, including funders, service recipients, prospective families, accreditation organizations, and regulators. The story framework outlined three key points:

**High Outcomes on Key Measures:** The organization achieves strong results on critical success indicators, drawn from benchmarks like Chicago data, COVID-related metrics, CDC reports, and accreditation requirements.

**Program Engagement Drives Success:** Success is attributed to high-quality programming and active engagement of children and families.

**Engagement and Outcomes Correlation:** Greater engagement, such as using multiple programs or specific program combinations, leads to better outcomes.

This framework aims to guide the prioritization of data collection and reporting, ensuring it aligns with the organization's goals and audiences.

#### Chicago Board Updates

Carole reported on the Chicago Board's recent meeting at the end of October, highlighting their efforts to recruit new members. Several individuals, including Ashley Sprowl, joined the board. Ashley, a fourth-generation member of her family involved in the organization, brings excitement and historical ties, as her family has contributed significantly in the past, including her relative serving as board chair in 1991 during the purchase of Evanston Hall.

The board remains focused on recruitment efforts and is considering engaging members of the Emerging Leaders group who were active during the COVID period.

#### Evanston Woman's Board Updates

Holly Sunshine reported that the Evanston Woman's Board was actively engaged in its dollar-letter fundraising campaign, with donations beginning to come in despite initial slow progress. The board had also welcomed two new members, with one being a prospective addition. The board also organized pop-up mini fundraisers aimed at engaging younger adult members.

#### North Shore Board Updates

Claire Winnard reported on the North Shore Board's recent accomplishments, including hosting their largest fundraiser of the year. Despite a decrease in attendance by approximately 75 people compared to the previous year, the event raised nearly \$400,000, only \$15,000 less than the prior year's total. Donations were still coming in, with hopes of reaching last year's amount.

The board is exploring the possibility of shifting future events to suburban locations and has begun recruiting new members. On October 19, they participated in the Early Childhood event, engaging with classrooms. Additionally, the board benefited from the national "Witches Ride" fundraiser, which raised over \$5,000, and saw significant growth in their junior board's efforts, including tripling revenue from their spring fundraiser. Claire acknowledged the hard work of members and expressed gratitude for their contributions.

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#### Winnetka Board Updates

Lieke Hakkenberg reported on the Winnetka Board's activities, noting that preparations were underway for the annual "Adopt a Family" initiative, which is consistently successful. The board was also seeking donations for gift cards to support the program.

Additionally, Lieke shared news about a holiday partnership with Sawbridge Studios, which offered to donate 15% of proceeds from purchases made by members of the Winnetka Board, North Shore Board, Evanston Board, or NUSH board members. The offer also included free shipping, and Lieke encouraged the board to consider promoting this opportunity.

#### Questions/Other

Amy reminded members that the next Board of Directors meeting had been scheduled for Monday, January 27, Noon and in person attendance was strongly encouraged.

#### Closed Session

With no further questions or comments, the meeting prepared to transition into a closed session for discussions on real estate and other matters requiring confidentiality. Kathy Elliott made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to Section 2(c)(6) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act to discuss the setting of a price for the sale or lease of property owned by the Settlement: and Section 2(c)(1) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of one or more specific employees. Holly Sunshine seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The open session adjourned at 2:23 PM and the Board of Directors went into closed session.

Open session resumed 3:12 PM. Kathy made a motion to adjourn the open session. Ginny Burnstine seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. Open session adjourned 3:12 PM

Minutes submitted by Alison Armstead