

***Ozark Opportunities, Inc.***  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
February 25, 2021

The *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* Board of Directors met via virtual meeting in Harrison, AR at **6:06 p.m.** on **Thursday, February 25, 2021.**

**Board Members Present (all by virtual meeting):**

Paulette Hill	Jim Sprott	Debra Clemons	Janice Mann
Heath Kirkpatrick	Margaret Hodge	Nicole Campbell	Althea B. O’Haver
Trish Beck (rep. for Hon. Mickey Pendergrass	Charmaine Seaton (rep. for Hon. Jim Harness)		

**Board Members Absent:**

Sandra Holt (rep. for Hon. John Massey)	Robin Myers	Jan Larson
---	-------------	------------

**Staff Members Present:**

Richard Atkinson Hilary Cleaver	Jane Bueg	Rebecca Hanlin	Ryan Clayborn
------------------------------------	-----------	----------------	---------------

**Guests Present:** Linda Duncan

The primary purpose of the meeting is to review and take action on: November 19, 2020 minutes of the Board of Director’s meeting, ratification of actions of the January 26, 2021 Executive Committee, OOI Strategic Plan and Needs Assessment, CSBG Standards Update, ABC Refunding Application, LIHEAP Regular, Crisis and A-16 Grant Application, Board Training & Action Schedule, Finance Reports, Job Description approval, CEO Annual Performance Evaluation, HS/EHS In-Kind waiver request and budget revision, Agency Progress Report.

Audio recording of this meeting is available upon request.

**1. Welcome & Meeting Called to Order:**

Chairperson Paulette Hill called the meeting to order, established that a quorum was present, led the Pledge of Allegiance, and read the mission statement of *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* Chairperson Hill welcomed all in attendance and began the meeting of *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* Board of Directors at 6:06 p.m.

**2. Special Presentation:**

After viewing a video tribute by *OOI* staff to Shirley Richesin, retired CFO, Richard Atkinson, CEO shared a historic profile of the agency and presented to Ms. Richesin two memorial plaques commemorating her 54 years of service to *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.*

The plaque which will be on permanent display at *OOI* Corporate Office in Harrison, reads: “After 54 years of service, Shirley Richesin is retiring from her post as Chief Financial Officer of *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* Ms. Richesin began her career at *OOI* in August of 1966. She was hired as the agency’s first Fiscal Officer by the agency’s first Executive Director, Don Young. Community Action Programs were a new concept, a product of the War on Poverty and the learning curve was steep.

**Ozark Opportunities, Inc.**  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
February 25, 2021

Shirley quickly became an expert in her field, and served as mentor and trainer for fellow Fiscal Officers throughout the state. Shirley has devoted her professional career to providing impeccable leadership in all things fiscal at OOI. She always sets a high bar of fiscal accountability and her example was one to be followed by other non-profits in the area. Her tenure continued under the direction of Roger Ratchford, the second Executive Director of OOI and draws to a close under the leadership of OOI's third and current CEO, Richard T. Atkinson. The Board and Staff recognize that her departure marks and end of an era. We are truly sorry to see her go and wish her the very best for a long and fulfilling retirement."

In honor of Ms. Richesin's dedication to the agency and her heartfelt care of the people who work for *OOI*, the Board of Directors will establish a fund in her honor, which will be dedicated to providing emergency assistance to employees in need.

- ❖ Jim Sprott moved to approve the OOI Board of Directors to establish the **Shirley Richesin Employee Assistance Fund** with initial corporate funding in the amount of \$5,000.00. Debra Clemons seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Richesin expressed her profound gratitude for the honor, and thanked the staff and the Board for their dedication and leadership throughout the years.

### **3. Prior Meeting Minutes; Approval & Ratification of Exec. Committee Actions:**

- ❖ Trish Beck moved to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2020 meeting of the Board of Directors, and ratify the actions and approve the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of January 26, 2021. Debra Clemons seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### **4. CEO Report:**

Richard Atkinson discussed the agency Strategic Plan and CSBG Standards Update. Mr. Atkinson asked the Board to table the Needs Assessment at this time, as the agency will be starting the entire ROMA cycle in the near future; beginning with Comprehensive Community Assessment. The Strategic Plan for the agency continues to focus on housing and homelessness as top needs. Funds to assist in these areas are included in the COVID/CARES funded programs. Althea O'Haver noted that the agency is in compliance in all areas of the CSBG Standards except Board membership. Mr. Atkinson mentioned he had some leads on potential members and would appreciate any support and contacts Board members could provide.

- ❖ Heath Kirkpatrick moved to approve the Strategic Plan and CSBG Standards Update and to table the Needs Assessment. Althea O'Haver seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### **5. Action Items:**

Richard Atkinson reviewed the ABC Refunding Application noting that there are no changes in scope of the project or locations of the classrooms. He also presented for review and approval the LIHEAP application for Regular Assistance, Crisis Assistance and Assurance-16 (Case Management) components. Mr. Atkinson asked the Board to table action on the Updated Board Training & Action Schedule, as it is still under development.

- ❖ Jim Sprott moved to approve the ABC and LIHEAP grant applications and to table the Updated Board Training & Action Schedule. Althea O'Haver seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**Ozark Opportunities, Inc.**  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
February 25, 2021

**6. Finance:**

Stephanie Underwood, NFP Partners Director of Accounting Services, presented the Finance Report for the period ending January 31, 2021. Reports presented to Board for review and approval include Recap: All Grants-Contracts Expenditures compared to Budget, Payroll and Payroll Taxes Report, Credit Card Recap (documents available for review upon request).

Jim Sprott noted that HS/EHS is under spent and the program is nearing the end of the grant period. Mr. Atkinson responded that February expenses are not entered yet and the gap in expenditures will narrow, but there may be unexpended funds. He is in conversation with the funding source about the possibility of carrying over the funds into the next grant year, and staff have worked hard to spend the funds appropriately in support of the program- he is hopeful all of the funds will be spent.

Another question from the Board concerned the unspent ESG CARES grant funds. Mr. Atkinson responded that the agency applied for the ESG CARES grant because it did not require match funding. The agency has been unable to spend that money because we did not get access to the HMIS system required for administering applications for the funds. Mr. Atkinson asked for feedback on returning the funds, as several area agencies have received ESG rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention money and we are all serving the same clients. The agency is currently spending Fresh Start Housing funds through the Ar. Community Action Agencies Association, which has a lighter administrative burden and serves the same clients. ESG CARES is a reimbursement program and there is a long wait for funds to be repaid. Fresh Start Housing was funded immediately, providing for adequate cash flow to make assistance payments. Althea O'Haver asked why a funder would consider us for future funding if we give the money back. Mr. Atkinson responded that ESG is traditionally hard to administer as the amount of paperwork and staff time required to spend a moderate benefit amount and he did not feel turning down the funds would impact the agency in the future. Rebecca Hanlin, Community Services Manager, added that the challenge of ESG is that the income eligibility levels are so low that most of our applicants are not eligible, and an eviction notice is required as part of the eligibility criteria- since there is a current moratorium on eviction notices it puts landlords in a tough spot as they can't be asked to provide one.

- ❖ Jim Sprott moved to approve the Finance Report for January 2021 and to turn back the ESG funds to the state. Margaret Hodges seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**7. Human Resources:**

Jane Bueg, Chief Operating Officer, presented the report of employment actions and OOI Pandemic Sick Leave activity for January/February 2021. Ms. Bueg introduced Hilary Cleaver as the new Human Resource Manager for OOI. Ms. Cleaver began employment February 2, 2021 and is quickly assuming responsibility for the human resource functions for the agency.

The Job Description for Program Supervisor (with ROMA emphasis) was presented for review and approval.

- ❖ Jim Sprott moved to approve the job description for Program Supervisor (with ROMA emphasis). Trish Beck seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

***Ozark Opportunities, Inc.***  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
February 25, 2021

**8. OOI CEO/Child Development Director Evaluation (Closed Session):**

- ❖ Jim Sprott moved to move to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the annual Performance Evaluation and compensation of *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* CEO Richard Atkinson. Trish Beck seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Chairperson Paulette Hill requested Jane Bueg to attend the session.
- ❖ Jim Sprott moved to re-convene in open session. Trish Beck seconded.

Chairperson Hill announced that Mr. Atkinson is employed for another year and the Board of Directors is pleased with his performance to date.

**9. Training:**

Training on Arkansas Childcare Licensing Regulations & Accreditation and Child Maltreatment were made available to Board members prior to the meeting. Harley Thompson, Child Development Coordinator responsible for these component items is available to answer questions.

Stephanie Underwood provided Board training on Agency Finance Regulations, including OMB Uniform Guidance, 45 CFR Part 75 and applicable subparts, and agency audit requirements. When asked when the agency starts the audit process, Ms. Underwood responded that we already have started. Mr. Atkinson added that the agency went through the Request for Proposal process in 2019-2020. Traditionally the audit firm's contract is renewed for three years, up to five years. We recently renewed our commitment to Welch, Couch and Company PA. The Board can choose to go out for proposals from a different provider. NFP Partners has been in contact with the auditor to get files from last years' audit.

Laura Jorstad, Managing Principle for NFP Partners, updated the Board on MIP Cloud-based services. The NFP Partners team meets weekly with the *OOI* Finance Team every Friday (and more frequently if needed). Mr. Atkinson extended kudos to Laura and Stephanie in transitioning *OOI* to the cloud and assisting with the transition to the virtual outsourced CFO model.

**10. Program Updates/Department Reports**

**Child Development:** Mr. Atkinson updated the Board on Child Development programs. He is working with William Richey, finance person for Head Start regional office. *OOI* has been given another year on our 5-year grant cycle (extending the grant cycle to 6 years). The application submitted by *OOI* in December has been accepted and we are funded for another year. Hopefully we can move remaining funds forward. On the horizon is a COLA funding opportunity. The pandemic has affected the program's ability to generate the necessary in-kind funding. Volunteer and parent engagement activities are radically reduced. Mr. Atkinson requests the Board approve a HS/EHS In-Kind Waiver request and budget revision for the current program year.

- ❖ Heath Kirkpatrick moved to approve Mr. Atkinson submit a HS/EHS In-Kind Waiver request and budget revision for the current program year. Jim Sprott seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Ryan Clayborn, Child Development Manager, gave an update on purchases for classroom improvements, including books and furniture. He reports that classrooms have been refreshed and have received supplies and materials to reduce the COVID threat.

## ***Ozark Opportunities, Inc.***

### Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

February 25, 2021

He reported that CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) reimbursement has improved throughout this school year. Child Development Coordinators are setting improvement goals for their areas of responsibility and classroom quality assessments are underway. The Early Childhood Education websites developed by *OOI* are updated. Mr. Clayborn provided follow-up on the Harrison attendance question presented at the last meeting. The classroom is meeting attendance standards as set forth by Head Start regulations.

**Community Services:** Rebecca Hanlin provided updates on LIHEAP, Community Services office, communication and technology improvements. SUCCESS seminars will be available to the public by invitation. "Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-by World™" had a virtual launch this week. Ms. Hanlin gave a shout-out to *OOI* Child Development Coordinator Krystal Mayes, who spoke with participants on the "Basics of Budgeting". Community Services is looking for candidates to fill positions of Outreach Worker in Searcy/Van Buren counties and Baxter/Marion counties, along with a Family Development Worker for Searcy/Van Buren counties.

Mr. Atkinson took a moment to express his gratitude for the hard work of the *OOI* team. He stated that in order to get good people and keep them we have had to stay competitive; we have been able to continue increasing our wages over the years; however, the minimum wage increase has been tough, and we will be coming back to discuss staff wages and benefits again.

Mr. Sprott asked if the agency's Finance Stoplight has changed from yellow back to green. Mr. Atkinson responded; "Not yet; however, we are expecting a big chunk of money from LIHEAP and CSBG, so it should be better by the end of March or mid-April. We shouldn't have any problem getting the funds due to us."

#### **11. Review and Acceptance of Agency Progress (Governing Board) Report**

- ❖ Jim Sprott moved to approve the Agency Progress (Governing Board) Report for February 2021. Heath Kirkpatrick seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **12. Adjourn**

Chairperson Hill asked for a motion to adjourn.

- ❖ Heath Kirkpatrick moved to adjourn. Trish Beck seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.



May 27, 2021

---

*Board Officer*

*Date*