

**Board of Directors and Foundation Trustees**  
**September 20, 2022, 4pm – 7pm**  
**Joint Meeting Agenda**

*NOTE: Meeting location is University United Methodist Church, located at 1085 East Genesee Street, Syracuse, New York 13210*

- I. Call to Order – *Marissa Saunders, President and Elaina Wellstead, Foundation Chair*
  - A. Activity
  
- II. Consent Agenda
  - A. Board - August 16, 2022, Board of Director’s Meeting Minutes
  - B. Foundation - August 9, 2022, Foundation Meeting Minutes
  - C. Joint Executive Committee Meeting Minutes September 2022
  
- III. Financials
  - A. Foundation Financial Statements – July 2022– Russ Sturtz
    - a. Foundation support of the agency
  - B. Agency Financial Statements – July 2022 – Carolina Cordero-Dyer
    - a. Vote
      - a) Signatory removal
      - b) Signatory additions
      - c) Credit card additions/increases

Key Bank

- a. Need approval to remove Randi K. Bregman, Co-Executive Director, as authorized signer on all accounts: Agency & Foundation
- b. Need approval to add Angela M. Douglas, Executive Director, and Board Treasurer Carolina Cordero-Dyer, as signer on Key Bank Line of Credit

Empower FCU

- a. Need approval to remove Randi K. Bregman, Co-Executive Director’s, name off main agency credit card
- b. Need approval to remove Randi K. Bregman, Co-Executive Director’s name off savings account and add Angela M. Douglas, Executive Director’s as authorized signer
- c. Need approval to add Angela M. Douglas, Executive Director as named on main agency card, currently Randi’s card
- d. Need approval to increase on Angela’s card to \$5000
- e. Need approval for card for new Co-Director of Shelter, Angelica Keene for \$2500 – note: other Co-Director – out on leave
- f. Need approval to add Sherry Jones, Finance Director, as authorized user on all corporate credit cards with the ability to speak directly to representatives if need to cancel, reissue, or report fraud transactions on card

g. To increase Donna Young, Receptionist's card to \$1000.

IV. Executive Director's Report

Transition Plan and Strategic Plan

- a. Stabilize organization
- b. Knowledge transfer
- c. Consultants
- d. Compliance Officer
- e. Update on OVS investigation

V. Stabilization

- A. Staffing - What does the staff need to feel supported

VI. Gala Cancellation – Benita Rodriguez

VII. Foundation Fundraising Task Force – Jim King

VIII. New Business

IX. Unfinished Business

X. Open Discussion

XI. Adjournment

Next Board of Directors Meeting: October 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.

Next Foundation Trustee Meeting: November 8<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.

VERA HOUSE, INC.  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
AUGUST 16, 2022  
ZOOM MEETING MINUTES

**Present:** James Branche, Darrell Buckingham, Benjamin-Ariel Charles, Kate Chmielowiec, Jalyn Clifford, Carolina Cordero Dyer, Otis Deluca, Gregorio Jimenez, Rebecca Ortiz, Dawn Penson, Sheri Rodriguez, Trista Rosen, Marissa Saunders, Ashlea Schad, Shewa Shwani, John Huhtala, Sarah Fitzgerald, Ariell Mussi, Joelle Margrey, Barb Karper, Julie Flack, Jodi DeAugustine, Elizabeth Morgan, Kate Chmielowiec

**Staff:** Fran Bishop, Angela Douglas, Randi Bregman, Sherry Jones, Benita Rodriguez

**Absent/Excused:** Kelly Besaw, Ariell Mussi, Patricia McBride, Nakeia Chambers, Talina Jones

**Call to order:** Marissa Saunders called the meeting to order at 5:35pm.

**Consent Meeting Minutes:** A motion to accept the June 21, 2022, Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes was made by James Branche and seconded by Jalyn Clifford. The motion passed.

Marissa led a discussion on the current events. Angela Douglas explained there is a lot in the media and not much is clear. She gave a very detailed timeline of the events leading up to and during the employment of Marcus Jackson.

At this time, we have communications consultants preparing a statement for Vera House to release to the media and Rebecca read a statement that would be going out to staff. There was still extensive discussion on the future hiring process as we cannot discriminate against someone with such charges. We will be using a different background company going forward.

**Committee Updates:**

Cheryl, Sarah, Brenda and Lieva from the Alford Group joined the call to discuss the 5 year Strategic Plan. Cheryl Blanchette discussed the process as well as the proposed refresh of the mission statement, vision and values.

**Open Discussion:**

There was more discussion on the current crisis. Angela will put out a healing plan. Randi will continue to work with the communications team on the statement. Members shared a lot of comments and concerns regarding Marcus Jackson, as well as victims and survivors who have been impacted by this.

**Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 8:24pm.

**Next Board Meeting- September 20, 3-7 PM**

Joint meeting with Foundation

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Bishop for

Jalyn Clifford, Secretary

**VERA HOUSE FOUNDATION, INC.**  
**TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**  
**AUGUST 9, 2022 - ZOOM**

**Present:** Randi Bregman, Darrell Buckingham, Carolina Cordero Dyer, Jodi DeAugustine, Meagan Dean, Angela Douglas, Julie Flack, Tim Giarrusso, Barb Karper, Jim King, Gwen Sanders, Russ Sturtz, Martin Hewitt, John Huhtala, Pierre Morrissette, Yvonne Scott-Younis

**Staff & Guests:** Benita Rodriguez, Fran Bishop, Brenna Vallar

**Absent/Excused:** James Borer, Buster Melvin, Gloria Barbano Weyl, Monique Wright-Williams, Marissa Saunders, Elaina Wellstead, Alexandra Gorski, Lynn Horowitch

**Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Barb Karper, Vice Chair.

**Communications-** Randi Bregman started the meeting with a discussion regarding a negative media story set to air stating Vera House knowingly hired former sex offender Marcus Jefferson. There was a lengthy conversation sharing thoughts and feelings. Meagan Dean is going to draft a response to this story.

**Approval of May 10, 2022, Meeting Minutes** – A motion was made by Barb Karper and seconded by Martin to approve the meeting minutes. None were opposed and the motion was passed to accept the minutes as presented.

**Agency Update**

- Some residents living in shelter for over a year now unable to find safe affordable housing.
- Still need an Elder Abuse Director.
- Changing of many roles as employees leaving and new employees onboarding.

**Treasurer's Report**

- \$300,000 moved to cash to be able to meet obligations to agency.
- \$105,000 grant request was made to transfer WRC funds to the agency and the motion was made by Jodi DeAugustine and seconded by Martin. Motion passed.

**Anti- Racism Work**

- Social Contract discussed and motion made to adopt was made by Martin Hewitt and seconded by Jim King. Motion passed/
- White caucus update given by Rebecca Ortiz. They are breaking into smaller groups to accommodate the 32 members. Please email Rebecca at [rortiz09@syr.edu](mailto:rortiz09@syr.edu) if you would still like to be added to the group.
- Caucus of color will meet to discuss retreat.

**Gala** – Benita Rodriguez shared that our presenting sponsor will be the Lynn law Firm who has committed \$20,000. A meeting was held with the honorary co-chairs Mayor Ben Walsh and Don McPherson that went very well.

**Foundation Task Force-** Update was given by Benita Rodriguez and Jim King. They had a good brainstorming conversation to try to come up with actions needed to take place to move the process forward. Some ideas included.

- White Ribbon Campaign all year long.
- Creating a pitch book on how to speak so that there is continuity of our message.
- Foundation to provide “why”.

#### **Board Development Committee**

- Jodi DeAugustine advised she has a few great candidates but still welcomes any referrals.
- Erica Wynn-Kearse has resigned.

#### **New Business**

- There was more discussion about Marcus Jackson and creating hashtags on social media to create a sense of unity.
- The joint meeting with the board is September 20<sup>th</sup> with an extended time of 3pm-7pm.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Fran Bishop, Development/ Executive Assistant  
for Jim King, Secretary

VERA HOUSE BOARD AND FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
September 12, 2022, 12:00 PM

Members in attendance: Marissa Saunders, Carolina Cordero Dyer, Jim King, Elaina Wellstead, Jalyn Clifford, Barbara Karper, Julie Flack, Jodi DeAugustine, James Branche, Darrell Buckingham, Sarah Fitzgerald

Staff in Attendance: Angela Douglas, Benita Rodriguez, Cindy Britz, Fran Bishop

No formal agenda.

**Transition Discussion**

Looking to hire a transition and crisis consultant on a higher level due to the delicacy of the matter.

Angela explained that at this time, her plan aligns with the transition. That a succession plan is not a transition plan, and they are looking for a role for Randi to support relations beyond the transition with donors/partners. (Which needs to look like a succession plan)

Angela also said there is a plan to work on stabilizing staff with Key Information Transition Teams. Support would be not only kind words and affirmations, but whatever the staff may need.

**Financial Discussion**

- Discussion on the financial impact and building a transition budget.
- Has the money from the foundation been spent?
- Even with the current crisis and canceling the Gala, looks like we will be ahead of budget due to the vacancies within the organization.

**Other Business**

- Jolie Moran, Co-Director of Advocacy's last day is today.
- Office of Child & Family Service says we are doing a great job.
- Waiting on information from DCJS. Expecting more to come.
- The community is looking for us to return to normal.
- Thinking of a possible legacy gift for Randi.

**Next Meeting Items**

- Members asked to see the transition plan. Angela advised she is "literally buying time" and will work the plan in sections. It will support her leadership and honor the legacy of Randi.
- KIT teams possibly joining meeting to discuss a reparative and healing plan.
- Discuss how to close the door on the crisis.
- Resignation of Board members.
- Use next week's meeting to get everyone on the same page and then plan for the retreat in October.
- September 20, 2022, with **time change** of 4pm-7pm.
- An agenda will be put together for that meeting.

Meeting ended at 1:10 pm.



## **Background Check Policy**

All offers of employment at Vera House are contingent upon clear results of a thorough background check. Background checks will be conducted on all employees after an offer of employment has been extended.

Vera House, Inc., has expanded our background check vendors. Starting September 1, 2022, IndentoGO will be our primary vendor. Checkr, a non-fingerprint background check organization will be our subsidiary vendor.

Initially, IndentoGO was used to complete fingerprint-based background checks for all anticipated new Shelter employees, now it will be expanded for most new incoming Vera House Inc., staff. For volunteers, depending on the department they will work in, it will be determined by the Human Resource Department and the hiring manager if the background check will be completed by IndentoGO or by Checkr. All volunteers must complete orientation before a background check will be done. Interns that work one semester or less will utilize Checkr to complete the background check, all other interns will utilize IndentoGO.

### **Background checks will include:**

- **Criminal History** - includes review of criminal convictions. The following factors will be considered for applicants with a criminal history:
  - The nature of the crime and its relationship to the position.
  - The time since the conviction.
  - The number (if more than one) of convictions.
  - Whether hiring, transferring, or promoting the applicant would pose an unreasonable risk to the Agency, its employees or its clients and vendors.
  
- **Motor Vehicle Record** - provides a report on a prospective employee's driving history.

### **Background Check Procedures**

After an offer of employment has been accepted, the prospective employee will complete all background check paperwork when new hire paperwork is completed. The type of background check will depend on whether the prospective employee is working at the shelter or not.

Our background check procedure will be very thorough. The information we will receive from the fingerprint-based background check includes arrest and conviction information for all criminal arrest submissions and a specific segment of non-criminal records.

No anticipated new hire will be allowed to begin their first day of employment until their background check information has been received and thoroughly reviewed by the Human Resource Department. If there is a finding on the background check, Vera House Inc., will consult with our New York OCFS Monitor and/or other funders on the finding(s) prior to moving forward with the next steps in our hiring procedure.

**Determination of suitability required, in advance, for certain individuals who may interact with participating minors**

Vera House will not permit any employees, interns or volunteers to interact with any minors unless Vera House has first made a written determination of the suitability of that individual to interact with minors, based on current and appropriate information.

No individual may be hired to interact with minors if they:

- A. Withhold consent to a criminal history search;
- B. Knowingly make (or made) a false statement that affects, or is intended to affect, any search;
- C. Are listed as a registered sex offender on the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website;
- D. Have been convicted -- whether as a felony or misdemeanor -- under federal, state, tribal, or local law of any of the following crimes or any substantially equivalent criminal offense:
  - (1) sexual or physical abuse, neglect, or endangerment of an individual under the age of 18 at the time of the offense;
  - (2) rape/sexual assault, including conspiracy to commit rape/sexual assault;
  - (3) sexual exploitation, such as through child pornography or sex trafficking;
  - (4) kidnapping;
  - (5) voyeurism; or
- E. Are determined by a federal, state, tribal, or local government agency not to be suitable.

**Motor Vehicle Record Check**

A motor vehicle record check is required for all employees who use the shelter vehicles or are expected to use their personal vehicle in the ordinary course of business. A Motor Vehicle Record check “ provides a report of an applicant’s driving history. This is done through the New York State License Event Notification System (LENS). The application is provided by the Human Resource specialist when completing the new hire paperwork.

Prospective staff will be notified by the Human Resource Manager if there is a negative response to this record check. Updated motor vehicle record checks are provided to the agency by the LENS program for all current employees who use shelter vehicles or are expected to use their personal vehicle in the ordinary course of business. If an infraction is reported for a current employee, the employee’s supervisor will notify the employee and the employee will not be able to drive agency vehicles or use their own vehicle for business purposes until the infraction is resolved.

**Non-Shelter Staff**

A *Security Check Questionnaire form* is to be completed by a prospective employee who is not working in the shelter. This background check provides a Criminal History Record in all states. The Security/Background Check Questionnaire is to be completed when filling out new hire paperwork.

The Human Resource Department will order the background check upon receipt of the signed release form and review the result of the background checks.

When the results of a background check are received the Human Resource Manager, Deputy Director and/or the Co-Executive Director(s) will assess the potential risks and liabilities related to the job's requirements and determine whether the individual should be hired. If there is a finding on the background check, Vera House Inc., will consult with our New York OCFS Monitor and/or other funders on the finding(s) prior to moving forward with the next steps in our hiring procedure. If a decision is made that the prospective employee should not be employed, the Human Resource Manager will notify the candidate immediately and terminate employment.

### **Shelter Staff**

Both a background check consent and criminal record conviction verification form are to be completed for prospective shelter staff. These forms are to be completed when filling out new hire paperwork.

New York State Office of Children and Family Services requires additional background checks for individuals that have the potential for regular and substantial contact with children in a residential setting. As a result, prospective shelter staff are subject to the following additional background checks:

#### **Staff Exclusion List (SEL)**

This is an inquiry through the Justice Center, as to whether a prospective employee with the potential for regular and substantial contact with children is listed on the register of substantiated cases of abuse or neglect.

The SEL background checks are done when filling out the new hire paperwork. Information is entered directly into the Justice Center website when the prospective employee is completing new hire paperwork.

If a prospective applicant is listed on the SEL, a determination to hire can be made after the results of the DCJS Criminal History Check and SCR database check have been returned if there has been a thorough review of the information available according to OCFS guidelines published in 17-OCFS-ADM-16 and listed below under the (SCR) section. If the applicant is listed on the SEL, Vera House Inc., will consult with our New York OCFS Monitor and/or other funders on the finding(s) prior to moving forward with the next steps in our hiring procedure.

#### **Statewide Central Register (SCR)**

This background check is done through the Online Clearance System (OCS) and is an inquiry to determine if the prospective employee is the subject of an indicated report of child abuse or neglect. The prospective employee will need to submit their name, including aliases and maiden names, addresses for up to the past 28 years as well as providing a list of the current household members. This is performed during the time a prospective employee completes new hire paperwork.

If a prospective employee is the subject of a case on the SCR, the SCR will send a letter notifying the individual and giving them 90 days to respond. If Vera House determines that the prospective

employee should be hired, the following should be considered:

- Seriousness of the incident,
- Seriousness and extent of injury to the child(ren) named in the incident,
- Ages of the subject and children at the time of incident,
- Time elapsed since the most recent incident,
- Number and frequency of incidents,
- Information produced by the subject on their behalf regarding rehabilitation.

If the applicant is the subject of a case on the SCR, Vera House Inc., will consult with our New York OCFS Monitor-and/or other funders on the finding(s) prior to moving forward with the next steps in our hiring procedure.

If Vera House chooses to hire the potential applicant, a record will be maintained in their personnel file, as to specific reasons why the individual was determined to be an appropriate and acceptable employee with access to children being cared for by our program.

### **Fingerprint Based Criminal History Check**

A fingerprint based criminal background check is required by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). This background check provides access or review of criminal history record information of the prospective employee. DCJS has entered into an agreement with Identigo to provide these services. Upon hire, a prospective employee will be sent an email with the information needed to register for the fingerprint check online, along with the service code required. When registering for the fingerprint background check, you will pick from the available time and day. There are various locations to choose from. There is a fee due when the fingerprinting is done. Vera House will also provide a code for payment of the fee in the initial email.

If as a result of the DCJS Criminal Background check, the prospective employee has been convicted of a crime, Vera House will make a written Safety Assessment to determine whether or not to hire the prospective employee.

A written Safety Assessment includes the following:

- The public policy of NYS to encourage the employment of persons previously convicted of one or more criminal offenses,
- The specific duties and responsibilities of the employment being sought by the prospective employee,
- Bearing, if any, the criminal offense will have on the ability to perform the duties and responsibilities,
- Time elapsed since the occurrence of the criminal offense(s),
- Age of the person at the time of the occurrence of the criminal convictions,
- Seriousness of the offense(s),
- Any information provided by the applicant regarding rehabilitation or good conduct,
- Legitimate interest in protecting property and safety and welfare of children.

The Human Resource Specialist will notify the hiring manager regarding the results of the background checks. In instances where negative or incomplete information is obtained, the Human Resource Manager will request additional information from the prospective employee. Depending on the results of the background check, the Human Resource Manager, Program Director, Deputy Director and/or the Co-Executive Director(s) will assess the potential risks and liabilities related to the job's requirements and determine whether the individual should be hired. If there is a finding on the background check, Vera House Inc., will consult with our New York OCFS Monitor and/or other funders on the finding(s) prior to moving forward with the next steps in our hiring procedure.

If a decision not to hire the prospective employee is made, the following should be provided to the prospective employee:

- An opportunity to explain, in writing, within 15 days of the date notification was mailed. An extension of 15 additional days may be granted. The opportunity to explain should be made by non-electronic mail, so mailing date can be verified.
- A copy of the individual's criminal history information,
- A copy of Article 23-A of the Correction Law,
- Information about the individual's right to seek correction of any incorrect information contained and procedures.

If a decision is made that the prospective employee should not be hired, the Human Resource Manager will notify the candidate immediately and terminate employment offer.