



# **Board of Nursing**

## **Office of Professional Regulation, Vermont Secretary of State**

89 Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor • Montpelier, VT 05620-3402

<https://sos.vermont.gov/opr/>

### **Unapproved Minutes**

**January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Remote Meeting**

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by the Chair, Jennifer Laurent.

**Board members present:** Jennifer Laurent, Jennifer Lyon, Daniel Coane, Deb Belcher, William “Jamie” Floyd, Matthew Choate, Ginger Gillette-Kent, Douglas Sutton (ad hoc), and Kelly Sinclair

**Absent:** Lauana Tredwell

**Staff members present:** Shiela Boni, Nursing Board Executive Officer; Carrie Phillips, Pharmacy Executive Officer; Lauren Layman, Board Counsel; Noura Eltabbakh, General Counsel; Emily Trudeau, General Counsel, Aprille Morrison, Licensing Administrator Supervisor, Kristin Donnelly, Case Manager; Elizabeth Kneen, Case Manager, Julie Bowen, Docket Clerk, Corey Young, Licensing Administrator; Kamanie Sweet, Licensing Administrator; Michelle Lavoie, Licensing Administrator, Laticia Garcia, Enforcement Licensing Administrator; Kris Bowdish, OPR Deputy Chief Investigator; and Matthew Kinsley, Investigator.

**Administrative Law Officer:** George Belcher

**Prosecuting Attorneys:** Jennifer Colin, Rachel Heath, Ultan Doyle and George Hasselback.

**Guests:** Melissa Brown, Christine Strobl, Alan Russell, Chandler Bellanca, Dimitry Mucha, Ryan Miller, Meredith Burt, Sarah Maslowski, Sebastian Mucha, Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski.

### **2. Changes To The Agenda**

- Jennifer Laurent wanted to add the NCSBN meeting to the agenda.
- Shiela Boni proposed her Executive Officer report be brought up after the disciplinary hearings.
- Daniel Coane requested that Board meeting links be added to Board emails.

### **3. Approval of Minutes from December 11, 2023**

William “Jamie” Floyd moved to approve the minutes of December 11, 2023. Jen Lyon seconded. The motion passed. Douglas Sutton and Kelly Sinclair abstained. Chair Laurent commended Licensing Administrator Corrine Reynolds on such well-written minutes.

#### 4. Discipline Hearings

- **2022-28 – In re: Christine Strobl, Contested Hearing: Opposition to Remove Conditions**
  - Daniel Coane moved to dismiss the request to remove conditions, per Respondent not being present to speak to the Board. Matt Choate seconded the motion.
  - Daniel Coane withdrew his motion due to Christine Strobl joining the meeting.
  - Daniel Coane moved to deny the removal of conditions request. Douglas Sutton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- **2023-186 – In re: Ejike Ekwuekwe, Contested Hearing: Summary Suspension Request**
  - Attorney Chandler Bellanca appeared for Ejike Ekwuekwe.
  - The Board took notice of grammatical errors found in the presented Summary Suspension Stipulation, particularly removing mention of the Board of Pharmacy in the Stipulation and adding reference to the Board of Nursing.
  - Mr. Ekwuekwe's counsel, Attorney Bellanca, stated that Mr. Ekwuekwe agreed to the voluntarily indefinite suspension of Mr. Ekwuekwe's nursing license pending an adjudication of the matter on the merits. Attorney Hasselback confirmed that the State stipulates voluntary indefinite suspension of Mr. Ekwuekwe's license pending an adjudication of the matter on the merits.
  - Daniel Coane moved to accept the Voluntary Indefinite Suspension Stipulation of Mr. Ekwuekwe's license, as presented with the grammatical errors corrected. William "Jamie" Floyd seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
- **2009-13 – In re: Ejike Ekwuekwe, Contested Hearing: Opposition to Remove Conditions**
  - OPR Prosecution determined the matter of Ejike Ekwuekwe's request for removal of conditions of his Vermont RN license was no longer a valid request as Mr. Ekwuekwe license had been suspended pursuant to the Board's order.
- **2020-25 – In re: Melissa Brown, Uncontested Hearing: Reinstatement Stipulation and Consent Order**
  - The matter was heard on the record. William "Jamie" Floyd moved to accept the Order as written, seconded by Daniel Coane. The motion passed unanimously.
- **2023-185 – In re: Jason Weakley, Uncontested Hearing: Stipulation and Consent Order**
  - The matter was heard on the record. Jen Lyon moved to accept the Order as written, seconded by Douglas Sutton. The motion passed unanimously. Board Chair Jennifer Laurent recused.

#### 5. Executive Officer Report

Shiela Boni:

- OPR Bill
  - An update was provided to the Board on the status of the OPR Bill. There is no date set for congressional hearings on the relevant sections, but the Board will be notified when it is scheduled for the hearing.
- OPR Office Renovation
  - Some office furnishings have been backordered, which will delay some OPR staff from returning to work on the previous return date.

- License Data:
  - Shiela provided graphs to the Board representing licensing trends from May-December 2022 compared to May-December 2023 for RN's, LNA's LPN's & APRN's.
  - RN licenses increased by 825 licenses in 2022, vs increasing 836 licenses in 2023.
  - LPN licenses increased by 178 licenses in 2022, vs increasing 189 licenses in 2023.
  - LNA licenses decreased by 2840 licenses in 2022, vs increasing 721 licenses in 2023.
  - APRN licenses increased by 194 licenses in 2022, vs increasing 405 licenses in 2023.
  - Douglas Sutton explained that this license movement has been noticed in today's workforce. Douglas's employer has started reaching out to high schools to help promote nursing career paths.
  - Deb Belcher thanks Shiela for her provided information. Stating that Vermont department of Health may find this information helpful.

## **6. Other Business**

- Jennifer Laurent wanted to remind the Board of the NCSBN meeting March 13-15<sup>th</sup> in Atlanta, GA. Shiela Boni suggested using one of the available waivers to send an Enforcement team member to the meeting. If OPR staff cannot attend, Shiela would let the Board know.
- Daniel Coane would like to have the monthly meeting links provided via email for ease of use. Shiela Boni will contact Corrine Reynolds about future emails.
- Deb Belcher would like OPR to find a better way to provide notice through NGLP when certain items are updated. For example, changing the document name, so Board members accessing the portal can visually see what items have been updated.

## **7. Public Comment:** No public comment

## **8. Adjournment**

There being no additional business, Jennnifer Laurent adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting Date: February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024