

**You Thrive Florida
Governing Board Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2026**

Meeting Location: **Hernando County Chamber of Commerce**
15588 Aviation Loop Drive
Brooksville, FL 34604

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Jennene Norman-Vacha, Board Chair; James Morris, Vice Chair; Tracy Ramirez, Interim Secretary/Treasurer; Angelys Saez, Thomas Valdez

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Mat Kline, CEO; Kris Bates, CFO; Lisa Becker, CAO; Steve Homan, COO; Cristy Labadie, Controller; Richard Sanvenero, House to Home Director; Karen Schulz, Community Assistance Director; Melanie Harrison, Senior Services Director; Chad Johnston, IT Director; Janine Kell, Children's Advocacy Program Director; Jessica Scalise, Victim Services Coordinator; Tanya Stone, Director of Early Learning Programs; Jamie Young, Principal BEST Academy; Vanessa Qualina, Human Resources Manager; and Melissa Mace, Executive Administrative Coordinator.

BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Donna Maas, Steve Champion, Evonne Jackson, Aaron Lyons; and Jeff Cottrell, Paratransit Director

BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Michelle Alford

ATTORNEY: Jarrett Prater, The Hogan Law Firm

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Norman-Vacha, Board Chair, called the January 14, 2026 meeting of the You Thrive Florida ("YTF") Governing Board to order at 9:06 am. Ms. Norman-Vacha noted that a quorum was met as evidenced by the number of Board Members present in-person, and via teleconference Ms. Norman-Vacha led in a group prayer and the pledge of allegiance.

REVIEW OF BOARD REPORT AND CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS 1-6: Ms. Norman-Vacha asked if the board had time to review the board packet including the consent agenda items. Ms. Norman-Vacha asked if there were any questions regarding the items in the board report or further discussion needed on the consent agenda items. No questions were presented by board members.

APPROVAL OF THE October 8, 2025 MINUTES: Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2025 minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Ramirez moved to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2025 meeting. Mr. Valdez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS 1-6: Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

MOTION: Ms. Maas moved to approve the consent agenda items. Ms. Ramirez seconded the motion. The motion carried. Ms. Mace will be sending the Elder Options Policy form to be signed electronically by all board members.

CITIZEN COMMENTS – Ms. Norman-Vacha formally opened the floor for citizen comments; however, no additional comments were offered.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER – Mr. Kline began the meeting with formal introductions around the room, extending a warm welcome to board member Ms. Saez, who joined from Polk County. He then provided the board with an update on the CSBG grant. Mr. Kline was pleased to report that, as of January 1st—and thanks to the dedicated efforts of Mr. Homan and Ms. Schulz—the agency has successfully and smoothly transitioned the CSBG grant to Step Up Suncoast. Although a few staff members departed for personal reasons, there were no layoffs resulting from the transition.

Mr. Kline emphasized that, with the removal of CSBG requirements, sector representation was no longer necessary, and all individuals would now serve simply as board members.

Moving to the next action item, Mr. Kline proposed shifting the annual election of board member and officers from the April meeting to the January meeting each year. He explained that this change would allow officers to be in place in time for Mr. Bates to file the annual corporate resolutions—listing board members—before the state fee increases in April.

Ms. Ramirez inquired whether the bylaws specified a quorum requirement for holding board and officer elections. Mr. Kline clarified that the bylaws contain no such provision and noted that 90% of the board was represented at the meeting. Ms. Norman then asked if there were any further questions or discussion needed.

APPROVAL TO MOVE THE ANNUAL ELECTION OF BOARD AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS FROM APRIL TO JANUARY: Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to approve moving the annual election of board and officers from April to January.

MOTION: Ms. Ramirez moved to approve moving the annual election of board and officers from April to January. Ms. Saez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Kline asked for board approval to also allow for the bylaws to be update in order to reflect that the annual election of officers will take place in January.

AMEND BYLAWS TO REFLECT ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS WILL BE HELD IN JANUARY: Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to approve amending the bylaws to reflect the annual election of officers will be held in January.

MOTION: Mr. Valdez moved to approve amending the bylaws to reflect the annual election of officers will take place in January. Ms. Ramirez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

RE-ELECTION OF BOARD AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Mat read the current slate of the board of directors and officers: Ms. Norman-Vacha – Board Chair; Mr. Morris – Co-Chair; Ms. Ramirez – Interim Secretary and made the recommendation to re-elect the current board of directors and officers. Mat requested a motion to approve the re-election of the current board of directors and officers.

MOTION: Ms. Saez moved to approve the board of directors and officers. Ms. Jackson

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seconded the motion. The motion carried.

FINANCE: Mr. Bates reviewed the financial statements in the board packet, noting total assets of as of September 30th, ending the fiscal year. Mr. Bates advised that the financial statements have been submitted for audit review. The audit is nearly 60% complete and he anticipates having the audit report ready for the April board meeting. Balance sheet shows total assets and liabilities. Total net assets are nearly \$8.6 million. Mr. Bates noted that there is nearly \$3 million in investments that can easily be transferred into cash should an emergency arise. The budget to actual shows the budget to actual expenses for the same 12-month period. Revenues were up for the year, most of the increase is from the \$2 million ERC payment that we received in August. Cash flows show an increase in net cash; this is related to grants contracts being paid. The service area percentages shows that Childhood Services is about 52%, and the General and Administrative remains consistent at 5%.

Mr. Bates requested approval of the final year end budget in the amount of \$49,360,511.88.

APPROVAL OF THE FINAL YEAR END BUDGET: Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to approve the final year end budget in the amount of \$49,360,511.88.

MOTION: Ms. Ramirez moved to approve the final year end budget. Mr. Valdez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Bates needed to make a correction to the final year in budget because he accidentally provided the total for 2024, rather than, 2025. Mr. Bates made a request to correct the final year end budget to \$52,514,116.08.

APPROVAL OF THE CORRECTED FINAL YEAR END BUDGET: Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to approve the corrected final year end budget in the amount of \$52,514,116.08.

MOTION: Ms. Ramirez moved to approve the corrected final year end budget. Mr. Valdez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The last portion of the finance report includes credit card expense sheets – these will now be a part of the finance report as it was a specific requirement of the CSBG grant.

Mr. Bates will be filing annual corporate resolutions to reflect the board officers.

HOUSE TO HOME: Mr. Sanvenero's board report provided updates on the current, but he wanted to take a moment to thank CEMEX for their generous donation. He also thanks Mr. Champion for showing him the process of bidding on tax deed. House to Home continues to shift toward workforce housing. Mr. Sanvenero let the board know that rather than hosting the annual Men's Bake, he plans to switch things up this year with a casino night. He anticipates being able to share more details in the next few weeks.

SENIOR SERVICES: Ms. Harrison provided the board with the Elder Options contract amount received from Elder Options after the board report was submitted. The contract amount from Elder Options for the coverage of Hernando, Sumter, and Lake Counties, for the period of January 1, 2026 – December 31,

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2026, is \$3,389,267.52 and Ms. Harrison is requesting board approval.

APPROVAL OF THE ELDER OPTIONS CONTRACT: Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to approve the Elder Options contract for the coverage of Hernando, Sumter, and Lake Counties for the period of January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026 in the amount of \$3,389,267.52.

MOTION: Ms. Saez moved to approve the Elder Options contract. Ms. Ramirez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Ms. Harrison concluded by sharing the results of the Senior Services Client Satisfaction Survey. She reported that they received 121 responses, with 90% of clients expressing satisfaction with the services provided by the Senior Services staff. The feedback indicated a high level of client satisfaction and measurable positive outcomes. It demonstrated strong client trust and consistent service delivery, all in line with our funding and accreditation standards.

The responses showed reduced stress and improved health outcomes among the seniors in the program. Overall, clients reported feeling safer and less overwhelmed. Our programs effectively support healthy aging while allowing seniors to remain in their homes safely. Additionally, many of our providers and contractors received high praise. The board had no further questions for Ms. Harrison.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER: Mr. Homan reported that the annual report is usually released in January; however, there was a hiccup with the agency responsible for creating the report. To avoid this issue in the future, he is considering handling the report's creation internally. Mr. Homan expects the completed annual report to be ready soon and will share it with the board, the community, and stakeholders.

Mr. Homan has completed the required agency risk assessment for CSBG. Since this assessment is based on a set of questions tailored for Community Action Agencies (CAAs), he plans to find a more suitable risk assessment tool to better evaluate the internal risks faced by the agency. He opened the discussion to the board regarding this matter. Ms. Ramirez inquired about the burden placed on staff by conducting the assessment annually versus biennially. She believes that given the agency's growth and direction, it may be essential to conduct the risk assessment each year to evaluate solvency and risk effectively. Ms. Norman-Vacha suggested consulting with the agency's insurance carrier, as doing so might provide opportunities for additional discounts by following their recommended risk assessment procedures. Ms. Ramirez recommended tabling the discussion until the next board meeting, hoping there will be more information available by then.

Mr. Homan reviewed the quarterly strategic plan update included in the board report, noting that all programs appear strong and are progressing in the right direction to meet their objectives. He opened the floor for questions regarding the strategic planning results, but no questions were raised. Since the current strategic plan is based on CAA guidelines, he will also be looking for a more representative strategic plan tailored for the agency.

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE: Ms. Schulz nothing to present opened up to any questions re board report. No questions were asked by the board.

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER: Ms. Kell guided the board to the 2026-2030 CAC Strategic Plan

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included in the board report. Although this strategic plan had already been approved by the board, Ms. Kell wanted to expand on the terms, goals, and timelines after consulting with the site reviewer. She then invited any further questions from the board. With no questions raised, she requested the board's approval for the revised 2026-2030 CAC Strategic Plan.

APPROVAL OF THE REVISED 2026-2030 CAC STRATEGIC PLAN: Ms. Norman-Vacha made a motion to approve the revised 2026-2030 CAC Strategic Plan.

MOTION: Ms. Ramirez moved to approve the revised 2026-2030 CAC Strategic Plan. Mr. Lyon seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Ms. Kell has maintained a longstanding partnership with the nursing program at Pasco-Hernando State College, where she conducts presentations and role-play exercises to enhance understanding and raise awareness about child abuse. She is excited to share that she has recently been invited to present to the nursing students at Jersey College of Nursing and looks forward to building relationships with nurses who are often on the frontlines in emergency rooms, pediatric facilities, and doctor's offices.

Ms. Kell asked board members to mark their calendars for April 7th in case they are needed for a virtual site visit. Currently, Ms. Norman-Vacha and either Mr. Morris or Mr. Lyon will be the second participants.

Ms. Kell updated the board on the status of the new CAC building located on Jacqueline Road, behind Petco and Marshalls. She was onsite yesterday, and the area has mostly been cleared and leveled. To request \$1.25 million for building construction, she has been collaborating with our lobbyist to find a sponsor. Senator Ralph Consulo has agreed to sponsor the bill. Ms. Kell and her team will attend legislative advocacy days on February 9-10 to seek funding for our agency and CACs statewide. This will be her third-year attending.

The children at the CAC enjoyed a wonderful Christmas party with Santa, who generously volunteered his time. Ms. Kell expressed gratitude for the community's support through generous donations of gifts for the children.

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and Ms. Kell's team presented to the Hernando County Board of Commissioners and the City of Brooksville Commissioners, where a proclamation was made declaring January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

Ms. Kell will host the first Red Sand Project ceremony on January 21st at 11 AM at 711 Benton Avenue, featuring several guest speakers. During this ceremony, attendees will fill cracks with red sand to symbolize the victims who fall through the cracks. Ms. Kell invites all board members to attend and show their support if they can.

Additionally, Ms. Kell shared that the CAC Client Satisfaction Survey yielded excellent scores. However, she noted that, due to the nature of their services, it is often challenging to receive completed surveys.

Lastly, Ms. Kell expressed her gratitude for her team, who consistently go above and beyond to serve the children. She shared a recent success story involving her staff. She concluded with a reminder about the upcoming CAC Klays for Kids Fundraiser on February 6th and asked board members to share the event

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flyer to encourage more sponsorships and participants.

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS: Ms. Stone offered to answer any questions regarding the board report. Since there were no questions, she provided the board with updates on program funding and grants as of January 1st. She is currently awaiting approval for the 2026 budget but recently received notification that the Early Head Start grant has been awarded, with payouts beginning in February. The program grant specialist recommended that Ms. Stone add a spreadsheet to support the change of scope for the Head Start grant, and she expects to receive the award notification any day now.

ELP Facilities Updates: Ms. Stone reported that they are utilizing disaster funds to make renovations to the playground. She is excited to share the completion of those projects by the April board meeting. The Woodland site opened on January 6th, welcoming students and staff back from winter break. This site is fully operational, with two Early Head Start classrooms, three Head Start classrooms, and support staff. However, the Woodland site across the street will be closed by the end of January. Ms. Stone also shared that the renovated Keech Street facility, which had been closed since Hurricane Ian, is scheduled to reopen on January 20th.

The program made the difficult decision to close the Chisholm site in New Smyrna Beach, which had suffered damage from Hurricane Ian, leading to a continual decline in the facility's condition. Following a recent environmental inspection, it was determined that closing the facility was in the best interest of the program. Ms. Stone was able to quickly secure a new site in Deltona, located on the west side of Volusia County. There is a high demand for services for children in this area, and there is already a waitlist for enrollment. The new site is more than halfway through renovations, and Ms. Stone anticipates applying for licensing in February, aiming to open the site to families in March.

After further examining the Brooksville tuition-based model and considering several factors, including a lack of interest, location, teacher pay, and leadership oversight, Ms. Stone has decided to postpone the implementation of this model for now. Although this model has the potential to generate funding and opportunities, she hopes to explore its implementation in the future in Volusia or at the Spring Hill site. Ms. Stone and Ms. Young are collaborating to determine the next steps for effectively utilizing the Brooksville site. Ms. Stone's focus for 2026 is to continue building and strengthening community partnerships and generating additional opportunities for expansion.

BEST ACADEMY: Ms. Young announced that she has submitted a letter of intent to open two new charter schools in Hernando County and is currently deep into the application process. The first charter application is for a K-5 campus in Brooksville, which will focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) learning, with the intention of enrolling students from the Head Start program. The plan is to start small by admitting 40 students in the first year and adding 40 additional students each subsequent year until the school reaches capacity by Year 3. This intentional growth model supports a seamless educational pathway that expands students from Early Learning Programs into elementary grades and provides a natural progression from elementary school into BEST Academy's middle school program.

The second charter application is for a K-5 school in Spring Hill, emphasizing creative arts. Ms. Young and Ms. Becker are actively working on securing a site for the Spring Hill charter school, which is expected to accommodate 116 students upon opening.

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As part of the charter application process, all board members must complete the Board Member Information Form and the Statement of Assurances. They are also required to submit a resume along with their completed forms. Ms. Mace will email all board members the Executive Summary for each charter application, as well as the necessary forms that need to be completed and returned by January 23rd. Ms. Young plans to submit the completed applications to the school board by the February 2nd deadline, aiming for both charters to open by August 2026.

Mr. Morris inquired about the source of funding, and Ms. Young explained that it would be similar to public school funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). Ms. Ramirez noted that having charters focused on different subjects would be beneficial, especially as public schools are cutting art programs. Ms. Becker added that Chocachatti Elementary has a waitlist every year, in addition to multiple Pasco charters, suggesting that the Spring Hill location would help meet this demand.

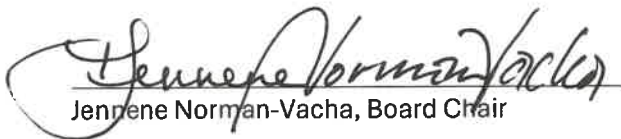
OTHER BUSINESS: No other business.

There being no further business, Ms. Norman-Vacha requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. She also reminded the group that the next meeting will be on April 8th beginning at 9:00 am.


MOTION: Mr. Valdez moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 am.

Respectfully submitted,


Jennene Norman-Vacha, Board Chair

08 April 2026
Date


Tracy Ramirez (Apr 8, 2026 15:24:16 EDT)
Tracy Ramirez, Interim Secretary/Treasurer

04/08/26
Date


Prepared by:
Melissa Mace, Executive Administrative Coordinator

01/23/2026
Date

HANDOUTS:

- [CAC Red Sand Project Event Flyer \(January 21st\)](#)
- [CAC Klays for Kids Event Flyer \(February 6th\)](#)