



CRAEA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Call to Order – Welcome Visitors

Board President Dr. Debra Rich called the Central Rivers AEA Board of Directors meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. Board members present included Dennis Craun, Jr., David Hill, Nicole Lovik-Blaser, Jenn Peter, Dr. Cynthia Phillips (via Zoom), Dr. Tony Reid, Dr. Theron Schutte, and Dr. Mary Stevens (via Zoom). Also present were Chief Administrator Stan Rheingans, Assistant Chief Administrator/Director of HR Karl Kurt, CFO Jennifer Coombes (via Zoom), Board Secretary Lori Thomas, Executive Director Annette Hyde, and Director Beth Strike. Visitors included staff members Kelsey Baker, Rod Ball, Melissa Hesner, Pam Morrissey, Sarah Nelson, Elissa Berding (via Zoom), and Julie Sherburne (via Zoom).

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Tony Reid moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Theron Schutte. The motion passed unanimously.

Program Update - Early ACCESS

Early ACCESS Regional Coordinators Elissa Berding and Julie Sherburne gave an update to the board regarding Early ACCESS. This is a statewide early intervention program that serves infants and toddlers from birth to age three who have developmental delays or disabilities, with an emphasis on helping parents and caregivers support their child's development. Dr. Rich thanked Elissa and Julie for providing an update to the board.

River Hills School Summary

Director of Special Programs Rod Ball and River Hills School Principal Kelsey Baker provided an overview of River Hills School. The school serves approximately 90 students with a wide range of disabilities from 30 surrounding school districts. They also shared the school's history and highlighted the role of Central Rivers AEA in supporting its programs and services. The board expressed its appreciation to Rod and Kelsey for their excellent work and dedication to serving students.

Consent Agenda Approval

Dr. Mary Stevens moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Jenn Peter. The motion passed unanimously.

Brookhaven Youth Shelter Program Lease

Nicole Lovik-Blaser moved to approve the lease with YSS of North Iowa for the Brookhaven Youth Shelter Program, from August 19, 2025, to August 18, 2026, in the amount of \$1,044 per month. The motion was seconded by Dr. Tony Reid. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Appointments for 2026

David Hill moved to appoint board members to the three Board committees for the 2026 term. The motion was seconded by Dr. Tony Reid. The motion passed unanimously. The following Board members were appointed to serve:

- Audit Committee: Nicole Lovik-Blaser and Dr. Cynthia Phillips
- Facility Committee: Dennis Craun, Jr., Jenn Peter, Dr. Tony Reid, and Dr. Mary Stevens
- Policy Committee: Dennis Craun Jr., David Hill, Dr. Debra Rich, and Dr. Theron Schutte

Agency Office Calendar for 2026-27

Nicole Lovik-Blaser moved to approve the agency office calendar for 2026–27 as presented. The motion was seconded by Dennis Craun, Jr. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports to/from Board:

Chief Administrator Stan Rheingans: Stan updated the board on the upcoming Legislative Forum to be held during the Superintendents' Meeting on January 8 and invited board members to attend. He also reminded the board of the Day on the Hill advocacy event scheduled later this month at the Capitol in Des Moines. Additionally, Stan informed the board about the new accreditation process, including upcoming site visits and the annual desk audit.

Asst. Chief Administrator/Director of HR Karl Kurt: Karl reported on a new program being rolled out for staff through the agency's self-funded insurance funds. He noted that the program will provide a valuable opportunity to support staff wellbeing and personal goals.

Board Member Dennis Craun, Jr: Denny shared that Dunkerton CSD recently utilized the agency's Crisis Team services and reiterated that this is a critically needed service for school districts.

Board Member Dr. Tony Reid: Tony expressed his appreciation for the agency's school psychologists. He noted that in speaking with one of them, he learned about the increasing challenges students are facing and the growing demand for these services.

Board President Dr. Debra Rich: Deb reported to the board that the agency's Auditors had contacted her regarding the annual report.

Adjournment

Board President Dr. Debra Rich adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m. upon a motion by Dr. Tony Reid, seconded by Nicole Lovik-Blaser.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lori Thomas, Central Rivers AEA Executive Assistant/Board Secretary

 2-4-26

Dr. Debra Rich, Board President