

**BITTERROOT VALLEY EDUCATION COOPERATIVE
MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Thursday, March 5, 2020

10:00 a.m. – Cooperative Office

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING AGENDA - DRAFT

1. **Call to Order** – Bob Moore called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. and read statement that he would be chairing the meeting.
2. **Employee waived right to privacy.**
3. **In Attendance** – BVEC attorney Elizabeth Kaleva. Board Members Bob Moore, Scott Stiegler, Lance Pearson and Dan Johnston. BVEC staff Tim Miller, Chris Hughes and Jill Reynolds. Employee Heather Cashell, employee spouse Matt Cashell, MFPE representative Melanie Charleson, Kristen Ashcraft.
4. **Moore read statement on the meeting procedure.** The meeting was called to hear Director Tim Miller's recommendation to terminate Heather Cashell due to inaccurate Medicaid billing records. This would be a recommendation for cause. The Cooperative would present their case and evidence then the employee would present her case. Ms. Kaleva reminded everyone that no client names should be used as we would be discussing client records.
5. Ms. Kaleva called Chris Hughes to testify. She asked Hughes to verify his position and describe how he learned of the billing irregularities and how the information was presented to Ms. Cashell. As she proceeded through the questioning, she presented the evidence as exhibits for all participants. Mr. Hughes indicated that a survey of Hamilton School employees brought Ms. Cashell's performance issue to light, specifically if she was providing services to students as required. Mr. Hughes began addressing the issue by looking first at the billing records versus student attendance. Mr. Hughes confirmed that Ms. Cashell billed Medicaid for services for students on 17 separate instances when those students were not present at school. The Cooperative would have to report the inappropriate billing to Medicaid and pay back those instances where payment was received, and no services were provided. When questioned at the initial meeting by Mr. Hughes and Mr. Miller, Ms. Cashell acknowledged her errors and opined that maybe there were errors in the Hamilton School District record keeping as well.

When Ms. Kaleva finished questioning and presenting of evidence with Hughes, Dr. Moore asked Ms. Charleson if she wanted to question Mr. Hughes.

Ms. Charleson questioned Mr. Hughes about the Exhibits A, B and C, the investigation timelines, the accuracy of the attendance records and if he spoke to the person who made the survey comment. Hughes replied that the survey response was anonymous, but he had spoken to two teachers at Washington School that expressed the same concerns as those in the survey comments.

the offense warrant." Ms. Kaleva asked Ms. Charleson why she omitted the last part of the sentence and she indicated it wasn't relevant.

Both parties were then given the opportunity to close. Ms. Charleson cited Ms. Cashell's performance up to this point and indicated that when given suggestions for improvement Ms. Cashell took them and improved. She also read a statement from Ms. Cashell asking for written warning versus termination and they then reviewed the progress notes and attendance records.


Ms. Kaleva closed with the fact that this meeting was about the billing irregularities versus history as an employee. The fact is that Ms. Cashell billed for services she did not provide, and those actions are violations of Cooperative policy, state and federal law and the ethics of her field. The Cooperative was unaware of Ms. Cashell's conduct until a Hamilton School employee brought the issue to their attention.

Public Comment from Matt Cashell, Ms. Cashell's husband. He expressed concern with the terminology of fraud.


Mr. Moore opened the floor to Board Members. Mr. Stiegler noted that Ms. Cashell's job evaluations noted concerns with record keeping, and some instances of comments in performance reviews regarding needs for improvement with progress notes with a comment in 2015-15 review about seeing improvement. No other comments from the Board.

Mr. Johnston made a motion to approve the recommendation to terminate Ms. Cashell's employment. The motion was seconded by Scott Stiegler. Mr. Moore called for discussion, there was none. Mr. Moore called for the vote. Vote was 4-0 in to approve the recommendation for termination. Motion carries.

Meeting Closed at 11:15.

 3/31/2020

Board Chair Signature and Date

 4/3/2020

Business Manager/Clerk Signature and Date