
Colorado Office of Public Guardianship

Director, Sophia M. Alvarez

Commissioners

Deb Bennett-Woods, Chair
Stephanie Garcia, Vice-Chair
Spencer Crona
Patrick Thiessen
Brandon Fields



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PUBLIC MEETING **June 28, 2023** **RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**

CONVENE

The meeting of the Colorado Office of Public Guardianship Commission was convened by video conference via Zoom at 10:00 AM by Commission Vice-Chair Garcia.

A quorum of the Commission was present.

Commission Members Present

Chair Deb Bennett-Woods
Vice-Chair Stephanie Garcia
Spencer Crona
Patrick Thiessen
Brandon Fields

OPG Director

Sophia M. Alvarez

Others Present

Janelle Cantu, Deputy Director, Office of Public Guardianship
Loretta Vigil, Office of Public Guardianship
Angela Bullard
Vannesa Cruz
America Paz Pastrana, Office of Public Guardianship
Colette Gaenssle, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General

Public Attendance

Hani Raley, Executive Director, The ARC of Aurora

Participation was by video conference.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order. The meeting was recorded.

II. Approval of the May 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chair Garcia asked for comments or amendments to the May 16, 2023 Commission meeting minutes.

Chair Bennett-Woods **moved** to approve the May 16, 2023 meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Crona **seconded** the motion. Motion **passed** unanimously.

III. Chair Report (Deb Bennett-Woods)

Chair Bennett-Woods' Chair Report, was distributed electronically and discussed.

Chair Bennett-Woods did not have any additional updates. There were no follow up questions.

IV. Director Report (Sophia M. Alvarez)

a. Welcome to Vannesa Cruz – 2nd JD Guardian

Director Alvarez's Director Report was distributed electronically along with other materials and discussed. Additional items discussed included, but were not limited to:

Director Alvarez provided the following updates:

- She had a meeting on June 26, 2023 with Robin Smart, who is the new Judicial Department Budget Manager and discussed the budget process and timelines for Fiscal Year 2024 supplemental budget requests for additional office leased space and a staff attorney. They also discussed budget process and timelines for Fiscal Year 2025.
- Camille Price submitted her resignation and July 5, 2023 will be her last day.
- She introduced Vannesa Cruz as a new 2nd JD guardian is the new hire, and we continue the process of hiring two more guardians.

B. Commissioner Thiessen inquired about the total number of guardians the office will have as of July 10, 2023. Director Alvarez stated that there will be 5 guardians and one on medical leave that is ending in mid-August.

- C. Commissioner Crona inquired if this will be about 15 clients per guardian or more. Director Alvarez informed that each guardian will have more than 15 clients and Angela the Guardian in the 7th Judicial District is helping cover clients as well.
- D. Commissioner Thiessen inquired if the total number of guardians does not include the director and deputy director. Director Alvarez stated that the total does not include the director and deputy director, but they will assist with client visits.
- E. Director Alvarez further updated that the Colorado Aging and Adult SubPac Committee asked her to present to their group on July 11, 2023 as they are interested in hearing about the passage of our bill, expansion of our bill and how county Adult Protective Services groups can collaborate with our office.
- F. Vice-Chair Garcia inquired about the issue of hiring an internal staff attorney since there were some differences of opinion. Director Alvarez stated that she asked the Attorney General's Office to provide a written opinion because their belief is that we do not have authority to hire a staff attorney. Director Alvarez believes that the office does have authority based on other independent state agencies.
- G. Commissioner Crona inquired if discussion of the bases of that AG opinion would risk waiver of privilege in the current public meeting. The discussion ended.
- H. Commissioner Thiessen asked about the job posting from the AG's office for a designated attorney for office. Director Alvarez informed that the AG Attorney will also be covering another agency, the BRIDGES Program, aside from the COPG.
- I. Chair Bennett-Woods informed that the AG's representative will perform different duties, such as presenting the office, and advising the commission. Chair Bennett-Woods further explained that the staff attorney will do probate related work on behalf of COPG clients.
- J. Director Alvarez advised that the staff attorney would also be taking over some of her duties and will help with on-call coverage.
- K. Commissioner Crona agreed that the need for hiring a staff attorney is warranted.
- L. Director Alvarez had no further updates.
- M. Vice-Chair Garcia brought to everyone's attention that as the office expands statewide, she would like the Commission to reconsider expanding the referrals minimal age from 21 to 18 years old to close the gap.

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VI. Revision of Critical Incident Policy and Reporting Procedure

Director Alvarez informed that the revision of Critical Incident Policy and Reporting procedure is to remove the language of not having the personal identifying information on the current reporting procedure to the Commission.

Vice-Chair Garcia asked for a motion to approve the revision of the Critical Incident Policy and Reporting Procedure to include the amendment.

Commissioner Thiessen **moved** to approve the insertion of the revision to the Critical Incident Policy and Reporting Procedure and to include appropriate identification as confidential on each document. Chair Bennett-Woods **seconded** the motion. The motion **passed** unanimously.

VII. Discussion of Critical Incident Reporting

- a. **Specifically, the matters referred to Executive Session and Discussion of Critical Incident Reporting**

VIII. Review of Final 2023 Director Performance Evaluation

- a. **Specifically, the matters referred to Executive Session and Discussion of Final 2023 Director Performance Evaluation**

Vice-Chair Garcia asked for a motion to enter Executive Session.

Commissioner Crona **moved** to initiate Executive Session. Commissioner Thiessen **seconded** the motion. Motion **passed** unanimously with at least two-thirds of the membership present.

The Commission exited open session and entered executive session on a separate line at 10:28 a.m.

At 11:19 a.m., the Commission returned to open session.

IX. Approval of 2023 Director Performance Evaluation

Vice-Chair Garcia asked for motion for approval of the 2023 Director Performance Evaluation.

Commissioner Thiessen **moved** to approve the 2023 Director Performance Evaluation as amended in executive session. Commissioner Crona **seconded** the motion. The motion **passed** unanimously.

Additional Comments

- A. Director Alvarez introduced Vannesa Cruz, Public Guardian for the 2nd Judicial District. Vannesa Cruz provided a brief background about herself.
- B. Commissioner Thiessen informed that will not attend the July Commission meeting.
- C. Chair Bennett-Woods informed that OPG will have new Board members soon since the deadline is July 1st, and as they are appointed, they can start attending meetings to have quorum.
- D. Director Alvarez advised that the new board is not active by statute until September 1st.
- E. Chair Bennett-Woods informed that she will be participating in the Commission’s meetings through August.
- F. Commissioner Crona asked if the Meridian Contract needs commission approval. Chair Bennett-Woods stated that the contract did not require approval.
- G. Chair Bennett-Woods asked if the letters to the bill sponsors and legislative liaisons were sent. Director Alvarez answered yes.

X. Adjourn

Commissioner Crona **moved** to adjourn the meeting. Vice-Chair Garcia **seconded** the motion. The motion **passed** unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

ATTESTATION

As Commission Chair and Commission Vice-Chair, we attest that these minutes of the open public meeting of the Colorado Office of Public Guardianship Commission substantially reflect the substance of the discussion and action taken related to the matters under the authority of the Commission.



Deb Bennett-Woods, Chair

7.26.2023
Date



Stephanie Garcia, Vice-Chair

7.26.2023
Date