



Youth and Family Services Division
1718 E. Michigan Street
Orlando, Florida 32806

June 24, 2024

Meka Beacham, Chairperson
Membership and Mission Review Board
Agenda Development Office
201 South Rosalind Avenue
PO Box 1393
Orlando, FL 32802-1393

Dear Ms. Beacham,

Our Children Family Services Board is in receipt of your letter of April 19, 2024, advising us that pursuant to section 2-210, Article VI, of the Orange County Code, each advisory board is assigned a sunset date and will expire on that date unless reauthorization by an enabling resolution is adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. It is our understanding from your letter that the Membership and Mission Review Board (MMRB) will be considering whether to recommend extending the existence of our Children and Family Services Board or allow it to sunset.

It should be noted that our board was initially appointed back in 1924 by the judge of the juvenile court for the county and vested with actual control and operation of the "Parental Home" now known as Great Oaks Village where children were housed who were considered ungovernable or without parental oversight. At the time the Board was known as the "Board of Visitors" and its members were chosen to represent various sections of the county. In 1965, the Orange County Parental Home Commission was created later to be renamed the Children Family Services Board (CFSB). It was formed by the legislature to act as trustee for the gifts and contributions to the "Parental Home."

With this brief but rich history, the members of the CFSB are putting forward our response to the seven questions being asked by MMRB to help facilitate their review of our Board's continued existence.

1. Please state the purpose and/or mission of the advisory board. Is the advisory board serving the purpose for which it was created?

Yes, the advisory board is serving the purpose for which it was created:

- *The purpose of the Children Family Services Board is to act as trustee for all gifts, real or personal property, testamentary or inter vivos, donated to the county's residential group home Great Oaks Village.*
- *Advise the Board of County Commissioners and County Administrator regarding the provision of direct services to children, youth and families by the Department of Health and Human Services.*
- *Assist the county in obtaining donations to benefit the children of Great Oaks Village and other programs of the county operated by the Youth and family Services Division.*
- *Advocate for children and families in Orange County, especially those who require the services of the division.*

Since its first inception 100 years ago as the “Board of Visitors,” and throughout the decades, the CFSB has continued to maintain the purpose for which it was created specifically to act as trustee for all gifts and donations given to Great Oaks Village as well as ensure the requests of the donors are carried out as stipulated. In addition, this Board continues to assist the county in raising donations for its residential group home.

2. What is the current need(s) of the county being served by the advisory board?

One of the greatest needs of Orange County Government is to raise awareness of the plight of the most vulnerable in our society and specifically in Orange County. In this county and its surrounding area there are children and families in crisis. Children are being removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. There are families in this community in need of counseling and other resources to help keep them intact and functioning effectively for the betterment of all. In order to meet those needs, there must be a mechanism in place where men and women of sound, practical judgment and of unquestionable interest in the welfare of the children and families of Orange County can not only raise awareness, but also take part in advancing the needs of these vulnerable individuals.

3. What are the accomplishments of the advisory board?

The CFSB throughout its long existence has advocated effectively for the children at Great Oaks Village. They have successfully raised well over a \$1million dollars to ensure the children in our residential group home experience a sense of normalcy though they are not able to be in a home with family members who are able to love, care and support them.

This Board ensures funds are available for the children at Great Oaks Village and the Youth Shelter to receive weekly allowances, enjoy summer programs geared to their needs and interest combined with school activities that include theme park admissions, meals and educational materials, school pictures, lab fees, homecoming and prom activities and a host of other activities to ensure they experience a sense of normalcy.

This Board has also funded the security arms that limit access to the GOV campus by vehicles that may try to access the campus inadvertently and harm the kids in the county’s care. The Board has also funded secure fencing around the on-campus pool to ensure the safety of the kids and purchased a state-of-the-art swing set with special flooring to accommodate a comfortable area for the kids to gather and play with one another. This Board has been and continues to be an awesome ambassador for the children at Great Oaks Village, by raising the type of awareness in the community and around the state that only those who are passionate about the welfare of the children of Orange County can effectively do.

4. Is there another public or private board that would better serve the function of the advisory board? If so, please list the board and explain why it would better serve the function.

To our knowledge, the CFSB is the only advisory board in the State of Florida “formed by the legislature in 1957 to act as trustee for the gifts and contributions to the Parental Home (Great Oaks Village).” We do not believe there is another such Board in the entire state that has this responsibility. No other board has carried out any of the functions vested in the CFSB.

5. Should the resolution creating the advisory board be amended to enable the advisory

board to better serve the purpose for which it was created? If so, how should the resolution be amended?

No. We do not believe the resolution creating the advisory board should be amended.

6. Should the advisory board's membership requirements be modified? If so, how should the requirements be modified?

No. We do not believe the membership requirements for the CFSB should be modified.

7. What are the direct and indirect costs of maintaining the advisory board?

There are no direct costs to Orange County for maintaining the Children Family Services Board. There are, however, indirect costs that are inherent in having and/or maintaining any board. These costs are general and administrative in nature and are required in order to support the CFSB in its fundraising activities and oversight of all donations received for Great Oaks Village.

Finally, as can be seen from this board's responses to the seven questions above posed by MMRB, we feel strongly, that we have, over the decades, stayed true to our mission and purpose to act as trustee for all gifts, monetary or otherwise, donated to Great Oaks Village as well as advocating for the children of this 100-year old residential group home that has been a beacon of safety and security for the vulnerable youth of Orange County.

Respectfully,

Willie J. Montague, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Children and Family Services Board

Cc: Venerria Thomas, Director, Community and Family Services Department
Dr. Barbara Williams, Manager, Youth and Family Services Division

