



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 28, 2026

PRESENT FROM BOARD:

Tawny Espinoza, Randy Brown, Brandi Coleman, Justin Aubert, John Flanagan, Dave Hayden, Jeff Franklin, Krista Ubersox, David McKendry, Tamara Krizman

PRESENT FROM STRIVE:

Grant Jackson, Mary Anne Lawrie, Chris Bergquist

OVERVIEW OF MEETING
No conflicts of interest were identified.
Minutes from previous meeting were reviewed and approved. Minutes from the Executive Session were also reviewed and approved
Desiree presented on the Early Intervention Program
Grant provided state and organizational updates.
Financials were reviewed and approved.
The Board approved a bonus for the President/CEO.
The Financials were reviewed and approved.

A quorum was achieved at 12:02 p.m. and the meeting was called to order. No conflicts of interest were identified.

BOARD MINUTES AND EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES FROM 12/9/2025

Minutes were presented.

It was M/S/P (Franklin/Espinoza) to approve the Board and Executive Session minutes from 12/9/2025 meeting as written.

OLD BUSINESS

Solar Panels – The organization has been dealing with ongoing solar panel issues for several years. In June 2025, hail damage required roof repairs on multiple residential properties, necessitating the removal of solar panels. During these roof repairs, contractors discovered burn marks on panels and evidence of potentially unsafe conditions, raising concerns that all panels of similar age may have the same issues and appear to have not been maintained properly. After consulting with our attorneys, the legal team determined that Clear Energy (the solar company) had breached their contract by failing to maintain and replace panels as required, with no site visits from them. We are remedying the situation by not reinstalling the panels and notifying Clear Energy through legal channels. Currently, panels will not be reinstalled, and the organization is notifying property owners who purchased homes with

existing panels. Clear Energy no longer bills the organization, and it is unclear if Clear Energy is still in business. The organization will exit the solar business entirely, needs to recycle numerous panels, and is considering selling panels for scrap metal/copper wire value.

Donor Pledge – The donor, who is a real estate developer, purchased 950 Grand in 2017. The purchase agreement included a legally binding pledge of approximately \$96,000 in donations to be paid in three installments. The donor consistently made excuses each year since 2019 when reminded of his commitment—citing bad financial years and money tied up in properties—until the threat of legal action finally prompted his first payment of approximately \$33,000 in 2025, which he hand-delivered. Chris recently contacted the donor for the second installment, and the donor committed to payment by January 30, 2026. Chris will provide an update at next month’s meeting whether the payment was received or not.

EARLY INTERVENTION OVERVIEW

Desiree Aydt, Early Intervention Manager since 2017, presented a comprehensive overview of the program, which serves children from birth to 3 years old through a family coaching approach rather than traditional one-on-one therapy. The program's philosophy centers on working with families to incorporate therapeutic strategies throughout the entire day, not just during 45-minute sessions. Services are provided primarily in homes, but also in daycare centers and community locations including Eureka Science Museum, parks, and Jennie's Playhouse (a new sponsor partnership for indoor play area).

The program currently employs 6 service coordinators, 4 speech-language pathologists, 2 occupational therapists, 1 physical therapist, and 1 early childhood special educator, along with billing specialists Michelle and Lexi. Contracted providers handle audiology, nutrition, vision, and hearing services. The program is currently serving 236 children with approximately 5 referrals per week, and caseloads of 36-37 children per coordinator—representing steady growth since 2019 when they started with only 4 coordinators.

The enrollment process begins with referrals from anyone (doctors, teachers, family members, or self-referral), followed by a state evaluation using the Developmental Assessment of Young Children (DAYC) assessment tool to evaluate five developmental domains. Eligibility is determined by the state based on 25% delay in 2 or more domains, 33% or more delay in one domain, or established conditions like Down syndrome, autism, or chronic ear infections, which automatically qualify. The program operates under strict timelines: 45 days to contact families and establish service plans, and 28 days to begin serving children after the plan is created, with no waitlists or caps on enrollment allowed.

STRiVE maintains community partnerships with pediatric offices throughout the valley (conducting outreach monthly to every 4 months), two Head Start programs, outpatient clinics at St. Mary's and Fruita Health West, and School District D51 for hearing assessments and transitions to special education. As children approach age 3, a collaborative process involving families, providers, and coordinators evaluates whether referral to D51 for special education services is appropriate. Recent policy changes driven by Joint Budget Committee scrutiny and cost containment measures will introduce a new redetermination process starting July 2026, where children who meet age-expected developmental domains may be discharged before age 3, though those with established conditions continue to be served

until age 3—representing a significant shift from guaranteed service until age 3 for all eligible children.

The billing structure follows a hierarchy: private insurance first, then special Medicaid, state Medicaid (payer of last resort), and finally state contract. Recent changes include the state pushing for more private insurance billing and a new requirement to bill Rocky Mountain Health Plans (RMHP) Prime (managed care Medicaid), which has created significant paperwork and administrative burden for Michelle and Lexi, with questions about the necessity since it is still Medicaid funding. Children can receive both Early Intervention and outpatient services simultaneously, with billing departments coordinating to avoid conflicts. STRIVE is the sole EI broker for Mesa County (one broker per county statewide) and has held this role since program inception. They reapplied via RFP process approximately 2 years ago, received a 5-year designation with no other organizations applying, and will need to reapply in a couple of years. During the board discussion, questions arose about whether families who want to private pay could access services directly without state evaluation, and there was a suggestion to invite Michelle to a future meeting for deeper explanation of EI billing processes. Brandy expressed interest in volunteering with families, particularly those with children newly diagnosed with attention deficit disorder.

Board members expressed their appreciation and gratitude to Desiree for taking the time to provide them with an overview of the department.

President/CEO Report

Grant, Desiree, Michelle, and Gayle Berry (the organization's lobbyist) are meeting this Friday to discuss Early Intervention issues with the Joint Budget Committee. The Joint Budget Committee is conducting figure setting in the coming weeks, and Early Intervention remains a hot-button issue after last year's \$4 million budget shortfall. STRIVE is providing feedback to Representative Rick Taggart, who serves on the JBC, to inform their decision-making process.

Gayle Berry will retire in October 2026 after serving as STRIVE's lobbyist for many years, providing direct access to local legislators (especially Representative Rick Taggart), real-time texting during hearings to share information and prompt specific questions to state department, services for which she has no recommended replacement. After her retirement, STRIVE will rely on Alliance lobbying efforts, though Alliance lobbies on broader organizational issues rather than STRIVE-specific concerns and votes on legislative priorities each session, representing a loss of personalized, direct lobbying support. Grant has lobbying experience from his Mesa County position and could take on some lobbying responsibilities, though this would require significant time commitment involving Capitol visits during session and local legislator meetings. During board discussion, a member raised concerns about the future risk of not having dedicated support, with another other one suggesting reevaluating the decision in 6 months to a year. This topic will be discussed at the February 20th board retreat to assess whether the lack of specific organizational representation poses risks.

The organization received the final installment of over \$500,000 from the Farley Pearl estate, bringing the total donation to nearly \$1 million over time (with the first installment of approximately \$250,000 received earlier in the fiscal year). Grant expressed deep appreciation for Farley's generosity during her lifetime and after, describing the donation as

"life-changing" for the organization and an incredible legacy of support for STRiVE. During board discussion, questions arose about whether to do something in Farley's honor, noting that Farley also left a bequest to the Country Club. One member noted the Country Club money has not yet been fully distributed, with some funds designated for specific projects (e.g., ADA-compliant front door), and Grant agreed to check with Sal about the Country Club's plans and any expectations regarding recognition.

Funded partially by the Farley Pearl donation, the organization distributed bonuses to staff with a tiered structure based on number of hours worked per week. The bonuses were distributed in the most recent paycheck and were described as a "nice surprise" that was well-received across the organization, notably marking the first bonus distribution with no complaints about tax withholding. Grant did note that he did not give himself a bonus initially per the Board's request. Grant commented that he would leave the meeting at the end so they could decide on the bonus.

Leadership team will meet on Thursday following the board meeting for a retreat over a long lunch with consultant Sally Schaefer, focusing on leadership team culture, team cohesiveness, and strategic planning. Grant will update the board on the outcomes and strategic planning progress from this retreat at a future meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Chris presented the December 2025 financials in a shortened format for the full board (with more detailed versions reserved for the executive committee), comparing results to the original budget set on July 1st rather than the revised forecast—a change from typical practice where the budget represents a "stake in the ground" that never changes while the forecast rolls forward with known adjustments.

December 2025 showed exceptionally strong performance with operating income of \$646,000 (including over \$600,000 from county allocation, though results would still be positive without it), donation/grant income of \$91,000, and net income exceeding \$730,000. Year-to-date performance from July through December 2025 was equally impressive with operating income just under \$1 million, significant donation income, a \$270,000 gain on sale from the previous month, and net income just under \$1.5 million—making this one of the best financial years in recent memory.

Revenue exceeded budget primarily due to solar panel insurance reimbursements (where revenue was recognized immediately but associated expenses were capitalized over the roof's life, creating a timing mismatch) and conservative donation estimates that consistently exceeded projections, leading to a discussion about becoming more aggressive in future budgets.

Personnel expenses came in significantly lower than budgeted due to open positions throughout the year; the budgeting process starts with fully staffed departmental plans, then discounts for expected vacancies by estimating which positions will be vacant and for how long, but this conservative approach may need adjustment. Both factors—higher revenue and lower expenses—moved net income in the same direction, causing it to exceed budget and highlighting the need to "sharpen the pencil" for more accurate forecasting that enables better decision-making on capital investments. Major reasons for budget variance included additional enrollments not predicted in July (difficult to forecast timing and

quantity), the first Farley Pearl estate installment of approximately \$250,000 (not budgeted), unanticipated solar panel insurance proceeds, county allocation increases of \$50,000 above historical levels (approximately \$600,000 versus \$550,000), unpredictable gains on property sales, and conservative budgeting for repairs/maintenance and legal expenses that came in lower than projected (legal expenses were minimal this year unlike years with major issues). The balance sheet showed all positive cash metrics due to strong net income, though accounts receivable was slightly elevated—a minor negative metric caused by EPA billing authorization dates out of alignment, pending county financial eligibility determinations, and administrative issues with higher-level claims, all expected to resolve by next month and not concerning unless they persist for several months. Board feedback was positive: Jeff Franklin appreciated the budget comparison and suggested continuing it quarterly or permanently; Randy Brown found the variance explanation slide (Slide 7) extremely helpful; Brandy felt the presentation was the perfect amount of time and easier to understand than detailed spreadsheets. Chris agreed to mix up formats periodically, highlight major variances, and accommodate any specific information requests from board members.

The Blue Lights Event experienced remarkable growth, with 2025 ticket sales more than doubling from 2024 and drawing about 1,500 attendees. New features included ice sculptures by Willie and an assistant from Ohio at a cost of \$5,000. The event successfully revived a beloved Grand Junction tradition, generating strong community recognition, positive publicity for Strive, and meaningful revenue. However, electrical infrastructure reached maximum capacity, with fuses melting, overloaded strands, and limited outlets causing some outages. Planned improvements include installing stronger circuits, adding and replacing receptacles, and obtaining multiple electricians estimates to improve safety and reliability. Future enhancements will feature Bluetooth speakers playing Christmas music throughout the display, already in planning. The board requested financial recaps for all major events, including Tulips and Juleps and Harvest, to better track performance and growth .

It was M/S/P (Franklin/Espinoza) to approve the minutes as presented.

The Board deliberated on Grant's bonus and historical compensation trends following his recusal from the meeting.

It was M/S/P (Coleman/McKendry) to approve the President/CEO's bonus as previously agreed, matching the amount allocated for other Leadership members.

OTHER UPDATES

Brandi announced a promotional cookie deal running through February, including new product offering including pumpkin snickerdoodle cookies, monster cookies, and pumpkin oatmeal chocolate chip, along with a pumpkin oatmeal applesauce dog treat. She is currently seeking volunteers to assist in the production and packaging of these products.

It was M/S/P (Espinoza/Hayden) to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

MaryAnne Lawrie
Senior Executive Assistant

Minutes approved (Franklin/Espinoza) on 2/24/2026