

## STATEMENT OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF VERMONT PERMANENCY INITIATIVE, INC.

## SPECIAL COMMITTEE

At a recent public hearing with respect to the Vermont Permanency Initiative, Inc. d/b/a Vermont School for Girls ("VSG") application for independent school approval, a question was posed to representatives of VSG about a decision made by the Board of Trustees to reinstate Jeffrey Caron, M.Ed., CAGS, as President of Vermont Permanency Initiative, Inc. ("VPI"). When informed of this, we found ourselves confused by the question being raised in that context and venue, apparently arising from Board members' review of materials on the internet. We had no advance notice of the Board's intention to pursue this line of inquiry, in which case we would have been able to address this matter in an orderly fashion. We are aware that this application has been pending for more than a year and that our staff submitted all information requested in the application on a timely basis to the AOE, who did not raise this concern with us.

Within the legal constraints upon releasing health and other personal information regarding employees, we can advise you that, upon notification in the fall of 2016 that Jeffrey Caron had been involved in a vehicular accident and arrested for driving under the influence, our Board held an initial meeting within 48 hours. We were fortunate, through our shared service arrangement with a Becket Family of Services alliance member, to be able to access the services of Jay Wolter,<sup>1</sup> Chief Administrative Officer of Becket Family of Services, to serve as Interim CEO of VPI. This provided us with the comfort, at the Board level, given Jay's extensive knowledge and considerable skillset, that appropriate leadership was in place to support VPI. As directors, we already had close working relationships with Mr. Wolter. The appointment of Mr. Wolter as Interim CEO allowed us time to evaluate the situation in a process - focused manner that gave due weight both to the seriousness of the allegations and to Jeffrey Caron's long-time service to this organization. The Board appointed the three of us to serve on a committee to assess Mr. Caron's situation and make a formal recommendation to the Board. Mr. Caron was placed on an indefinite leave of absence.

This Committee met on numerous occasions beginning almost immediately following the October 27, 2016, Board meeting. Key factors in our discussion included (i) resolution of the legal proceedings that had been initiated against Mr. Caron by the Lebanon Police, (ii) an evaluation of Mr. Caron's overall health / fitness / state of mind, and (iii) evaluation of internal / external feedback relative to the events.

---

<sup>1</sup> Biographical Information of Jay Wolter:

Jay T. Wolter, JD, *Chief Administrative Officer*

Jay is the son of Becket's founder, John J. Wolter. His commitment to Becket has been life-long. As a youth, Jay attended Becket for five years and participated in several Becket Adventures wilderness trips. As a young adult, Jay worked at the school before embarking on a legal career following his graduation from Georgetown Law School (cum laude). After practicing health law for several years, Jay returned to Becket in 1993 as President & Executive Director of the former Pike School. Jay renamed the school Becket School and began oversight of the transition of this small residential treatment program into what is now known as the Becket Family of Services. During his tenure, Jay has played a key role in the development of nearly fifty new programs and services. He has also founded the Oliverian School and the Mountain Valley Treatment Center, specialized providers that are not affiliated with the Becket Family of Services. Jay resides in Hanover, NH, with his wife, Colleen, and four boys, Shane, Christian, Ryan and Brendan.

Early in the process we met with Mr. Caron to gather information regarding his fitness and state of mind. Mr. Caron was very forthcoming, including about his health, and, understandably, wanted more time to consider his future.

This Committee provided updates to the full Board at meetings in November, 2016, and then in February and May, 2017. Beginning in early winter of 2017, the Committee also began a series of meetings with Mr. Caron, where we continued to monitor his fitness and to obtain information relative to the police matter. We communicated directly with Mr. Wolter and others to obtain internal and external stakeholder feedback. At the February Board meeting, we obtained guidance from the other members of the Board relative to the potential elements we would consider if we were to consider a return to work arrangement with Mr. Caron.

At the May, 2017, Board meeting we recommended that Mr. Caron be allowed to return to work following resolution of the legal proceedings that had been initiated against him, if the proceedings did not result in a criminal conviction. The Board unanimously accepted this recommendation. In early summer, 2017, we were informed that no criminal charges were being pursued and that the incident would result in motor vehicle violations only. In light of this, and of the other information available to the Committee concerning Mr. Caron's fitness to return to work, he was allowed to return after an eight month leave of absence.

Please understand that our process was extensive and deliberative. However, this Committee and our Board have been advised that certain information we possess cannot be shared publicly, since it is protected under privacy laws. We can assure you that Mr. Caron met and exceeded all expectations that we placed on him before we made our recommendation allowing him to return to work. Since that time, we and other members of the Board have continued to support and monitor Mr. Caron relative to his return to work and have identified no concerns relative to his conduct.

As a Committee we are confident that we have fairly balanced the need of the agency for our leadership to be accountable for their conduct with a recognition of the personal sacrifices and commitments that our employees, from the President on down, must make on a daily basis in an extraordinarily stressful workplace. Perhaps more so than any other person in this agency, Mr. Caron has been making those commitments since 1993. We feel, as a human services agency, that this was a thoughtful, humane, and justified approach to the situation on the facts as we came to understand them, and we intend to continue to work closely with Mr. Caron in furtherance of our mutual understanding.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Bownes

Robert Bannon

Charles Wheeler

718844.1