Brookings Health System
Board of Trustees Minutes of Meeting
Monday, August 26, 2026
Board Room, Brookings Hospital

The Brookings Health System Board of Trustees held a meeting at the Brookings Hospital in the Board Room with the following members present: David Meyer, Mary Anne Krogh, Tracy Greene, Lynn Darnall, Shelby Eischens, Don Greiner, and Shawna Hanson.
Ex-officio: Brianna Doran and Lisa Hager

Absent: Jenn Barlund, David Jones

Management Present: Jason Merkley, CEO; Tammy Hillestad, CNO; Melissa Wagner, CFO; and Sheri Wiig, recorder

Call to Order: President Meyer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Invited Guest
Megan Sinner, Director of Ambulance Services, presented a detailed overview of services and notable growth over the years. Brookings Ambulance provides 24/7 ALS emergency services, interfacility transports, regional support, community education, and event coverage. EMS call volume reached a record 3,090 responses in 2025, a 41.5% increase since 2020, with significant growth in both 911 responses and interfacility transports.

The department maintains a five-ambulance fleet and is proactively planning for future vehicle replacements due to extended vehicle delivery timelines. Workforce retention remains a strength, with many long-tenured employees contributing to clinical excellence and mentorship. Patient satisfaction remains high, with more than 90% of respondents rating their care a 9 or 10 out of 10. Sinner emphasized the ambulance service's critical role as the first point of contact for many patients entering Brookings Health System.

Merkley noted that hospital-owned ambulance services are uncommon, making Brookings Health System's direct ownership and operation of the service a unique community asset.

Sinner was thanked for her informational presentation and departed the meeting at 5:32 p.m.

Agenda Approval
A motion was made by Krogh, seconded by Greiner to approve the agenda. All present voted in favor; motion carried.

Consent Agenda Approval
A motion was made by Darnall, seconded by Eischens to approve the following consent agenda items. The motion carried unanimously.

A. June 29, 2026, Board of Trustees meeting minutes
B. August 19, 2026, Medical Executive Committee meeting minutes
C. June and July Financials (total payables were $3,288,251.27 for June and $2,930,523.09 for July)
D. BHS Board of Trustees Bylaws – Annual Review
E. Quality Assessment Performance Improvement Program - Annual Review

Informational Items

Articles of interest included: “Healthcare in the South Dakota Economy”, Dakota Institute; “Rural hospital CEO sees no hope in the RHT funds", Becker's Hospital Review; “A Partnership for Peace of Mind”, Limitless by MMA; “Strengthening Trust within the Community”, Healthcare Executive; and “Closing the Gap, Building Trust Between Leadership and the Front Lines”, Healthcare Executive.

Executive and Board Committee Reports

CEO Report

Merkley reported that the 17th Annual Aiming to Inspire Health Sporting Clays Fundraiser was another successful Foundation event, with 29 teams participating. He also noted that the organization's recent recognition as a Forbes Top Hospital by State for 2026 reflects the team's consistent performance and collective effort.

CFO Report

Wagner reported that CMS is working through its backlog of desk reviews and will be conducting reviews for 2022, 2023, and 2024. She does not anticipate any concerns related to these reviews. Wagner also noted that planning is underway for the 2027 capital and operating budgets.

CNO Report

Hillestad reported that two nursing students recently completed the 10-week Clinical Enrichment Program, a partnership with the South Dakota Board of Nursing. The program was a positive experience for both participants and the organization. She also shared the addition of two experienced providers. Dr. Lawrence Donley will join the Brookings Health System Emergency Department team later this month, and Dr. Greg Gerrish will provide surgical services for Sanford patients twice monthly.

Administrative Committee

Secretary Greene reported that the Administrative Committee met on August 25. Discussion topics included Epic/Workday, the SD Rural Health Transformation Plan, Former North Circle, FARM Program, Northern Plains Health Network, Restorix/Wound Center, Board Education, Brookings Regional Growth Alliance Request, Dacotah Bank Center, Compensation Plan, Benefits Review, and Board Member Reappointments.

Finance Committee

Committee Chair Greiner reported that the Finance Committee met on August 25. The committee reviewed the June and July payables, financial statements, and adjustments and recommended them for board approval. Salaries and wages totaled $2,652,724 in June and $2,635,661 in July. Wagner also provided an overview of net revenue/charges pre and post Epic implementation.

Quality Committee

Committee member Hanson reported that the Quality Committee met on August 25. Invited guest, Erin Nielsen, Dietary Director, presented information on a continuous performance improvement project focusing on improved menus and food quality at The Neighborhoods at Brookview and Hospital. Additional topics included a report on Hospital Outpatient Quality Reporting, Epic Update, 2026 Contracted Patient Services, AHA Stroke Program Recognition/Award, Patient Safety Indicators, and Forbes Recognition.

New Business

Medical Staff Credentialing

Dr. Eischens presented August 2026 medical staff credentialing. A motion was made by Hanson, seconded by Greiner, to approve all credentialing as recommended by the Medical Executive Committee. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Upon motion by Hanson, second by Greene, the meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Greene, Secretary