Brookings Health System
Board of Trustees Minutes of Meeting
Monday, February 23, 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, Jenn Barlund, Shelby Eischens, Don Greiner, Shawna Hanson, and David Jones.

Ex-officio: Brianna Doran, Lisa Hager, and Larry Jensen

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 5:30 p.m.

Invited Guest – Dr. Rebecca Vande Kop, Artificial Intelligence in Health Care/Epic
Dr. Vande Kop was welcomed and introduced. She is the Clinical Vice President of Informatics at Avera and works half time as a Family Physician in Brookings.

Dr. Vande Kop presented information on the adoption of AI in healthcare and new AI tools planned for implementation with the integration of Epic's electronic health record system. AI is best viewed as Augmented Intelligence, a tool to support, rather than replace clinical decision-making. While healthcare has traditionally been slower to adopt AI due to concerns around patient safety, privacy, data quality, trust, liability, cost and provider buy-in, progress is quickly advancing. Current uses at Avera include ambient listening for documentation, computer-assisted coding, virtual sitting for fall and safety monitoring, and Viz.ai for rapid stroke detection.

Dr. Vande Kop outlined upcoming Epic-integrated capabilities like AI-generated patient-message responses, enhanced message prioritization, automated prior-authorization letters, documentation improvement suggestions, and care-plan drafting. Looking ahead, she emphasized how AI may soon advance clinical decision support, early disease detection, remote monitoring, operational prediction tools, and personalized medicine. An AI governance committee has been formed at Avera to oversee ethics, quality, patient safety, etc.

Dr. Vande Kop was thanked for her informative presentation and departed the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

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

Consent Agenda Approval
A motion was made by Jones, seconded by Greiner to approve the following consent agenda items. The motion carried unanimously.
A. January 26, 2026, Board of Trustees meeting minutes
B. January Financials (total payables in January were $3,017,349.77)
C. February 18, 2026, Medical Executive Committee meeting minutes

Informational Items

Articles of interest included: "Disrupt Better", *Chief Executive;* "5 Ways to Build Financial Resilience", *Healthcare Executive*; and "Licensure" *South Dakota Board of Nursing.*

AHA Rural Health Care Leadership Conference: Mary Anne Krogh provided an update on the conference she attended earlier this month. She noted it was well attended and provided a valuable networking opportunity. One session she attended highlighted rural health care demographic challenges, including declining populations and the resulting sustainability concerns for many facilities. Krogh noted Brookings Health System is in a fortunate position compared to many others. She encouraged board members to consider attending future conferences.

Executive and Board Committee Reports

CEO Report

Merkley reported that Epic hardware installation is progressing smoothy, with only minor items remaining. Merit increases will be issued in the first March payroll. He also reminded board members of the upcoming employee appreciation event scheduled for March 20.

CFO Report

Wagner reported on recent progress on Epic Revenue Cycle Readiness, including a partner meeting, completed charge submissions, ongoing checklist work, and preparation to maintain financial stability through go live. Wagner also shared data on Medicare Advantage enrollment in Brookings County which continues to rise, resulting in an almost even split between MA plans and traditional Medicare.

CNO Report

Hillestad reported strong January performance noting that Home Health set a monthly record with 53 admissions, Hospice also reached a record with 544 patient days, and the Obstetric department reached an all-time high of 430 births last calendar year. The Obstetric department also implemented TeamBirth, an initiative to improve communication and safety during childbirth.

Administrative Committee Meeting

President Meyer provided a report; the Administrative Committee met on February 17. Topics of discussion included Workday/Epic, SD Rural Health Transformation Plan, Brookings Health System Medical Plaza, Brookings Health System Old North Circle Infusion/Outreach, SoDak Spurs Funding Request, SD Legislative Session, Investment Authority Meeting and AI Presentation.

Finance Committee

Committee Chair Greiner provided a report; the Finance Committee met on February 17. The committee reviewed and approved the payables, adjustments, and financials for January 2026. Total salaries and wages for January were $2,434,786. An update on the FY25 audit was also provided.

Quality Committee

Committee Chair Barlund provided a report; the Quality Committee met on February 17. Bunny Christie, Infection Preventionist, provided information on survey readiness and emphasized the value of conducting mock surveys in preparation for unannounced visits from the South Dakota Department of Health. Other topics of discussion included Medical Staff Peer Review, 2025 Hospital and The Neighborhoods at Brookview Falls and Medication Errors, and Promoting Interoperability.

New Business

SD Rural Health Transformation Plan

Merkley provided an update on the South Dakota Rural Health Transformation Plan, outlining state priorities and expectations. A director-level brainstorming session will be held to identify creative and sustainable ideas that will align with the initiatives. He noted significant work will be required to access funding. Uncertainty remains about how funds will be distributed across the state.

Medical Staff Credentialing

Dr. Eischens presented the February 2026 medical staff credentialing. A motion was made by Barlund, seconded by Hanson to approve all credentialing as recommended by the Medical Executive Committee.

Adjournment

Upon motion by Hanson, second by Jones, the meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Greene, Secretary