

**VIRGINIA BOARD OF NURSING  
ADVISORY BOARD ON MASSAGE THERAPY  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, September 30, 2026**

**TIME AND PLACE:** The meeting of the Massage Therapy Advisory Board convened at 10:00 a.m. in Board Room 3, Department of Health Professions, Perimeter Center, 9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 201, Henrico, Virginia.

**PRESIDING:** Shawnté Peterson, L.M.T., M.P.H., C.H.E.S., NADA, DAc, Chair

**MEMBER PRESENT:** Annie Lively, L.M.T., Vice Chair  
Michael Tramonte, Administrator  
Tracey Walker, L.M.T.

**STAFF PARTICIPATING:** Claire Morris, L.N.H.A., R.N., Executive Director  
Christina Bargdill, B.S.N., M.H.S., R.N.  
Candis Stoll, Senior Discipline & Licensing Specialist

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING:** Patricia L. Dewey, R.N., Discipline Case Manager  
Candice Merrick, L.M.T., Licensing Specialist-Massage Therapy  
Sandra Freeman, SCHEV, Private Post Secondary Education Director

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATING:** Cindy DiFranco, Principle Advantage  
Angela Bezik, Principle Advantage  
Jennifer Cochran, American Massage Therapy Association-Virginia Chapter  
Ashley Haynes, American Massage Therapy Association-Virginia Chapter  
Jada Thompson, American Massage Therapy Association-National Representative

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM:** Dr. Peterson welcomed attendees and asked Ms. Stoll to perform a roll call of the Massage Therapy Advisory Board Members. With four (4) members present, a quorum was established.

Staff and public attendees were identified.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** No announcements.

During the ordering of the agenda, Ms. Bargdill advised that she will be including new agenda item 7.5. MBLEx Invalidation Report Update.

**OLD BUSINESS:** The minutes from the Advisory Board of Massage Therapy meeting, held on October 16, 2025, were reviewed. There were no edits or corrections made to the minutes. Ms. Lively made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Walker and carried unanimously.

Ms. Bargdill provided an update on the implementation of the Massage Therapy Licensing Database (“MLTD”) for future use by the Virginia Board of Nursing.

Currently, the data sharing agreement is under legal review. Once approved, information technology specialists (“IT”) from FSMTB will work with IT from the Virginia Department of Health Professions to implement MTLTD.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Dr. Peterson opened the meeting for public comment.

Jada Thompson, a national representative for the American Massage Therapy Association (“AMTA”), introduced herself and two members, Jennifer Cochran and Ashley Haynes, attending the meeting from the Virginia AMTA chapter. Ms. Thompson took a few moments to let the Advisory Board know of AMTA’s continued support of massage therapy education and industry in Virginia.

NEW BUSINESS: Dr. Peterson announced that according to the By-laws, elections for both Chair and Vice-Chair must be held. Dr. Peterson is currently serving as Chair, and Ms. Lively is serving as Vice-Chair.

Ms. Lively moved to nominate Dr. Peterson to serve as Chair. However, since Dr. Peterson has served two consecutive terms as Chair, in accordance with the By-laws, she is ineligible for a third term as Chair. Ms. Lively then moved to nominate herself as Chair. Ms. Walker made the motion to nominate Ms. Lively as Chair and was seconded by Dr. Peterson. With no other nominees for Chair, Ms. Lively was elected to Chair by acclamation.

Dr. Peterson moved to nominate herself to serve as Vice-Chair. Ms. Walker made the motion to nominate Dr. Peterson as Vice Chair and was seconded by Ms. Walker. With no other nominees for Vice Chair, Dr. Peterson was elected to Vice Chair by acclamation.

Ms. Bargdill informed the Advisory Board that Board staff were in the process of finalizing the Informal Conferences schedules for January – June 2027. She will reach out to the Advisory Board members at a later date to request that the Advisory Board members provide their availability for each set of dates. For the upcoming Formal Hearings, Ms. Bargdill requested the Advisory Board members keep the dates they have previously provided on hold, and they will receive scheduling confirmation approximately 60 days prior to the proceeding.

The Environmental Scan portion of the meeting elicited an organic discussion with input from all the members of the Advisory Board about massage therapy education and the potential benefits to the massage therapists and the public with standardized educational expectations. The discussion acknowledged the Entry Level Analysis Project (ELAP) which defined knowledge and skill components of entry-level education through structured data collection. The final ELAP report recommended a minimum of 625 hours to prepare graduates for safe and competent practice. The members discussed how the expansion of massage therapy educational curriculum and total program hours could better prepare newly educated and licensed massage therapists for the many types of situations that arise in the industry, including trauma informed care, special population care, client interactions, and enhancing licensees’ self-awareness to maintain boundaries and consider selfcare. Ms. Bargdill stated that the Code of Virginia § 54.1-3029 establishes the current educational

requirement for a license to practice massage therapy in the Commonwealth of Virginia includes the completion of a massage therapy program that requires a minimum of 500 hours of training, among other criteria as detailed in the law. Ms. Morris reviewed the legislative process.

REPORTS:

Ms. Bargdill presented the L.M.T. Licensure Report and noted that the totals only reflect January through September of the current calendar year and that there are still four months left. Total number of licensees has built back up since a slight dip in licensees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Bargdill presented the L.M.T. Discipline Report and noted the increase in Fraud, Non-Patient Care cases. These cases generally involve fraudulent education programs which result in the invalidation of the licensing examination results. As a result, the impacted individuals no longer meet eligibility requirements to hold a license under Code of Virginia § 54.1-3029.

Ms. Bargdill gave the MBLEx Invalidation Report Update. Ms. Bargdill advised the Advisory Board that the Board of Nursing is processing the MBLEx invalidation cases in the same manner as the educational fraud cases in nursing referred to as the Operation Nightingale cases. Investigations are completed and if appropriate, these cases are moved forward to the Board for consideration of summary suspension of the license to quickly remove an ineligible individual from practice. The Board is also accepting via pre-hearing consent order, the voluntary surrender of a license for revocation in lieu of an administrative proceeding. An individual may apply for a new license should they meet eligibility requirements at any point in the future.

Ms. Bargdill attended and submitted a written report for the 2026 FSMTB Massage Board Executive Summit that is attached. She took a moment to highlight key topics from the Summit.

Ms. Stoll will attend the 2026 FSMTB Annual Meeting, serving as a voting delegate for Virginia. A written report will be provided to the Board of Nursing.

INFORMATION ONLY:

The FSMTB 2026 Annual Report is not available yet.

DISCUSSION OF  
FUTURE MEETINGS:

Board staff will poll Advisory Board members in July 2027 for availability to meet in the early fall of 2027.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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Christina Bargdill, B.S.N., M.H.S., R.N.  
Deputy Executive Director