

Board of Massage Therapists – Regular Meeting – December 4, 2025

**Alaska Board of Massage Therapists – December 4, 2025 – Regular Meeting**



**Alaska Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing**

**Time:** December 4, 2025, 9:00 AM Alaska

**Attendance**

**Board Members:**

Annetta Atwell, Licensed Massage Therapist  
Emily Foster, Licensed Massage Therapist  
Michelle Steiner, Licensed Massage Therapist  
Vickie Acree, Licensed Massage Therapist  
Scherri Hoopes, Public Member – Not Present

**DCBPL State of Alaska Staff:**

David Edwards-Smith, Occupational Licensing Examiner III  
Shane Bannarbie, Program Coordinator I  
Reid Bowman, Program Coordinator II

**Investigations Unit:**

Roger Rouse, Investigator  
Jenni Summers, Senior Investigator  
Ryan Bennett, Investigator

**Public Attendance:**

Seth Dinkel, Government Relations, Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards (FSMTB),  
Tyler Eggen, Institutional Authorization Program Coordinator, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary  
Education (ACPE)  
Volker Hruby, Public Stakeholder  
Jacie Sturm, Starla DeFresne, Claudia Buzby, Lacey Rummer, Thomas Petrie, Jada Thompson,  
Jasmen Rand, Corinne Berrey

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**2. Review/Approve Agenda – 9:05 AM**

Chair Atwell requested amendments to the agenda. None were presented.

**A motion made by Vickie Acree, seconded by Emily Foster, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the agenda as written.**

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### **3. Ethics Review/Disclosure – 9:10 AM**

Chair Atwell requested ethics disclosures. No conflicts were reported. Mandatory ethics training will be coordinated by Sarah Chambers.

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### **4. Administrative Business – 10:25 AM**

#### **a. Financial Report – FY26 Quarter 1**

Chair Atwell asked OLE Edwards-Smith for the current license count. David reported 1,098 active licensees.

#### **b. Licensing Fee Schedule Update – 10:50 AM**

Chair Atwell reviewed the updated licensing fee schedule. Vickie Acree suggested the board work to educate licensees about fee increases and the self-funded nature of professional licensing. OLE Edwards-Smith clarified that the license fee schedule being presented today was approved by the board in the June 2024 meeting.

#### **c. Correspondence – Fingerprinting Requirements**

Chair Atwell described the current fingerprinting statute. Vickie Acree asked why fingerprints are required every six years. Jenni Summers explained the cost and necessity of updated fingerprint cards. David Edwards-Smith provided historical context for the six-year fingerprint cycle.

#### **d. New Licensee Welcome Packet Review – 11:33 AM**

The board reviewed the welcome email for new licensees. No changes were proposed.

#### **e. October Meeting Minutes Approval**

A motion made by Emily Foster, seconded by Michelle Steiner, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 3, 2025.

#### **f. Vice Chair Election**

Emily Foster announced her departure from the board. Chair Atwell thanked Emily for her time and dedication with the Board of Massage Therapists.

**A motion made by Emily Foster, seconded by Michelle Steiner, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to ELECT Vickie Acree as Vice Chair of the Board of Massage Therapists.**

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### **5. FSMTB Research / Distance Learning Discussion – 10:15 AM**

The board reviewed FSMTB documentation on state regulations regarding online massage education. Vickie Acree asked why Alaska allows 80% online content. Chair Atwell explained Alaska's unique

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geography and limited school access. Michelle Steiner referenced similar frameworks in nursing. Emily Foster expressed concern about online education in a hands-on profession.

The board agreed to revisit the topic later in the meeting.

### **6. Public Comment**

Open at 9:10 Closed at 10:06

*No public comment was provided.*

### **7. Apprenticeship Program Correspondence – 9:30 AM**

Chair Atwell reviewed a letter from Stacy Collier regarding apprenticeship program guidance. Tyler Eggen joined the meeting to provide an overview of the role of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education in apprenticeship programs. He explained that the Department of Labor defers apprenticeship approval to the federal government, but state boards must approve programs before federal registration.

Tyler suggested the board consider defining “employment” in future apprenticeship regulations to allow flexibility without statutory changes. Emily Foster supported defining compensation in regulation. Vickie Acree raised concerns about sponsor qualifications and clients being charged for student massages. Chair Atwell clarified that schools may accept funds for student massage services, but students cannot be compensated.

Vickie asked if there had been many apprenticeship inquiries. Chair Atwell confirmed several inquiries over the past year. Emily noted that while the concept of apprenticeship is appealing, no mentors have followed through with presenting a complete program for board approval.

Chair Atwell reviewed the current draft of apprenticeship regulations. Vickie suggested establishing a deadline for finalizing the regulations. Chair Atwell proposed late September 2026.

Emily Foster and Vickie Acree emphasized the need for clear standards and accountability for mentors. Emily noted:

“We need some serious definition on what this would look like to keep not only the students accountable, but also the instructors.”

Chair Atwell proposed forming a subcommittee to develop a framework.

**A motion made by Vickie Acree, seconded by Emily Foster, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to ESTABLISH A SUBCOMMITTEE to develop an apprenticeship framework, with Vickie Acree and Michelle Steiner as members.**

The board discussed the COMTA curriculum summary and agreed it could serve as a sufficient standard for apprenticeship review.

**A motion made by Emily Foster, seconded by Michelle Steiner, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to REMOVE the ELAP REFERENCE and ADOPT COMTA STANDARDS as the guiding framework for apprenticeship curriculum.**

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*Off Record at 10:00 On Record at 10:25*

Roll Call: Annetta Atwell, Michelle Steiner, Emily Foster, Vickie Acree

### **8. Investigative Report 10:30**

*Jenni Summers joined at 10:28 AM. Ryan Bennett joined at 10:31 AM.*

Presented by Roger Rouse:

- 14 cases opened; 9 active, 7 near closure
- 3 cases closed recently
- Case 2023-959 involves sexual misconduct; license voluntarily suspended

Jenni Summers added:

“For the record, this case is currently assigned to Senior Investigator Kendra Wardlaw. It appears to be a sexual misconduct case that has a corresponding criminal matter with it as well.”

Vickie Acree asked about the final response to complainants. Roger explained that complainants receive a closing letter and that license actions are reviewed and approved by the board.

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### **9. FSMTB Research / Distance Learning Discussion – 11:01**

The board resumed the review of FSMTB documentation on state regulations regarding online massage education.

Chair Atwell explained Alaska’s allowance of up to 80% online education was originally intended to accommodate remote learners. Emily Foster expressed concern:

“I don’t agree with it personally... I think if you want the education, you make it happen.”

Michelle Steiner noted that other professions, such as nursing, allow significant online education. Vickie Acree questioned the high percentage:

“Why have we not re-looked at that so that people do have to attend and not do 80% online?”

Chair Atwell acknowledged the ambiguity in current regulations and proposed revisiting the definition of “practical application” to clarify what portion of education must be hands-on.

*OLE Edwards-Smith referred to the following regulation for clarification in the discussion. 12 AAC 79.140 (2) “practical application” means a hands-on application of various clinical modalities dedicated to the practice of massage therapy.*

*Reid Bowman joined the meeting at 11:04 AM*

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Chair Atwell asked the board for feedback on the boards review of the COMTA standards.

Emily Foster referenced the COMTA which states on number 14B, it says hours awarded for distance education constitute no more than 49%

The board agreed to revisit the topic in future meetings and consider aligning with COMTA standards.

*Break for Lunch at 11:57 On Record at 1:00*

Roll Call: Annetta Atwell, Michelle Steiner, Emily Foster, Vickie Acree

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### **10. Administrative Order 360 Regulation Review**

Chair Atwell reviewed the Governor’s Administrative Order 360, which mandates a 15% reduction in regulations by December 2026 and 25% by December 2027.

OLE Edwards-Smith presented a regulation table with highlighted items for consideration.

#### **- 12 AAC 79.100(b)(2)(A–C) – Application by Examination**

The board discussed removing outdated transitional language referencing dates before June 30, 2019. Chair Atwell stated that striking these date-based distinctions would simplify the regulation and improve clarity.

#### **Action:**

**The board agreed to remove the date-specific language and consolidate the education requirement to reflect the current standard of 625 hours from an authorized/accredited school.**

Additionally, the reference to ELAP standards in subsection (C) was discussed. Chair Atwell proposed replacing ELAP with “substantially equivalent to current COMTA standards.”

A motion made by Emily Foster, seconded by Michelle Steiner, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to REMOVE the ELAP REFERENCE and ADOPT COMTA STANDARDS as the guiding framework for apprenticeship curriculum.

#### **- 12 AAC 79.100(b)(5)(A) – Safety Education Requirements**

The board reviewed the requirement for bloodborne pathogens and universal precautions training. Chair Atwell recommended removing the outdated language that refers to the four hour requirement on or before June 20 2019. The date-based requirement to a minimum of 4 hours for all applicants.

#### **- 12 AAC 79.120 – Application for Transitional License**

Chair Atwell recommended repealing this entire section, as transitional licenses are no longer issued and the regulation is obsolete.

#### **- 12 AAC 79.210(a)(1) – Continuing Education Requirements**

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The board discussed the ethics CE requirement. Vickie Acree raised the question of whether ethics CE should include training on sexual misconduct.

**The board agreed to retain the ethics CE requirement and table further discussion on expanding the scope of approved ethics training.**

**- 12 AAC 79.210(b) – CPR Course Credit**

No changes were proposed. The board agreed this section is clear and relevant.

**- 12 AAC 79.210(d) – CE Record Retention**

Chair Atwell recommended removing this section, noting that record retention is already covered under 12 AAC 02.960 and 12 AAC 02.965.

**It is the boards consensus to REMOVE 12 AAC 79.210(d) as duplicative of existing record retention regulations.**

**- 12 AAC 79.220 – Audit and Documentation**

The board reviewed this section and determined it is already addressed under general audit procedures in Title 12.

**It is the boards consensus to to REMOVE 12 AAC 79.220 as redundant.**

**- 12 AAC 79.920(a)(c) – Stale Documentation**

Chair Atwell recommended removing the six-month postmark requirement, stating it creates unnecessary administrative burden.

**It is the boards consensus to to REMOVE the SIX-MONTH STALE DOCUMENTATION RULE in 12 AAC 79.920(a) and (c).**

**- 12 AAC 79.930(a)(2) – Notarized Self-Inspection Form**

Chair Atwell proposed removing the notarization requirement, noting that it is outdated and not required by other boards.

**It is the boards consensus to REMOVE the NOTARIZATION REQUIREMENT from 12 AAC 79.930(a)(2).**

**- 12 AAC 79.930(f) – Establishment Closure Notification**

**The board agreed this requirement is necessary and should be retained.**

**- 12 AAC 79.950 – Internet Advertising Requirements**

Chair Atwell raised the question of whether license numbers should be required in online advertisements. The board tabled the discussion for future review.

**Action:**

**Discussion tabled. No changes made.**

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Chair Atwell confirmed that the board’s decisions would be compiled into a formal plan for submission to the Division by February 8, 2026. She reiterated the importance of balancing regulatory efficiency with public protection.

*Program Coordinator Shane Bannarbie:* Through the chair, so I think let's, let's wait to make motions until the board has decided the full, scope of AO360 reduction recommendations, and then once, completed then we'll make a motion to, adopt all the, board, recommendations and vote on that. Dave will be documenting the board's wishes

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### 11. Stakeholder Meeting – 2:00 PM

Chair Atwell opened the floor for public comment regarding regulation reduction.

Public Comments:

- Seth Dinkel (FSMTB): Confirmed submission of apprenticeship frameworks from other states
- Volker Hruby: Advocated for mandatory ethics CEUs and supported regulation reduction. “I support keeping ethics. I am concerned about the availability of ethics courses on specific subjects.”
- Tammy Gifford: Recommended ethics CEUs focused on sexual misconduct prevention. “I do not support removing ethics requirements. Ethics are essential to our profession.”

Chair Atwell emphasized the board’s commitment to maintaining public safety while complying with AO360.

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### 12. MBLEX Apprenticeship Transcript Clarification – 2:56 PM

Chair Atwell asked Seth Dinkel about FSMTB’s requirements for applicants with apprenticeship transcripts. Seth responded:

“FSMTB will defer to state regulations. In the event of an Alaska applicant, FSMTB would contact the State of Alaska.”

### 13. Meeting Adjournment – 2:58 PM

**A motion made by Emily Foster, seconded by Michelle Steiner, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to ADJOURN the meeting at 2:58 PM.**

**A motion made by Emily Foster, seconded by Vickie Acree, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to RECONSIDER THE MOTION OF ADJOURNMENT the meeting for the purpose of PUBLIC Comment.**

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Volker Hruby:

Yes, thank you. Things that came up that would have been nice to public comment on. And one of them being, or that one being the internet advertising requirement. Well, the first question I had was, does internet advertising requirement pertain to social media posts, which are internet advertising? And then I would say that pretty much I never see a license number on any of that, and I really think that that regulation is not needed. The internet advertising, you know, posting your license number on there, it just... it doesn't seem to protect anyone, and I think the board members brought up really valid points on, even if someone does look at that number, what does that do? You could use a fake number, you could use someone else's number, you know, it's also... If you see a post on social media, or you see it on a website, you're already on that entity's you know, site. So you see, if my business posts something, you see that's from my business. So to have it on the... advertisement also seems a little redundant to have to put a license number on social media posts, so that was it. I just wanted to say, I feel that that's probably one that could be cut. Looking at all the regulations that were proposed, I think that would be one that just... it doesn't... I never understood why that one had to be there, as far as protection of the public, or, you know, it doesn't seem to do much, so... thank you.

Chair Atwell: I appreciate that comment, Volker. The board has decided to table that, so I'm not going to reopen that. And if we can close our public comment for the purpose of regulation.

*Stakeholder Meeting Public Comment Closed at 3:02*

**A motion made by Emily Foster, seconded by Michelle Steiner, and passed with unanimous roll call vote; it was RESOLVED to ADJOURN the meeting at 3:03 PM.**

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