

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board

139 6th Street, West Des Moines, IA 50266

April 21, 2020 Minutes

(Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present: Council Member Russ Trimble, Rick Riley, Dan Werner, Mary Bernabe, Matt McNeese, Janet Clarey-Jones, Jo Helling, Jami Schnoebelen, Carol Sipfle, Mari Bunney, Bill Solawetz, Joe Happe, Sue Wright, Kasey Tickel, Doug Loots, Sean Fredregill

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Citizen Participation: None

Call to Order: Sue Wright called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the February 18, 2020 meeting were approved by Joe Happe, seconded by Dan Werner, and approved by the board.

Director's Report:

- Althea shared that Human Services, due to the pandemic, is not using any help from approximately 100 volunteers and operating solely with 10 employees. Full social distancing is being practiced. Carol Bodin and Lindsay Finger are working from home. If a single person tests positive for Covid-19, HS would have to shut down. Staff are taking turns running curbside food distribution. Nonperishable food items are prepacked by family size. Clients call when they arrive, staff puts prepacks and other items/produce from food rescue into a cart. Client takes to car, after which cart is sanitized. Clients visits are being recorded as they call to make pickups, but ID's not being checked. Food pantry service only receiving 10-12 clients/day, a lot less than expected and similar to other DMARC food pantries. This likely due to many other entities, such as schools and churches, now handing out food.
- G Migs restaurant plans to put together box lunches for the needy in lieu of paying landlord's rent. They received a business loan on 4/20 which enables this. It is proposed that HS distribute these meals, which would be about 500 meals during a 2 hour timeframe each Tues/Thurs/Sat. Althea envisions traffic snarls each distribution day with many clients coming during the short timeframe. Mary Bernabe suggested HS give each client a sign with name and no. of family members to display in their car window to expedite this. Jo Helling asked if volunteers would be needed and Althea declined the offer.
- Human Services received \$192,000 of Community Development Block Grant funds for client rental/utility assistance – however, these funds cannot be used for undocumented clients. People will apply for this assistance and checks will go directly to landlords and utility providers. HS will not see these clients. Althea proposed that we use HS General Trust Fund discretionary money for undocumented clients needing assistance, and support them at the same level as those receiving CDBG monies. Doug Loots made a motion to approve use of HS discretionary funds in this manner, Joe Happe seconded, and the board approved the motion.
- Transportation Service – Polk County is now providing transportation service in place of HS, but only 1 client is eligible for this. However, many clients with Medicare or Medicaid have transportation coverage, and Bus Plus (\$3.50 each way) is used by some. HS provision of transportation services ended 4 days early due to many client

appointments being cancelled (Covid), and Althea deemed it an anticlimactic ending to the 18 month process to move transportation services from HS.

- Additional Covid-19 effects on Human Services – HS closed services at its building before other city buildings because of our many clients and the medical clinic needed to be closed since other city buildings were closing. HiSET and ESL classes will not resume until fall, and general Human Services reopening date is uncertain. Althea misses the vibrancy of clients' presence.
- Shawna Rolph (new Client Relations Specialist) is working as a floater learning generally about all services. She is going through training for program outreach.
- Althea created Thank You posters for all staff recently and encouraged staff to show gratitude towards each other in these challenging times. The staff have taken to secretly posting supportive notes to each other on these posters. Staff ability to be creative has been needed and Althea deems this valuable.
- Dan Werner asked about front entry renovation project. Althea says allowed time to get done is 8 weeks but thinks it will be done in 6 weeks.

Advisory Board Chair Report:

- Sue Wright shared that strategic planning process will be postponed until fall; interaction to do this properly needs to happen in person rather than online. No volunteer appreciation activity as is typical will be done, and staff appreciation luncheon normally held in June may not happen.

Old Business:

- Rick Riley asked if worth considering a fundraising approach different than Sunday Supper in Our Town normally held in late September. Althea will visit with the Friends Foundation in the near future to discuss this. Mary Bernabe said Connection Café did an online fundraiser recently and raised \$8,000...maybe similar could be done for Sunday Supper? In a separate effort, Althea is creating an email message to donors now; not sure how much that might raise.

Meeting adjourned at 6:13pm, motion by Mary Bernabe and seconded by Joe Happe.

Respectfully submitted,

William Solawetz