

## West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board

139 6<sup>th</sup> Street, West Des Moines, IA 50266

### October 15, 2019 Minutes

**Members Present:** Council Member Russ Trimble, Rick Riley, Dan Werner, Sue Wright, Matt McNeece, Janet Clary-Jones, Jo Helling, Jami Schnoebelen, Carol Sipfle, Mari Bunney, Bill Solawetz

**Members Absent:** Mary Bernabe, Kasey Tickel

**Staff Present:** Althea Holcomb

**Citizen Participation:** Sierra, a student in WDM community school district, in attendance as part of learning how the city of West Des Moines functions. Her career goal is to become a lawyer.

**Call to Order:** Board Chair Sue Wright called the meeting to order at 5:31pm.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from the September 17, 2019 meeting were approved by Dan Werner, seconded by Matt McNeece, and approved by the board. Corrections to spelling of a few board members' surnames were noted.

#### **Director's Report:**

- The latest monthly version of NIFCAP reports was presented. Board agreed seeing this reporting every 6 months is adequate.
- Althea explained Alice Fuhrmann Estate funds given to WDMHS to meet senior citizen needs such as heating, snow removal, and lawn care. Initial funding to WDMHS was \$250,000. Typically this funding is used to provide \$200 stipend per client per year for energy assistance. Seniors can also receive energy assistance through the federal LiHEAP program (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) by providing tax return or current income information to qualify. LiHEAP provides a moratorium on qualifiers getting heat shut off which can encourage them to postpone paying MidAmerican bills when there are other bills to pay.
- Signups have started for LiHEAP and holiday programs (Thanksgiving, Adopt a Family, Toyland, Santa Station, and COG shopping spree); HS lobby is filling up quickly right after 8 AM opening.
- From the September 2019 Recap of Available Funds report, question raised about withdrawal to pay OneNeck IT Solutions almost \$8,500. Human Services server capability was expanded to accommodate services provided by the medical clinic and child care center.
- New Childcare Coordinator Megan McNeece to start working October 21.
- Transportation Coordinator position job description is completed and Althea will meet with city HR on October 18 and then post. Transition to DART transportation service planned for December 1 if the city council votes to approve transition on November 4; current HS drivers have been notified. Busses will be sold and van will be kept. Larry is working a installing a ramp in the van.
- Food Rescue started October 1 at Mills Civic HyVee. More bread being rescued than expected or needed. Friday food rescue day not ideal as pantry just open a short time after the rescue is made. Food considered still good for distribution for 5 days after the "best by" date on packaging. Many rescue items well received by clients including fresh made pizzas and turkey rolls.
- Human Services association with West Des Moines Leadership Academy – Althea appreciates ideas on how we can use LA's support. LA funding is not a given from year to year. A commercial refrigerator and freezer is proposed for the coming year. Creating a scholarship program with LA funds is still being considered although

there are a lot of questions (administration, sustainability, not all of our ESL and HiSET clients would be eligible if not WDM residents, etc).

- Sunday Supper results were off a bit from recent years. Althea explained that Atlantic Coca Cola Bottling did not support this year (\$5K in past) and a couple sponsors reduced their level of support. Sunday Supper was still regarded as a success overall.
- Mari asked a question about financial planning education. Althea shared that for HS employees there is a city-provided program. For clients, a financial planning program (Michael Bloomberg) may be available when Polk County receives \$300K in funding (\$150K x 2 years). Financial counselors would come in to teach. For Human Services clients requesting financial assistance, they would receive help at first request and then need to attend the financial planning classes before getting assistance a second time.

#### **Advisory Board Chair Report:**

- An Advisory board by-law change being considered for meeting attendance requirements. Currently there is no requirement and Mayor recommended not having one. Althea and Rick will continue talking with Mayor Gaer on this. Recently a board member was asked to leave because of low attendance and another member resigned due to inability to attend regularly.
- With departing board members, would like 4 new board members. Joe Happe has submitted an application; beyond that would like to have 2 males and 1 female join board.
- Sue introduced formulating a strategic plan for Human Services. Board members and staff could work jointly on this and consider what services to add and/or drop and what project the Leadership Academy might adopt. Strategic planning could be done with a half day or more meeting of intensive discussion or by adding 30 minutes to each regular board meeting. Janet suggested drafting a strategic initiative and Carol suggested doing comprehensive review of all HS current activities and how to coordinate with city's overall service plan. Some initial ideas for actions were affordable housing in WDM (city also working on), achieving higher pay for needy residents, and better achieving self sufficiency of clients. Pat Body and Bill Withers were suggested as possible facilitators for strategic planning, with Friends of HS possibly covering the facilitator's cost.
- Board agreed to again provide a family with holiday gifts (Adopt a Family) with Mary Bernabe spearheading.

With all agenda items covered, meeting adjourned at 6:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Solawetz