

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board
139 6th Street, West Des Moines, IA 50266
January 19, 2021 Minutes
(Virtual Meeting via Zoom)

Members Present: Rick Riley, Bill Solawetz, Sue Wright, Kasey Tickel, Jo Helling, Janet Clarey-Jones, Tami Swenson, Dan Werner, Mary Bernabe, Doug Loots, Matt McNeece, Joe Happe, Jami Schnoebelen

Members Absent: Mari Bunney, Sean Fredregill

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Citizen Participation: None

Call to Order: The meeting started at approx. 5:30 by Rick Riley.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the Nov. meeting were approved by Mary Bernabe, seconded by Dan Werner.

Director's Report:

First item - haven't been able to give the winter coats away that were generously donated. Received 200 more coats than last year so have a whole room full of coats for both adults and children. How do we figure out how to give the coats out? Could reach out to social workers at schools or store them for next year. They came very late this year so could store them so we are prepared for next year - very hopeful that people can come in next year to get them!

No set date on when WDMHS will start to open up again. Safety of the staff is the most important thing. If numbers in the community would stay down for an extended period of time, could possibly start to re-open. The only thing clients aren't currently getting an option to shop in the clothing closet, but otherwise all services are still available to clients. The staff has not yet heard when they are eligible to get the vaccine. Some suggestions were given on who to contact about possibly arranging for vaccines for the staff. Althea will check on the suggestions.

The holidays and especially Christmas were still very good at WDMHS. Mindy put together all the Adopt-A-Family information - WDMHS had 227 families and only had 2 to 3 complaints. Everything went well and a lot of kids and families were very happy. Polk County & WDM Community Foundation donated food cards and everyone at Thanksgiving received \$50 food cards which was an increase from \$20. WDMHS also received 156 pork loins and they have been distributed through the food pantry. Friends of the Public Library donated Barnes & Noble gift cards to the children in the families. St. Francis School packed boxes with personal items and then wrapped the boxes and these were given to families without kids so they have something to unwrap at Christmas. This all means a lot to the people that receive them. 400 coats & 200 boots were donated overall. Althea gave a very big thank you to all the groups that donated.

Sue thanked our board and the foundation board for their generous donations of around \$1,700 to adopt 2 families at Christmas and for all those that helped shop - gifts and gift cards were purchased.

Feb. 6th will be the budget hearing/meeting. This meeting will be different from past years. Althea and Rick will go to present the budget to the WDM council members/finance committee. There is a reduction in the overall budget because we no longer do transportation. Another change could possibly be sharing a staff member with the library - this has not yet been approved, however.

WDMHS started printing checks last week for the first time - it has been a process getting it set up, but it has been a long time in the making so they are excited to look more professional.

Rapid Re-housing grant received again - went up about \$10,000 which is good, but it has been hard to do with Covid.

Any updates from the race summit that was done earlier? A couple of workshops have been held with Heather Schott (Principal's Diversity Officer) and now working on a department plan to include equity and inclusion. The board and staff are not very diverse so need to be more intentional about both of those things when forming a plan for more equity and inclusion. Ideas and suggestions would be welcome if anyone has them. One suggestion is to look at outreach to people to make sure everyone in the community is aware of all of the services offered and available. It will be shared with the board if there will be openings on the board in June.

The board would like to help boost staff morale. Mary Bernabe has shared a document of many ideas of ways to support and uplift the staff. We could request Friends money to help pay for some of these things. Althea is very concerned about staff because the staff has experienced deaths in the family, Covid, still trying to serve clients that could be facing eviction, getting power cut off, or having food shortage and they take on the pain of the clients. Some happiness for the staff is much needed. This plan would provide something for everyone in the office each week.

Sue Wright moves that we adopt Mary's proposed schedule to support/encourage the staff - the specifics can be discussed each week. Mary seconds. Rick made the proposal that we request up to \$1,500 from the Friends Foundation to fund these ideas/activities.

A big thanks to Mary for making the plan. Lunch for the staff will be provided in January. Will share names for the chair massages. Chocolates and flowers in February. Will discuss the remaining months at our February meeting.

Tami can offer some coping strategies for staff also. Will email/contact Althea with these.

Mary motions to adjourn & Matt seconds.

Meeting adjourned at 6:41 pm.

6:29 - meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Kasey Tickel