

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board

139 6th Street, West Des Moines, IA 50266

April 20, 2021 Minutes

(Virtual Meeting via Zoom)

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

Members Absent: Doug Loots

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Citizen Participation: None

Call to Order: The meeting started at approx 5:31 by Rick Riley.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the March meeting were approved by Sue Wright, second by Joe Happe.

Director's Report:

First, a big thank you to the board and especially Mary Bernabe for the spring gardening packages delivered to the WDMHS staff!

Rent and utility assistance requests and disbursements have slowed down a lot because the state has offered so much money, but people with mortgages do not qualify so they are helping with that.

Most of the WDMHS staff is now vaccinated and will be moving back to fully in the office. The staff is very excited to be back together. Will not be opening right away to give time for training of volunteers and to get "ducks in a row" to be prepared to re-open. Have about 55 volunteers right now - pre-Covid had 100+ so will try to recruit more. Clothing Closet will soon begin accepting donations again on a smaller basis to start. Clothing Closet will start accepting people again by appointments. Can't ask if clients have been vaccinated but will require masks and temperature taking - if they have a temp above 100.4, they will not be allowed in. The Food Pantry will stay curbside right now. Trying to figure out how to do the Food Rescue program with points so that it is equitable and some cannot take advantage of the points system. Until a new system is created that is more equitable, the curbside program will remain in place to offer the consistency that people have now gotten used to. Food Rescue is now being brought from Hy-Vee on Mills Civic and Aldi on Mills Civic and two Hy-Vee Fresh Markets on the west side of Jordan Creek. Bread items are brought each day from the Hy-Vee Valley West. Food Rescue is picked up on Wednesdays and Fridays. Last year WDMHS rescued 50 tons of food. The curbside Food Pantry has been a big success! Food is not being wasted and it is getting to people that need it. It definitely helps people in WDM know that WDMHS is there to support them and there as a resource for them. Joe Happe suggested some sort of recognition in these stores for their donations.

Garden program and discounted pool passes started April 12th. WDM Human Resources is in need of lifeguards - send anyone looking for a summer job to them. Tami asked if people in the community have leftover garden produce, can it be donated - the answer is yes. The Faith and Grace Garden is one example - they donate leftover produce to WDMHS. The WDMHS Garden Program provides vouchers for people to get vegetable starts and soil for people to plant and grow their own produce. This is being done virtually right now - people can apply and voucher is mailed to them. This will end at the end of May.

Solicitations / donations right now are at \$10,095 which is a good return. WDMHS is going to have an audit. There has been some concern that the Foundation and WDMHS are too co-mingled. The Finance Dept wanted possibly more separation with the Foundation coming under the city of WDM. This would cause the Foundation to lose their 501-3c status. The audit is welcomed and can help with distinguishing the two entities and could lead to helping define the

duties of each more clearly. The audit is a tool to get better and that's what is desired. One suggestion is to increase the number of members on the Friends Board to be able to take over some of the duties so that Althea and Mindy do not have to do some of these jobs that they are doing now. The organization conducting the audit might want to talk to some board members.

The Financial Empowerment Center in Polk County was getting started before the pandemic and now WDMHS is working to get that going again and to get someone to meet with the WDMHS clients. This will help clients learn how to pay bills, pay off debts, make a budget, etc. - a variety of tools and resources are provided in a one-to-one setting and this will be very beneficial to the clients. Unsure if clients will willingly go. If a client comes to WDMHS in need of emergency financial services, they will be helped, but in the future to receive additional help they will need to meet with these workers to learn the money management side of things. We asked if there were ways to offer additional incentives to get clients to sign up for this program and these services.

This past year the staff has had some awful things happen - illnesses and deaths in the family. Carol Boden had just written / applied for a Covid Grant and it was granted. Then had several very serious things happen which has led to this Covid grant being returned due to the fact that we hadn't even started to spend it down. Carol is also going to retire. Carol's assistant, Lindsey, is also resigning due to some family issues. Now there will be no one in the Rapid Rehousing arena. Althea met with Tom Hadden, city manager, today to see gauge where the city was regarding our response to homelessness. So far, WDMHS has put 3 people in housing in West Des Moines. People go to Des Moines or other areas instead of seeking housing in WDM. If WDMHS is going to do something in the area of homelessness, it would seem we should do more in the area of WDM. Tom suggested re-evaluating WDM's role in homelessness - want to be doing something but maybe something different. Carol and Althea are going to talk to people involved with the homeless. They are going to first talk with board member Sue Wright who is very involved in the fight against homelessness. One suggestion is to partner with Anawim on projects. There is no question about the need, the question is about the fit.

Rick asks if we are all comfortable getting back together in person for our next board meeting and everyone does want to do that. We can meet in the multi-purpose room and still follow protocols.

Board Discussion time

Sunday Supper is on the calendar. It is the last Sunday in September - September 26th at Flemings. The price for the food and the menu will be the same. We will be holding this again this year after a year off. The price will be kept the same. There are corporate sponsorships and people will reach out to these organizations again. The event is well supported by the city and community. One benefit is no extra auctions or things going on at the event so people enjoy the pressure-free evening. Mark your calendars! Cocktails and apps at 5, dinner and speakers at 6. The Foundation Board will be meeting on May 25th to proof invitations and to be organizing at that time to prepare for fundraising and sending out save the date cards and invitations.

Thanks to Mari for sharing the vaccination app last meeting - that was shared with many. It was helpful that it was in English and Spanish.

Question - will there be a 4th of July parade in WDM this summer? If so, do we want to participate? We do not have any busses any more but we do have an SUV if we want to do that.

Dan Werner motioned to adjourn and Sue Wright seconded.

6:30 - meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Kasey Tickel