

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board

139 6th Street, West Des Moines, IA 50265

October 19, 2021 Minutes

Members Present: Bill Solawetz, Dan Werner, Jo Helling, Tami Swenson (virtual), Wes Franklin, Janet Clary-Jones, Sheila Nelson, Mike Frandsen, Victor Dutchuk, Jr.

Members Absent: Doug Loots, Joe Happe, Mary Bernabe, Kasey Tickel, Jamie Schnoeblen, Rick Riley

City Council Member Liaison Present: None

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Citizen Participation: None

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Bill Solawetz at 5:32.

Approval of Minutes: Jo Helling moved for approval of the September meeting minutes; Janet Clary-Jones seconded. The motion carried and the minutes from the September meeting were approved.

Wes Franklin asked if there has been an update about the Afghan refugees we discussed at the September meeting. Althea has had no contact.

Dan Werner agreed to act as board secretary for the meeting and to take minutes in Kasey's absence.

Director's Report: Althea spoke briefly about client activity numbers. She indicated that the client numbers are still not back to pre-COVID levels. She expects that to change soon.

Althea reported on the coat giveaways. There were 436 coats distributed to 116 households. Those present for the coat giveaways also used the food pantry, asked about LIHEAP, and signed up for the holiday programs. Althea expects to receive coats from Athene again this year.

In a discussion about LIHEAP, Victor Dutchuk, Jr., expressed concerns about natural gas prices, which are predicted to rise from 45 to 95% this year. If additional funding is needed, Althea indicated we could tap into the trust homeless prevention funds. The board briefly discussed the option of withdrawing funds from the Fuhrmann fund.

Althea reported that the Sunday Supper brought in about \$40,000. Before the pandemic, the amount raised was usually about \$60,000. Sponsorships were down this year. Thank you notes will go out.

Althea reported that progress is being made with the separation of duties between the Friends Foundation and Human Services. The next Foundation meeting will be held on November 9. The P.O. box has been set up and the bank account has been established. The IRS 990 postcard was submitted by the Foundation Treasurer. Althea provided tours to three potential Foundation members and will meet with the Foundation President to plan further.

There was difficulty in holding the three English Language Learner (ELL) Zoom classes at the same time. Human Services only has the ability to hold two classes at one time, so now there is one class at 9:00 and two classes at 10:00. Althea hopes the classes can be held in-person soon.

Human Services submitted the continuation grant for Rapid Rehousing with a request for \$117,238. Human Services has now housed everyone it can with the funds available.

Althea will be presenting at the national HUD D+CDBG webinar on October 26 and will explain how Human Services was able to purchase a new refrigerator and freezer with the funds.

Michael Hardat, a financial counselor from the Polk County Financial Empowerment Center, is now in the Human Services office each Tuesday to provide free financial counseling. Four clients have signed up for services. Gift cards for \$50 were offered as incentives. Michael will cover issues such as budgeting and setting up bank accounts.

Althea is in the process of budgeting for the next fiscal year. Althea asked if any board members had ideas to consider. We discussed the possibility of purchasing additional refrigerators or freezers for food rescue; the Friends Foundation could be another source of the needed funds. There is a low probability that any new employees will be added to the department.

Strategic planning: Bill indicated our strategic planning process will start after January 1. There has not been a strategic plan previously. Althea is checking to see if Donna Gilligan, who agreed to facilitate the process for us before the pandemic, would still be available. Bill pointed out we have a mission statement, but through the strategic planning process, we will develop a vision, values, and a five-year plan. Our board, the Friends Foundation board, and Human Services staff would participate. We would have some ½ day sessions to complete this process. Bill indicated we had a small planning committee regarding this effort before the pandemic, and he invited us to let him know if we would be interested in participating on this committee.

Adopt A Family: Our board typically adopts a local large family for the holiday season. Mary Bernabe is coordinating for us. We should plan to bring our personal donations to the November meeting as we do not meet in December. Althea provided some background about the Adopt A Family program and also Giftland. Typically, there are about 200 to 225 families available for adoption, and 100 participating in Giftland. Dan Werner reported the Friends of the West Des Moines Library have already started to collect books for Giftland. Althea expressed that the West Des Moines community has been very generous in its support of Human Services programs.

Staff appreciation: There are no plans for any efforts at this time.

Adjournment: Victor moved adjournment; Jo seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:28.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Werner as Acting Secretary