

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board

139 6th Street, West Des Moines, IA 50265

February 15, 2022, Minutes

(In-person & virtual meeting via Zoom)

Members Present: Dan Werner, Mary Bernabe, Bill Crane, Jo Helling, Wes Franklin, Sheila Nelson, Janet Clary-Jones (via Zoom), Joe Happe (via Zoom), Bill Solawetz (via Zoom)

Members Absent: Kasey Tickel, Mike Frandsen, Jamie Schnoebelen, Victor Dutchuk, Rick Riley, Tami Swenson

City Council Member Present: Doug Loots

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Citizen Participation: None

Call to Order: Chair Bill Solawetz called the meeting to order at 5:30.

Approval of Minutes: Mary moved approval of the minutes. Bill C. seconded. The minutes were approved.

Director's Report:

Althea explained the length of board member terms. Board members usually serve two three-year terms. However, if someone joins the board as the replacement for a member who has left in the middle of a term, the new board member may serve the rest of that term and then may serve for two more three-year terms.

Althea asked for questions about the Recap of Available Funds and the other documents distributed. The board asked about the entries for the Housing Solutions program, which show as negative entries on the Recap report. Human Services distributes funds for housing each month and then is reimbursed by the Iowa Finance Authority after submitting a monthly report. Althea reminded us that Human Services will no longer participate in Rapid Rehousing after this year. The staff person who assisted with Rapid Rehousing has retired, and the grant was reduced by 40% this year to approximately \$68,000. Constituents will have other options to receive help with housing costs.

Althea explained that CBDG is another HUD program. The entries on the Recap document are similar to those for Housing Solutions. The current CDBG CV (covid related funding) must be spent by 2023. More than likely, we will then return to pre-pandemic levels of CDBG funding which is approximately \$18,000.

Althea had distributed a map to the board members showing where the Human Services constituents currently live. The board appreciated the report and noted that many of the constituents live far from the Valley Junction office location, and may struggle with transportation.

Althea indicated February was a quiet month for Human Services after the holiday activity.

Althea expressed concern about increasing financial pressures on the Human Services constituents. Energy bills are up, rents are up 14 % (with an average rent now at \$1,017), and SNAP benefits will soon be reduced to pre-pandemic levels.

Althea and staff met with the Friends Foundation Event Committee to lay out the details of Sunday Supper. The full Foundation Board meeting will be held on February 23. The Foundation balance is currently at roughly \$250,000. The Foundation Board currently has eight members and would like one more member, preferably an attorney. HS board members are encouraged to submit names of candidates to Althea to pass along to the Foundation Board.

Bill Solawetz attended the city budget meeting with Althea on February 5. The budget is \$1,013,496, which is up about \$36,000. Much of the increase will pay for employee insurance costs.

The industrial refrigerator and freezer are on order, but have not arrived yet.

Human Services provides a survey to Adopt A Family sponsors each year to gauge their satisfaction with the program. The survey results were very positive about the program and Mindy's responsiveness. One area of concern involved families who do not complete wish lists before being assigned to a sponsor. Going forward, families will not be matched with a sponsor until a gift list is completed. Families who do not complete a gift list can still participate in the other holiday program, Giftland.

Althea reported that West Des Moines EMS and police have approached her about providing emergency supplies to families in need after a fire, crime, or health emergency.

Althea also mentioned that the Lenten service project at St. Francis will involve spring cleaning baskets.

Board members noted the Director's Report mentioned the Ashworth Baptist Church and its childcare center. As the church is close to an area where many of the Human Services constituents live, there could be some consideration of additional services offered there in the future.

Recruitment

Bill S. asked the board members to think about potential board members whose terms would begin in July. Dan, Rick, and Janet will all be rolling off the Board this summer. The board should be diverse. Doug indicated the city's DEI contact could provide information about key members of cultural groups who could be approached about serving.

Strategic Planning

Althea has not received a response from the individual who was going to facilitate our weekend strategic planning sessions. After some discussion, the board recommended to Althea that she identify another facilitator. Because of that, the meeting planned for February 26 will be rescheduled for a later date.

Althea is planning to retire in a few years. She wants the strategic plan to be completed by then so the progress made by Human Services can continue after her departure.

Other Issues

Althea reminded everyone that the March board meeting will be a week later than usual because of spring break.

Chairman Bill S. called for a motion to adjourn. Mary moved to adjourn the meeting. Wes seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 6:23.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Werner

Acting Secretary