

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board
139 6th Street, West Des Moines, IA 50266
Sep. 20, 2022 Minutes

Members Present: Greg Nichols, Kasey Tickel, Karen Smith, DeAnn Howard, Sheila Nelson, Jo Helling, Mary Bernabe, Victor Dutchuk,, Eric Tabor, Mike Frandsen, Joe Happe, Bill Crane, Clarissa D’Souza

Members Absent: Wes Franklin, Bill Solawetz

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Consultant Present: Teva Dawson

Citizen Participation: None

Call to Order: The meeting started at approx 5:30 by Joe Happe. Each member introduced him/herself.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the minutes by Victor. Second by DeAnn. Minutes approved.

Conversation with Teva Dawson:

Althea introduced Teva to the new members of the Board. She is the consultant for our strategic planning process. She has been in the DM area for the past 25 years. She is excited to facilitate the next steps for WDMHS. The report found that the West Des Moines Human Services Dept is very well respected - Althea by name, other staff very well thought of. Other communities look to WDM as a model. The major recommendation is to cast a wider net and to try to expand offerings or awareness of all that is offered. We will be moving into the next phase to align with the budget process.

Joe Happe asks the question - what will this process / next phase look like? How specific will the recommendations be? There will be specific recommendations but she won’t necessarily outline a pathway. It will be more of a timeline of to dos.

Eric Tabor mentions that there is a lot in the strategic plan about doing more, and will there be any recommendations about **how** to do more? Teva answers that the Foundation wants to be accessed more and be given specific projects to work on. The volunteer outreach program can look at how to recruit more. There could be ideas about adding staff or instead shifting hours when WDMHS is open. One thing that Teva heard from the City Council is that an increase in budget request is much easier if there is also private money teaming up with partners present. There will not be a specific budget amount along each recommendation.

Althea said that they are looking at flexing schedules to be able to be open one night a week or on a weekend so that those working can have better access. To make this happen, we would also need to increase volunteers. This schedule might work better for recruiting volunteers that work during the day.

Althea has been interviewing for the position of Communications Coordinator to help with marketing and for spreading the word about the need for volunteers and the offerings available. Teva said that the marketing person should also be able to communicate with policy makers since they have such an impact in decision making that affect people with limited resources.

Althea goes to all of the City Council meetings to have a presence. She does provide our monthly minutes to the City Council.

Greg Nichols asks who actually receives / approves the Strategic Plan. The WDMHS Board will approve the plan. Joe said that he would like to include the staff on the conversation. Greg shares that the many different constituencies will all want to know how it impacts them. DeAnn offers that we should prioritize the recommendations because we can't implement it all at once.

Althea shares that we have 81 countries represented in our clients. That is a lot to know about culture, language, experience, background. We just started the ELL classes again in person a week ago and it is good to have that happening again. A lot of different cultures are represented.

Teva recommends that different agencies try to share knowledge and to try to re-create networks that were lost during Covid. She said that with the retirement of Althea coming up, we want to be informed and share information with City Council and other constituencies.

Victor asks what sort of role this board will have in selecting a replacement once Althea retires. Althea shares that the board will definitely have a role. Althea's first interview was with the board, along with the other two candidates. Victor recommends having as much overlap as possible before Althea officially retires (July 2024). Althea is training a staff person on day-to-day things so someone is aware of all of the responsibilities / how-tos.

Karen Smith asks how to manage the other non-profits or service agencies to ensure there is no duplication of what is offered. Teva shares that they found no duplication of services to the extent that WDMHS offers. Could we partner with other communities or partners possibly to make sure we reach all those that need it?

Teva will still be available by email / phone if there are other questions. She plans to have the Strategic Plan first draft to Althea in two weeks.

Director's Report

School supply distribution went very well and so great to have kids back in person. In August, 376 kids walked out with a backpack and supplies!

ELL classes started up again with 52 students signed up. We are providing bus transportation which has been a challenge to explain to people that don't speak English which bus to take home. Althea found a childcare coordinator on Tuesdays / Thursdays so that parents can take classes while their children are cared for.

The Fill The Jail personal care drive at the WDM police station was a success!

Audit for the Rapid Rehousing Program was completed. Laura Abbott was full of praise for how that worked. We will not be doing Rapid Rehousing after December, so it was nice to end the program with nothing to fix.

93 applicants applied for the Communications Coordinator position. That number was narrowed down by a point system and we held 13 interviews over two days. We had some fabulous candidates and it will be a difficult decision of who the job is offered to.

Our winter coat distribution is Oct. 20th and 21st. Coats are donated by Athene every year. We have been storing them over the past couple of years and the clothing closet has been collecting gently used coats. Looking forward to distributing 450 or so coats this year on the Friday and Saturday event.

Prairie Meadows gave us \$20,000 for emergency financial assistance.

Food Bank conversation - We are a distribution point for DMARC Food Pantry. Because of this we are not a partner with the Food Bank of Iowa - DMARC is. We are not a 501c3. There are 14 food pantry locations across the metro and four mobile units. DMARC serves about 27% of all the numbers that the Food Bank of Iowa has in 55 counties. The Food Bank of Iowa, as a partner with Feeding America, can dictate the rules about how clients are served. They are saying that anyone that comes to the food pantry must be served. The rule had been that a client could only receive a 3-day food supply every 30 days. This new requirement could make it so that people that have food insecurity might not be able to be served / could experience a food shortage if those in need go to multiple food pantries. DMARC has tried to tell the Food Bank of Iowa that this is not a good idea. They are limiting it to one visit per pantry but a client could visit all 14 pantries. Can we track it to see how many people take advantage of it? The agreement has to be signed by October 1st. This is happening mid-budget. We do have a foundation and an anonymous donor to help pay for this currently.

The suggestion was made to asterisk anything on the client activity reports if there is anything unusual and Althea says that she can do that. A lot of clients have already been asking for rent help. There is a concern about heat costs throughout the winter.

Alice Fuhrman Funding Approval

Alice Fuhrman was an elderly woman who lived in Ft. Dodge. She had no living relatives. In her will, she specified that she wanted her dollars to go to an organization that helps seniors stay in their homes. It's a restricted fund and we use it specifically as a subsidy for heat for WDM clients that are age 60 and over. WDMHS has continually tried to spend this down. Two years ago, it was \$250 that was given to seniors to use toward heat costs. Last year, the board voted to increase that to \$300. This year we have 148 people eligible at \$300 which amounts to \$44, 400. We would need a budget amendment to add that amount in, and Althea asks if we want to continue the \$300? Joe suggests spending this restricted money down and when that is all spent, we could fundraise for the Fuhrman Fund to keep it going in honor of her. Mary moves to approve that \$300. Mike seconds. The motion passes. Victor moves that we keep it at \$300 for the remainder of the fund. Mary seconds. The motion passes.

Other notes

The Sunday Supper is this Sunday. We have 109 people that have bought tickets. We have room for 150 so tickets are still available. The Foundation is managing this event. We are behind this year on the amount raised. Part of this is because of the separation of duties now between the Foundation and the WDMHS Staff. The Foundation is all volunteers and that is hard - this year has been a learning year. In August, the Foundation hired Mindy in a consulting capacity for help in the future. The mayor and City Council will be at the Sunday Supper and so it would be good to engage with these constituents at the Sunday Supper.

Mary shares that the Board adopts a family during the holiday season. Mary would like to turn it over to someone new that will be on the Board to help walk them through it. She explains the process. Karen Smith volunteered to help Mary and take that over.

Mary wants Althea to know that we appreciate her non-profit background and the experience she brings to this position and her fundraising background. The Board agrees!

Mary motions to adjourn. Eric seconds. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 6:48.

Respectfully submitted,

Kasey Tickle