

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board Meeting

139 6th Street West Des Moines, IA 50266

May 16, 2023 Minutes

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

Members Absent: Bill Crane, Wes Franklin

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Citizen Participation: MJ, citizen of West Des Moines and Kent Schrost, citizen of West Des Moines

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order @ 5:30 pm by Joe Happe

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes by Deann Howard, with correction that Victor Dutchuk and Eric Tabor were present at the April meeting, seconded by Mary Bernabe. Minutes approved with correction/amendment.

Citizen Comments: Kent shares that he is attending to learn more about what the WDMHS board does and he is possibly interested in getting more involved with WDMHS and/or the board.

Marketing and Communications Materials: Katie Ross would like to have pictures of the WDMHS Board on the website and would like pictures from board members. Victor asks if Katie could be at the July meeting and Katie could take pictures of the members then so that the new board members could all get their picture taken. That could work, or board members can submit their own personal picture to her.

Director's Report: Comparing this April to April 2022, WDMHS has served more than 100 additional households in the Food Pantry. WDMHS has more than doubled new clients. The need is great in the community.

The question is asked - what does this increased need do financially to the Food Pantry? The Food Pantry is using restricted food pantry financial donations to get dairy products and eggs. DMARC provides the food staples so the Food Pantry is stocked right now.

Financially, WDMHS does have money. They just received a grant for \$8800 to help with the ELL program. The grant was written at the end of January and the money was just received. But Althea would like to make sure that finances are continually monitored because of the increase of need.

There was a big bump in cash donations in February. This is because during this month the Foundation reimbursed the WDMHS Trust for covering recreation fees for children.

Althea has asked the Food Pantry to track repeat households to see the impact that the Food Bank of Iowa new policy has had on the Food Pantry. The computer system connects all the DMARC food pantries so repeat users can track visits and some households visit multiple food pantries on the same day. Sheila asks if the same food pantries are being used / if it is being tracked to see which food pantries are most used / accessed.

In April 410 households were served. Greg asks if the upward trend is the same for the food rescue program? Right now, retailers are holding on one additional day to food to still try to sell it. Larry says that we are rescuing more food than we did last year. WDMHS does not formally keep track of how many people use this. Generally 50-60 people use/access the outside Anytime Food Program daily. Food is distributed beginning at 8:30 am and most of the inventory is taken by around 9-9:15 am.

Greg asks the question - with Larry and other staff taking vacation and with expanded hours, is there a big volunteer need? On Saturdays which is a new time for WDMHS to be open, 4-5 families so far have come. For the new extended hours, there are no volunteers for the Clothing Closet. Greg, a client, is there every morning to help set out the food. Volunteers are most needed for the new extended hours. It takes time for the community to know and trust the new hours they can come to receive services.

Gift Card Discussion: WDMHS was approached by Leslie Montgomery/Finance regarding gift card donations. During the Pandemic and following, the number of gift cards donated greatly increased. In early May, Althea was asked to take the gift cards to the finance department for an audit. The finance department is concerned that the gift cards should be part of the annual audit. Also, there is concern by some that gift cards could be used to purchase items such as alcohol, tobacco, etc. Because of these concerns, WDMHS will no longer be accepting gift cards. They can still receive financial donations that can be used to provide food vouchers to clients. The voucher can be printed with what is or isn't allowed. Jo asked what will happen to the gift cards that have already been received. They will all be handed out by Dec. 31st. No new gift cards will be accepted from this point forward.

Over the past ten years, almost \$150,000 has been donated in gift cards. Polk County donates gift cards at Thanksgiving. The question is posed - could gift cards be given to the Friends Foundation, since that is a private entity? If the gift cards are given to the Foundation who in turn give them to Althea to distribute. Althea will ask if this is a possibility. The restriction on the vouchers is if they are vouchers at Hy-Vee, they will have a use-by date and are only valid at one Hy-Vee store.

Sunday Supper: Joe is working on identifying more businesses to solicit / to get involved with the Sunday Supper. Joe talked to Megan Omann about developing something for businesses that donate but don't buy a table or go to the event. She is open to this idea. The cost this year at Fleming's will double. There is a Foundation meeting on May 17th to decide if they want to keep it at Fleming's. There is a possibility of having it at Glen Oaks. The Foundation will discuss at their meeting.

On Monday, May 22nd, at 5:00 pm at Joe's house, there will be a discussion of who is currently on the donor list and who has contacts at various businesses that would be willing to reach out. The group will do legwork to update the donor list and update contacts.

Board Elections and Board Member Update:

Discussion of nominations for Board Chair-Elect and Secretary. Althea suggests having a succession plan. Should it go from secretary to vice chair/chair elect to chair? Then each year just fill the secretary position? Or should it just be elections each year for each open position? Could you ask the secretary to commit for 2 years? After discussion, the consensus is to keep the nomination process as is.

Karen Smith has agreed to be nominated as the chair-elect. Eric Tabor has agreed to be nominated as the secretary. Victor is the current chair-elect and will serve as the Chair next year. Victor asks if there are any additional nominations. There are none. The board will vote next month.

Althea currently has 4 people interested in becoming board members: Betsy Happe, Brent Clark, Taylor Ann McDonald and Dan Crew. We are still one short. These applications will go to Russ Trimble and he will say yay or nay. The next city council meeting is June 5th and Althea would like to have all of the nominees submitted before that meeting.

Recognition of Mary Bernabe:

Mary has been on the board since 2015 and she has done a huge amount of work for the WDMHS Board. She did the work to create the Friends Foundation, developed the Heart Challenge, has been in charge of Sunday Supper, and so much more. She has helped the organization grow and thrive and become the great organization it is today! She is a can-do person and will always meet any challenge! Well-deserved applause for Mary and a certificate and card for Mary.

Board Comments:

Question by Karen - can t-shirts / t-shirt bags be given to the refugee groups?

Additional thanks given to Mary by board members.

Mary shares that she is thrilled to have been on the board for 8 years and that WDMHS is so lucky to have Althea leading the way.

Motion to adjourn by Mary, second by Mike. Meeting adjourned at 6:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kasey Tickel