

West Des Moines Human Services Advisory Board
139 6th Street, West Des Moines, IA 50266

Sep 15, 2020 Minutes

(Virtual Meeting via Zoom)

Members Present: Council Member Russ Trimble, Rick Riley, Mary Bernabe, Matt McNeece, Mari Bunney, Bill Solawetz, Joe Happe, Sue Wright, Kasey Tickel, Jo Helling, Janet Clarey-Jones, Tami Swenson, Doug Loots, Sean Fredregill, Dan Werner

Members Absent: Jami Schnoebelen

Staff Present: Althea Holcomb

Citizen Participation: None

Call to Order: After a brief delay due to technology issues, the meeting started at approx 5:50.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the July 21, 2020 meeting were approved.

Director's Report:

Food pantry is different - one stop shop. The bread & produce that is put out every morning for anyone that wants to come is very busy. 56 people were served in the first 30 minutes after items were put out. This is food that is rescued from Hy-Vee.

Clothing closet was opened on July 20, 2020 by appointment only. Working out well - not overly busy - temps, masks & hand sanitizer used. No one has been turned away because of symptoms. Urbandale opened up their own clothing closet - they prefer we don't help their residents now since they are able to serve. Goodwill closed their donation doors & so people have been bringing in a lot of stuff so now we have moved to donations by appt only. That has helped some but still receiving a lot. Some people still pull up and want to donate - angers some.

Spent all of Covid Cares money that was budgeted for rent & utilities. \$38,000 was set aside for admin resources / purposes / costs. Still have CDBG entitlement that came after July 1. \$231,000 received this year and that can be used to help people stay in their homes.

CDC placed a moratorium on evictions but the realtor's association is contesting that. Doesn't make that rent go away so basically prolonging the eviction process. Iowa Legal Aid is trying to work with landlords to negotiate. They have prevented about 80 households from being evicted.

Backpack distribution was about ½ the number as last year. 228 kids were provided with backpacks. Thanks to Sue & numerous other volunteers - packed ahead of time & went by grade & gender to ensure that every child that was signed up had the things on their school list. Put them on the south of the parking lot & had School Resource Officers helping distribute. DMU students came to help distribute via info provided by Tami Swenson. Thanks to those volunteers, also!

Sunday Supper way down - just under \$14,000 has been pledged/raised. No deadline to donate but typically the dinner is the end of September. Normally we collect between \$50-60,000. Everyone is encouraged to keep reaching out to possible donors.

Mary shared that various organizations are helping provide food & resources to those in need - connecting via a FB group so that might be contributing to why our numbers served are down.

Working on becoming more professional as an organization in the area of check writing - currently handwriting checks for rent or to waterworks or utilities because typically it is a last minute request. But we are getting a new software program that will cut the checks to now look more professional.

WDMHS is working from home on a weekly rotating basis. Really missing the human interactions between staff & clients. Making due for now.

No questions for Althea from her report.

Joe Happe asked about the staff and how they are doing w/ the pandemic. The staff is very resilient & they meet regularly to try to adapt. If something isn't working, they can re-do, nothing carved in stone. Very committed people and see that their work is very vital to low-income people.

WDMHS is seeing less clients, but down 66% in volunteers, so staff is picking up things that volunteers used to do like accepting donations or staffing places that used to be run by volunteers.

WDM Friends of the Library is offering a kiosk in Valley Junction for people.

Althea is meeting with the WDM Friends Foundation board to come up with other fundraising ideas or ways to cover the shortfall from Sunday Supper. Rick suggested a fundraiser - a 10 part series on Facebook where each staff member talks about themselves & what they do at WDMHS to let people know what all the organization does in the community.

Christina at WaterWorks was contacted about contributions through the water bill. There is a check off on the water bill for monthly donations. \$1646.22 has been donated through August. Have to make a phone call to get that contribution. Trying to get it so it's just a check off. Want to get an insert in the bill to get people's attention. Could send an email to everyone that we have contacts for to solicit donations & give them the number to call to set that up & how much you want added to your bill.

Is there an email database of anyone that has donated once - could an email be sent to ask those that have donated in the past in any way to WDMHS. Could this be done?

Would we be willing to do a press release for companies willing to do a bigger donation? Contact people that we know at various companies to ask for donations still for Sunday Supper.

Meeting adjourned at 6:31 pm, motion by Mary Bernabe and seconded by Matt McNeece.

Respectfully submitted,

Kasey Tickel