



**AITKIN COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
January 28, 2020**

Attendance

The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners met this 28th day of January, 2020, at 9:01 a.m. as the Aitkin County Health & Human Services Board, with the following members present: Commissioners Anne Marcotte, J. Mark Wedel, Don Niemi, Laurie Westerlund, and Bill Pratt. Others present included: County Administrator Jessica Seibert, Cynthia Bennett ACH&HS Director, Accounting Supervisor Carli Goble, Kim Larson Adult Social Services Supervisor, Jessi Goble Financial Assistance Supervisor, Erin Melz Public Health Supervisor, Julie Herbst Child Support Supervisor, Assistant to the County Administrator Lynn Cox, H&HS Executive Assistant Shawn Speed, and Guests: Jennifer Eisenbart, Aitkin Independent Age.

Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members voting yes to approve the January 28, 2020 Health & Human Services Board agenda.

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Marcotte and carried, all members voting yes to approve the December 17, 2019 Health and Human Services Board minutes.

Bills

Carli noted that was nothing out of the ordinary for the monthly bills.

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the bills.

Health & Human Services Director Report, Cynthia Bennett, ACH&HS Director

Directors Update

Cynthia began by introducing Julie Herbst, the new Child Support Supervisor who came to us from Crow Wing County with 14 years of experience.

Next Cynthia went on to talk about MACSSA's legislative priorities. There are 19 position statements in nine categories, which are behavioral health, case management, child well-being, healthcare, housing and transportation, long-term services and supports, modernization, race equality, and self-sufficiency. Of those she felt there were three that are paramount to our attention and two of those are in alignment with AMC's priorities.

The first was the SUDS reform enacted within the last year which has changed who can conduct comprehensive assessments as well as manage and coordinate the services. This left county employees out of the loop because they no longer met the criteria to conduct these. It also left most of the other CD assessors out of the loop too. This has created a gap in the workforce and we don't have enough people to provide this critical service. The proposal in the position statement is that the Commissioner of DHS shall, in consultation with county agencies, identify specific training, education, and experience requirements that would qualify individuals employed by counties who are not alcohol and drug counselors to perform comprehensive

assessments and treatment coordination.

She went on to say they are proposing that the training be made available only to counties and not to for-profit outside providers this would allow counties have a training track to meet the need of the individuals in their communities.

The next area was the procurement process. The way the state processes procurement doesn't protect county-based purchasing. County-based purchasing should not be included in that process. Counties spent hours upon hours looking at all of the plans and determining community needs and then giving feedback to DHS, upon which they seem to randomly pick whomever they want. It feels like they are not taking county feedback and opinions into consideration.

Commissioner Marcotte inquired as to where we are now with this process?

Cynthia responded that DHS has delayed the process a year and we have not been given any direction as to how they were going to move forward from that and there is a statute that mandates the procurement process, but the interpretation of that and how it is applied is being questioned.

The last area is the modernization, which relates to the METS system modernization. The position states that DHS should provide counties with a system that works, that is reliable, that is upgraded, and kept modernized so that we can actually use the system for our benefit without the frustration that comes with using the current system.

Commissioner Pratt asked whether they were including the counties in the discussion on that.

Cynthia said yes, there is a MACSSA workgroup that includes DHS and others on it.

Commissioner Marcotte inquired in to the monies that DHS claims we owe them due to their formula mistakes.

Carli Goble commented that we have gotten a little guidance on the cash assistance overpayments that were collected by the counties and state for clients who should not have had a collectable claim. We do not have a timeline for when they need to be looked at and completed however. We have received a little information about the SUDS miscalculation. Aitkin County owed around \$22,700 and they were going to apply that to our December bill, but we have not seen that yet. Last Board meeting, however, we were given support to notify DHS that we would not be paying these invoices.

Commissioner Niemi inquired as to whether that was what Governor Walz referred to when he said the counties should be held harmless.

Cynthia responded that yes and this is why it is important that it is an AMC legislative priority for HHS. Often times what happens, in HHS, is something comes up as a crisis we learn about it, but it doesn't get resolved, then another issue comes up and we learn all about it and it doesn't get resolved. As a legislative priority it remains visible so it doesn't get forgotten.

Commissioner Pratt commented that basically DHS is saying they made a mistake and the counties have to take care of it instead of the state taking care of it.

Cynthia agreed with that statement.

Commissioner Wedel commented that the Governor says we don't have to.

Cynthia went on to speak about the modernization of the HHS building and that she would cover

more on this after Carli's fiscal report.

Approval of Re-Appointment for Members to the Health & Human Services Advisory Committee

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members voting yes to approve the re-appointment of Carole Holten, McGregor as a representative for Commissioner District 4.

Approval of Contracts/Agreements/Policies

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Wedel and carried, all members voting yes to approve the WIC Agreement with Bethesda Lutheran Church of Malmo for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Medical Consulting Services Agreement with Dr. Donald Hughes for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Semi-Independent Living Services (SILS) Agreement with Woodview Support Services/Oakridge Homes, Inc. for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Guardianship/Conservator Services Agreement with Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Service Agreement with Phil Tange, LICSW for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Wedel and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Detoxification Services Agreement with Northland Counseling Center, Inc. for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Semi-Independent Living Services (SILS) Agreement with Access North Center for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Employment Services Agreement with Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Child Support Program Interagency Cooperative Agreement with The State of Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Support Division for January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021.

2019 Fiscal Report, Carli Goble, Accounting Supervisor

Carli started by stating that she has been in contact with the Auditor's Office and believes that we have a good handle on finalizing 2019 expenditures and revenues and so she went on to present her presentation on those numbers, which was included in the packet the Board members received prior to the meeting.

During her presentation Carli mentioned that we have tentatively ended the year well with fewer than expected expenditures and more than expected revenues. HHS will not reduce the fund balance as anticipated and per our county policy on fund balance there may be opportunities to reserve some of those additional dollars for building improvements. Currently \$90,000 set aside for capital improvement projects for 2020 and future years.

The plan is to create a capital improvement project plan to assure that our building is kept maintained and functional.

Jessica Seibert added that the process will include coming before the board as we work through the budget process, capital plan development and reserve requests. Upon completion of the audit process Cynthia, Jessica, and Kirk will sit down and talk about plans for using the fund balance for improvements and bring recommendations to the board at that time. There will be several opportunities to watch how the use of these funds get planned for.

Commissioner Pratt asked how much the numbers could change after the audit process is completed.

Carli commented that they shouldn't change much.

Commissioner Marcotte commented that she would hope we take the opportunity, after space is freed up by other departments moving out of HHS and back into the Courthouse and Government Center, to really look at what we need for the future.

Cynthia added that she is very excited about the opportunity to look at this from a larger scope and take into account the current needs as well as the future needs of our consumers. Cynthia discussed the need for a comprehensive approach and credits the addition of Jim Bright with helping to alleviate some of the stresses that goes along with this type of project planning. We have a resource we have not had prior and I am excited about this. .

Commissioner Pratt hoped that during the remodel we take into consideration energy upgrades and other items that are now available to make it more user and client friendly.

Cynthia assured him that all of that will be taken into account.

Committee Reports

HHS Advisory Committee Update

Commissioner Wedel and Westerlund gave brief review of the committee meeting and its minutes are attached.

Commissioner Wedel added that he is very impressed with the direction the committee is taking.

CARE Board

Commissioner Westerlund gave an update on their last meeting. Cindy Chuhanic was added as a member of the Board. There was a discussion on the budget as things are going to be changing and there are a couple of people interested in working full-time for CARE.

Commissioner Marcotte added that she hopes the board can take action sooner on funding for CARE and ANGELS. Whether both are needed or what needs to be done to best serve the citizens the best.

Commissioner Niemi agreed with her.

Lakes and Pines Update

Commissioner Niemi gave an update on their last meeting on January 27th. Nicole Bosner, housing rehabilitation public facilities project director, talked about the rehabbing of homes, connected properties in town. The big items right now are roofs and sewer issues. The weatherization program requires people to remain in their homes for 15 years for the cost to be forgiven. If it is a mobile home on your own property it is also 15 years, but if it is in a mobile home park the requirement is only 10 years.

He added that they had approved the contract between them and the county.

He went on to add that utility companies are required to do conservation measures in the areas that they serve, but don't have the capabilities to do so, so they use Lakes and Pines to do the weatherization program and then reimburse them for it.

Commissioner Wedel inquired whether or not Lakes and Pines funds steam removal of ice dams form roofs.

Commissioner Niemi commented that he was unsure of that, but would inquire into it and let him know.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Next Meeting – February 25, 2020