



**AITKIN
COUNTY**
EST 1857
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
April 28, 2020

Attendance

The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners met this 28th day of April, 2020, at 9:05 a.m. as the Aitkin County Health & Human Services Board, with the following members present: Commissioners J. Mark Wedel, Don Niemi, and Laurie Westerlund. Commissioners Bill Pratt and Anne Marcotte attended remotely via video and phone. Others present included: H&HS Director Cynthia Bennett, County Administrator Jessica Seibert, Assistant to the County Administrator Angie Sahr, H&HS Accounting Supervisor Carli Goble, Public Health Supervisor Erin Melz, who attended via video conference, and Jennifer Eisenbart, Aitkin Independent Age, who attended via phone.

Agenda

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

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the March 24, 2020 Health and Human Services Board minutes.

Bills

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

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

Directors Update

Cynthia began by stating the response within HHS to COVID-19 has been very intense.

She cited some things that have happened since the response began-

- There have been 50 waivers approved by DHS to adjust program regulations to better serve the consumers.
- There have been expansions to the use of telephones, telehealth, distance contacts to comply with social distancing and our communities have adapted well to church on the radio, not shaking hands, and following directional arrows in grocery stores.
- We have used out-of-the-box thinking to find adaptations to make things work.
- COVID-19 has still not reached its peak.
- We continue to make adjustments and adapt to be able to provide the services our community's needs.

The legislative docket, which is scheduled to conclude on May 18th, includes the continued request for counties to provide support in a variety of areas, such as –

- PPE for essential employees.
- Availability and support for telepresence and expanding on that.
- Homeless services.
- Flexible funds for covering response efforts.
- Mental health support.
- Emergency assistance for families.
- Parent support.
- Childcare assistance.
- Housing modifications

- Policy modifications to support the Federal Families First Prevention Act.
- SUDS reform.
- Looking at billing issues with DHS and how we are going to correct the errors that DHS made.

Commissioner Niemi inquired about the COVID-19 peak and the models being utilized for predictions.

Cynthia responded that both MDH and the Governor's models suggest a June or July peak to the disease.

Erin Melz added that the expansion of testing could change the projections.

Cynthia ended by applauding the HHS staff for going above and beyond to continue to provide services for our communities, the Departments within the county for their support and work during this event and lastly noted how amazing it is to see all of the support for each other within our communities.

COVID-19 Update, Erin Melz, Public Health Supervisor

Erin continued by first echoing her appreciation for all of the Aitkin County employees who have gone above and beyond for the county and their communities.

She went on by giving a brief situational update on COVID-19.

There are 3,816 positive cases of COVID-19 in the state and that she expects that number to rise due to the expanded testing.

There have been 286 deaths due to COVID-19, of which, most have been in long term care facilities.

9 Counties have yet to report their first case of COVID-19

She updated the Board that the DOC is now meeting only twice a week as opposed to meeting three times a week previously due to them having done a lot of preparations and gotten a lot of things in place the previous weeks.

She went on to state that they have begun the discussion and planning process in the event it is decided to reopen the county offices to the public.

The Commissioners added their thank you to all of the employees of the county for their response to COVID-19.

Commissioner Pratt asked Erin about how the determination is made where someone lives regarding someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

Erin responded that it is determined by the person's county of residence, not necessarily where the person was tested or where they were currently located, at the time the test was given.

Financial Reports, Carli Goble, H&HS Accounting Supervisor

Carli presented the board with her financial reports slideshow, of which a copy was provided to the Board members prior to today's meeting.

Commissioner Marcotte asked about the out-of-home placements costs and if we know why the drop in these costs has been dropping so significantly since 2010.

Cynthia said that she would follow up on this and get the information for the Board members sent out this week. Commissioner Marcotte asked if under the Adult Regional Treatment Center Costs showing the yearly totals, if the number of clients, total, that were paid for during the years could be added.

Carli responded that she would add that for next time.

Commissioner Pratt asked if Carli could give an example of what kind of flexibility programs are offering.

Carli gave an example that with the SHIP grant the monies can now pay for activities not previously allowed. Hannah Colby can make informational signs encouraging social distancing whereas previously that would not have been covered with those grant dollars.

Committee Reports

Joint Powers Board Update

Commissioner Westerlund reported that they had their Community Health Board meeting and talked primarily about COVID-19, spending, and that they were awarded \$144,626 from a grant.

H&HS Advisory Board

Commissioner Wedel remarked that they did not meet but that they have been working on reviewing their by-laws to bring it up to date with the current make-up of the group.

AEOA Update

Commissioner Westerlund stated AEOA met via video conference and inducted a new board member, had financial training, went over tax statements, and the new executive director talked about what they were doing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

CARE Board

Commissioner Westerlund stated the CARE Board met and had a short meeting. They talked about applying for some of the SBA protection grants and loans and had not heard anything back on them yet.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Next Meeting – May 26, 2020