



**AITKIN  
COUNTY**  
EST 1857  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
**COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
March 23, 2021

## Attendance

The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners met this 23rd day of March 2021, at 9:01 a.m. as the Aitkin County Health & Human Services Board, with the following members present: Commissioners Brian Napstad, J. Mark Wedel, Anne Marcotte, Don Niemi (VIA WebEx), and Laurie Westerlund. Others present included: H&HS Director Cynthia Bennett, Accounting Supervisor Carli Goble, Public Health Supervisor Erin Melz, Adult Social Services Supervisor Jessi Schultz (VIA WebEx), Financial Services Supervisor Jessi Goble (VIA WebEx), Child Support Supervisor Julie Herbst (VIA WebEx), County Administrator Jessica Seibert, Assistant to the County Administrator Angie Sahr, Paul Vold, KKIN (VIA WebEx), and Rebecca Fudala, Aitkin Independent Age.

## Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Napstad, seconded by Commissioner Marcotte and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the March 23, 2021 Health & Human Services Board agenda.

## Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Marcotte, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the February 23, 2021 Health and Human Services Board minutes.

## Bills

Carli stated that there was nothing out of the ordinary for the bills this month.

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

## Director's Update

Cynthia gave an update on the three key issues going to the legislature this session.

1. DHS Billing Error – In 2019 DHS realized they had made 3 significant billing errors one was the miscalculation of the county share of services provided to individuals in residential treatment facilities. In December of 2019 Governor Walz addressed the counties saying they should be held harmless for DHS errors. This became a legislative priority in 2020, but due to COVID-19 happening there was not a whole lot done in the legislature besides those things that were directly related to COVID-19. The Governor's 2021 Supplementary Budget proposal does address this and there are bills passing through committees in 2021 legislature to formally resolve this issue. It seems that all involved, the DHS Commissioner, House and Senate Representatives, AMC, MACSSA and the counties are on board with holding the counties harmless in this.
2. Continuation of COVID-19 Waivers into permanent policy/guidelines in regards to using more technology to meet with clients and less face to face meetings due to the cost savings they provided due to less employee travel time and expenses.
3. County Based Purchasing – In county based purchasing counties have the ability to either, by themselves or with other counties, go out and purchase health care services for various populations within their counties for MA, General Assistance Medical Care, and Minnesota Care. DHS is required to conduct a procurement that is done every four years. During procurement, counties are given a long list of survey questions to answer and then DHS takes all of that information and decides who will be providing health care services within each county. The procurement process and evaluation of effectiveness and costs should be conducted in another fashion. Counties who do not choose to implement county based purchasing should have a stronger say in the process of selection. So the

issue is not just a county's right to do county based purchasing as allowed in statute, but the process of procurement should be revised to give counties more say in the outcomes.

4. Lastly Cynthia shared that, in preparation of the disbursement of funds from the American Rescue Plan that H&HS was looking into ways to best utilize those funds when they are received. HHS will continue to work closely with Jessica on determining how monies are spent in HHS as well as the county as a whole.

Commissioner Wedel inquired as to when we could expect those funds?

Jessica Seibert responded that we had not yet seen an indication of when they will be making the request process available to us and that once they do our request will be entered and then we will received our approved funds within 60 days and have until December 31, 2024 to spend those funds.

## **COVID-19 Update**

Erin Melz, Public Health Supervisor, went through her presentation to the Commissioners in relation to where Aitkin County is with COVID-19 vaccine disbursement and their plans for future disbursement as more vaccine comes available.

At the time of the meeting she reported 33.8% of the Aitkin County population had received at least one dose of vaccine and 21.9% had completed the series.

67% of those 65+ had received at least one dose and 30.2% of those 50-64 years of age had received at least one dose.

## **Committee Reports**

### **CARE Report**

Commissioner Westerlund reported that CARE is doing great and that Lynne Jacobs continues to do outstanding work over there.

### **NEMOJT Report**

Commissioner Niemi reported that they did meet and that the main topic of discussion was NEMOJT's focus on getting the word out about careers for women in the construction industry and all of the opportunity there is within that industry for them.

### **Lakes & Pines Report**

Commissioner Niemi reported that they had applied for a couple of grants. One was \$306,400 to help people pay rent who have not been able to due to COVID-19 circumstances and how much they hope this will help people and their landlords with getting caught up on past due rent. The other was for \$95,000 through the Live Well at Home Grant to help seniors learn more about what services are available to them along with training them how to use things such as online banking and how to connect with friends and family on various video chat services that are out there and much more.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:13 a.m.

Next Meeting – April 27, 2021