

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

May 1, 2017

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Present: Vern Bennett, Arland Rasmussen, Chad Peterson, Mary Scherling, Rick Steen, Glenn Ellingsberg

Absent: Brian Hagen

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Scherling made a motion to approve the April 3, 2017 Board minutes. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. **Review GA Burial**

During the May Board meeting, there was discussion on the revised Century Code and the current Cass County GA Burial Policy, which is not consistent with the recent legislative changes. Mr. Peterson and Mr. Ammerman have not received further explanation on the changes in the Century Code. The discussion was tabled until the June meeting.

III. **SB 2206 Social Service Funding Bill Update**

Mr. Ammerman distributed information from Terry Traynor, North Dakota Association of Counties, showing the estimated budget for 2018 based on SB 2206 approved addendums. In the original bill, the budget would have been based on caseloads; however, legislators re-wrote the bill. The funding for Social Services is now based on 2015 expenditures. The estimated 2018 budget for Cass County is approximately \$12.5 million. This does not include funding for Adult Protective Services, contracts or County-funded programs, such as GA Burials and Homemaker Services. With estimated expenses and revenues, there will be a balance of approximately \$99,393. Mr. Ammerman and Mr. Montplaisir reiterated these are very preliminary numbers and additional information will be provided when more accurate numbers are available.

Mr. Ammerman shared the timeline for the budgeting process has been moved up by the state legislature, which is now one month earlier than last year. The Agency has begun working on the budgeting process, but Mr. Ammerman would like the Board's recommendation on how to present the budget. In the past, Mr. Ammerman has provided a summary to the Board members and presented a line-by-line itemization to the Commissioners. Due to the change in funding for 2018, a report like this will be very limited in information. Board members agreed to continue as it has in the past with a presentation to the Board and a line-by-line presentation to the Commission.

IV. **Operations Report**

Adult Protective Services (APS) numbers have dramatically increased in the last four months. Currently, there are 170 cases divided amongst three APS staff. Even though there is no standard caseload level for APS, Sharon Kleeman, Adult Services Manager, stated this is far above what should be carried by a worker. Adult Protection staff complete the initial assessment of the client and continue with case management services, maintaining an ongoing caseload. Due to the volume of reports the APS staff receive, there are concerns about liability and the quality of work is suffering due to the demands. Many of the cases the staff deal with

are mental health and chemical dependency cases. Cass County receives one-third to one-half of all APS reports in the state. Mr. Ammerman will be advocating for a fourth APS staff in the upcoming contract negotiations to assist in covering the increasing caseloads.

Pat Podoll, Family Services Manager, informed Board members that Child Care Licensing staff have been working to reorganize how they assign centers. They are using geographical assignment in order for the licensors to be able to group their visits more efficiently. There has also been a change in the way some of the licensor's paperwork is completed in order to streamline the process.

Ms. Scherling asked Mr. Ammerman about the agency's turnover and how it is being addressed. Mr. Ammerman stated the reasons for turnover include retirements, new staff in Economic Assistance not being able to manage the demands of the work, and staff frustration of not being able to keep up the pace or seeing any relief in their caseload. It can be very challenging and difficult for new staff in Economic Assistance to learn the systems and processes. Mr. Ammerman advised the Board the agency is taking steps to assist in new staff more successful. This includes improving the onboarding process, assigning them a mentor, providing more adapted and formalized training by the Economic Assistance trainer and supervisors taking on more of a collaborative role.

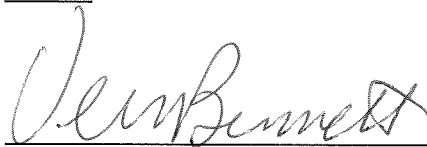
Ms. Scherling asked how the agency is being affected by generational changes and if there is a difference between the staff retiring and those hired to replace the positions. Mr. Ammerman's observations are that younger generations appear to be more driven, but have a better work/life balance. He stated they do prefer flexibility and alternative schedules; however, he is not seeing that they are not dedicated to the work they do. They do tend to challenge why the work is being done a certain way, which helps streamline processes and improve systems. Sidney Schock, Economic Assistance Manager, added passion is what drives most staff to do what they do and it can be debilitating for them when they are unable to do as well as they know they can, because of their caseload size.

Mr. Rasmussen questioned the addition of more staff due to SB 2206. Mr. Ammerman stated that due to the changes legislature made to the bill, it is no longer being based on caseload but instead the 2015 expenditure. Had the bill stayed as written, there would have been adequate funding in the budget to hire additional staff to reduce caseloads.

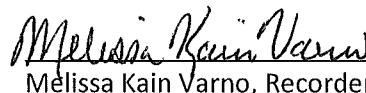
Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the Operations Report. Mr. Ellingsberg seconded it. Motion carried.

V. **Adjournment**

Mr. Peterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 pm. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder