

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
January 2, 2018

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

Present: Vern Bennett, Rick Steen, Brian Hagen, Mary Scherling, Glenn Ellingsberg, Arland Rasmussen

Absent: Chad Peterson

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the December 4, 2017 Board minutes. Ms. Scherling seconded it. Motion carried.

II. SB2206 – Committee Update

Mr. Ammerman reported the committee is still in the preliminary stages of meeting. Mr. Ammerman is a member of the Child Welfare sub-committee and Sidney Schock, Economic Assistance Manager, is participating in the Economic Assistance sub-committee. The goal of these committees is to provide better service effectively and efficiently across the state. Mr. Ammerman stated the Department of Human Services Executive Director, Christopher Jones, is very impressive and does not present any pre-conceived notions. He leads the group very well, embraces the different opinions that are expressed, and is not afraid to challenge committee member's thoughts. Some of the Board members shared they too have been present in meetings where Mr. Jones has participated and look forward to the changes he may bring in his new position.

Mr. Ammerman provided examples of discussions taking place during the meeting such as the practice of regionalized billing for targeted case management or Long term care economic assistance case management. These are two examples of activities that can be done remotely. The task force will be reviewing activities that do not have direct client interaction and in some counties these are done infrequently therefore limiting efficiency and potentially increasing errors.

Mr. Ammerman stated the committee will proceed with meetings twice a month: one in person and the other via Skype video conference.

III. 2017 Budget Recap

Mr. Ammerman provided the Board members with a handout outlining the projected 2017 end of the year budget, stating the finalized numbers would be available in March or April.

In the fall of 2017, it was determined Social Services needed to spend down the Social Welfare Fund to under \$500,000 to prevent anything in excess of that, after December 31, 2017, being added to the General Fund. Social Service was able to spend the amount down by purchasing

additional technology upgrades/replacements, paying for additional sponsorships and the building remodeling projects to create additional office space. Once all numbers are in, it is projected the Social Welfare Fund will end at \$406,787 for 2017. There was an excess in expenditures of \$30,676 that will need spending authority approved by the Commission. Mr. Ammerman will make that request at the next Commission Meeting in January.

Ms. Scherling asked Mr. Ammerman what changes should be requested when advocating for legislative changes when convenes for 2018. Mr. Ammerman stated primarily staffing. Caseloads continue to increase agency-wide. Adult Protective Services will need to re-negotiate the contract with the NDDHS for 2019 to include additional .5 staff, due to their growing caseloads. Social Service's budget is based on their numbers from two years prior. If a program sees an increase of 5% or more, they will receive additional funding in June/July 2018. At this time, Economic Assistance is the only program within Cass County Social Services that may meet this requirement for increased funding. At this time, we cannot project if the increase will impact the expenditures but will impact the revenue side of the budget.

IV. Social Service Building Renovations

Mr. Ammerman requested time during the next Board meeting to provide a tour to the Board members of all the changes that have occurred in the Social Service's building. Renovations have been completed to create additional offices on all floors, as well as, updating a few existing offices. There were technology updates to some of the conference rooms to include video conferencing capabilities. There are currently three conferences rooms in the Social Service building, but Mr. Ammerman stated the conference room on fourth floor possibly will eventually be turned into additional office space when the need for it arises; therefore the technology updates were focused primarily on second and third floor. Board members were in agreement to taking time during the next meeting to view the renovations.

V. Operations Report

Management is currently in the process of hiring for the new Economic Assistance Supervisor position, as well as the part-time Social Worker II position for Home and Community Based Services worker and other additional vacancies. Mr. Ammerman stated they are in the process of creating an exit interview survey for staff leaving the agency. He will be working with Robert Wilson, County Administrator, and Cindy Stoick, Human Resource Director, on this as well.

All units are seeing a steady increase in caseloads. Mr. Schock stated Economic Assistance was not as busy as originally thought during open enrollment of ACA this year. He surmised this was due to many clients opting to stay with their current coverage. Adult Protective Services (APS) continues to work with law enforcement and State Attorney's office due to ongoing financial exploitation of elderly or vulnerable adults. These types of cases are very intensive and in order to bring charges against the people possibly committing this crime, a forensic accountant is needed. Law enforcement does have a forensic accountant, but their availability to the agency is limited. There are also barriers the APS workers encounter because the clients are adults and, in most cases, are able to make their own choices. This creates difficulties for the worker because they are then working against the client.

Mr. Ammerman was asked about the agency's use of the Juvenile Detention facility. Mr. Ammerman stated rarely does Social Services promote the use of the Detention Center for

Social Service clients. Mr. Ammerman stated there are occasions where a child that was in detention is placed into the custody of Social Services. He stated it is used to protect the community from juveniles who would otherwise create harm to others due to their actions. Typically when needed, Social Services utilizes Attendant Care through YouthWorks, which provides a controlled and safe environment for the child who might otherwise be considered unruly, deprived or possibly delinquent. Mr. Ammerman stated the agency promotes children being placed back within the home when safe, with relatives if appropriate, home foster care and the least desirable being Attendant Care because of the experience for the child.


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

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:58 p.m. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder