

**CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING  
May 7, 2018**

**MINUTES**

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

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

**Absent:** Chad Peterson, Brian Hagen

**Presenters:** Chip Ammerman, Director; Sidney Schock, Economic Assistance Division Manager

**I. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Ellingsberg asked that the minutes for the April 2, 2018 be corrected to reflect that he asked how the counties would prevent the overwhelming amounts of clients seeking services.

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the April 2, 2018 Board minutes pending the revision of Mr. Ellingsberg's question. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

**II. 2019 Budget Update**

Mr. Ammerman presented the preliminary numbers for the 2019 Social Services Budget. He explained that when developing the budget, the county remains conservative in their revenues budget, knowing there will be some growth by the end of the year, and report expenses higher knowing the actual ending amount will be less than expected. This has been the trend for the last 20 years. The current proposed 2019 Budget reports \$12,984,227 in revenue with total expenses of \$14,727,589 resulting in a shortage of \$1,743,362.

The preliminary changes to the 2019 budget would include a 4.5% increase for Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and a 10% increase for benefits. The benefit increase is not definitive, as it could be increased up to 20%, but the Auditor's Office uses 10% for their preliminary calculations. Mr. Ammerman advised the Board that due to not having an increase of caseloads of 5% or more, the county will not be eligible for the revenue increase provided by the State. It was explained this would have been the only time the agency would have been able to receive this increase in revenue, due to the change that will more than likely occur with the redesign or discontinuation of Senate Bill 2206 for the 2020 Budget.

Mr. Ammerman explained management has created an initial request for positions, including the following additions: 1.5 FTE Attorney; 1 FTE SW III for Alternative Response cases; .25 FTE SW III Trainer for Family Services; 1 FTE EW I for Foster Care; 1 FTE Family Services Receptionist; 2 FTE SW III Jail Navigators; .5 FTE EW I for Southeast Human Service Center; along with the reclassification of four EW I to EW II and reclassification of an Office Assistant from A11 to A12.

The current Eligibility Worker for Foster Care carries a caseload of 742 cases, and while these cases are not as labor-intensive as others, it is a critical position that processes payments for children in foster homes, which has a significant impact if payments are not made. The caseload has seen a steady increase over the last few years, and it would be more efficient to have an additional position doing these tasks to prevent errors and missed payments.

Family Services currently has a receptionist that is contracted through Preference Personnel for 28 hours per week. This position has been a temporary position for 18 years. The cost of a full time receptionist position would be offset by \$29,446 from the employment contract with Preference Personnel. The total for all positions, minus the offset for the Family Services receptionist, would be \$668,787. That, plus the cost of the salaries and benefits, would create an added expense of \$1,329,477. There is a proposed reduction of \$164,391, but that would result in some external services being absorbed internally, due to the impact they have to the agency. If the additional positions were not added, Social Services would still need to reduce 6.6 positions in order to recover expense.

Board members questioned why there would be two Jail Navigator positions being requested in the Social Services' budget versus the Sheriff's Department. Robert Wilson, County Administrator, explained these positions would assist inmates in transitioning from jail into the community, in hopes the assistance they receive would prevent them from returning. The Sheriff's Office receives pressure from the Department of Corrections' directives and it was thought that if these positions were added to the Social Services budget, the State would see the need for the positions to be funded through the State versus the County. However, Mr. Ammerman, along with some Board members, stated these positions would unlikely be approved in the Social Services budget. There are currently two positions that are preparing to be staffed through the Probation and Parole Office that do something similar to the proposed Jail Navigator positions. Mr. Ellingsberg also suggested that the Jail Chaplains program, which is a non-profit organization funded by donations and an annual fundraiser, may be able to assist inmates with the transition.

Mr. Ammerman asked Board members to provide him with any suggestions or directions for the proposed 2019 budget. Mr. Steen suggested prioritizing the positions being requested, stating he trusts Mr. Ammerman knows what is needed to be effective and efficient within Cass County Social Services. Mr. Ellingsberg questioned that, as the State takes over more funding, when the responsibility would shift from the County to the State. Mr. Ammerman responded that more than likely, the County would continue to be liable for any wrong doing, although legal options would be reviewed if this would occur.

### **III. Senate Bill 2206 Redesign Update**

One of the potential changes in the SB2206 Redesign is the conversion of County employees to State employees. There is also the possibility of redefining boundaries, allowing clients to receive services at a location more convenient to where they reside and not where County lines dictate. Board members asked Mr. Ammerman to send out the additional information he has regarding this redesign for their review, which Mr. Ammerman agreed to do.

### **IV. Social Service's Emergency Response Practice**

This has been tabled until the next meeting.

### **V. Work Number Proposal – Economic Assistance**

Mr. Schock briefly explained the current process for receiving wage verifications for clients applying for assistance, which is lengthy and creates more applications to be placed into pending status. It also creates the potential for overpayments to clients that the agency would then request back when discovered. The agency has the opportunity for a three month test

phase that would provide verification information sooner than the current process. The cost for this service is \$3,593.33 per month. Mr. Ammerman asked the Board for approval to engage in this service for a trial period of three months as there is money available in the budget for this. If the Board approved this, Mr. Ammerman would present it to the Commissioners at their meeting for final approval.

Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to approve the Work Number Proposal for Economic Assistance's use. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

Chair Bennett also encouraged Mr. Ammerman to do further research of other states, specifically mentioning Utah, and their processes and efficiencies regarding Social Services.

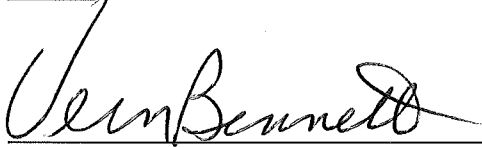
**VI. Operations Report**

Briefly, Mr. Ammerman pointed out a Caseload Committee was formed by Child Protection Unit staff who are looking at ways to be more efficient and effective with the large caseloads they are experiencing, while still complying with state regulations.

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

**VII. Adjournment**

Ms. Scherling made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:03 p.m. Chair Bennett seconded it. Motion carried.



Vern Bennett, Chair  
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder