

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
September 3, 2019

MINUTES

With quorum present, Commissioner Peterson called the meeting to order at 2:16 p.m.

Present: Vern Bennett, Duane Breitling, Glenn Ellingsberg, Chad Peterson, Mary Scherling, Brian Hagen (via conference call)
Absent: Rick Steen
Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Mike Montplaisir, Auditor

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Breitling made a motion to approve the August 4, 2019 minutes. Ms. Scherling seconded it. Motion carried.

II. Zone Plan Update

Mr. Ammerman shared the legislative representatives have been contacted about participating on the Cass Zonal Board; however, little response has been received. Mr. Peterson stated he will follow-up with Judy Lee, whom he has been unable to connect with, as well as others to determine if they are interested in participating on the board.

Mr. Ammerman announced that Cass County Social Service staff have been having conversation with Agassi Valley staff about the possibility of sharing specific cases, based on geographic location. Agassi Valley would complete the Northern Cass area for Child Protection and HCBS cases; Cass would complete Agassi Valley's Long Term Care and TANF cases. Conversations will continue and formal plans will be developed.

Mr. Ammerman distributed an updated draft of the Cass Zonal Plan. Additional information was provided regarding the county-funded home and community based program and sponsorship programs Cass provides, as well as the costs associated with them.

In July 2019, Mr. Ammerman submitted position requests to NDDHS for 2020. Recently, three positions have been approved by the state to begin in 2019 on a temporary basis, pending final approval by the state after all Zonal Plans have been submitted and reviewed. The three Social Worker III positions are in the Family Services Division, two working in Child Protection and one working in Case Management. Ms. Scherling asked if caseloads warrant the positions, why the state has not yet approved them? Mr. Ammerman believes the state wants to review all of the Zonal Plans submitted prior to committing additional staff to Cass. The purpose of the redesign is to create efficiencies and staffing structure is directly related to caseloads.

Mr. Ammerman requested the Social Service's Board approve the hiring of three temporary Social Worker III positions, pending approval by the state in 2020, to begin in November 2019. Estimated cost for all three positions for the remainder of 2019 is \$52,000. In addition, Mr. Ammerman requested the approval to hire a previous employee to assist in an emergency basis from October 1 – December 20, 2019 for the cost of \$9,262.

Mr. Peterson asked Mr. Montplaisir whether Cass is within their legal ability to fund the temporary positions for the remainder of 2019. Mr. Montplaisir said he believed this is within the law for 2019, but it would not be legal in 2020. Mr. Ammerman stated the current projections for the remainder of 2019 are below the amount originally budgeted. The projected Social Welfare Fund balance is \$399,000; Social Services' approved budget includes \$772,000 of money from the general fund to balance. Mr. Montplaisir reminded the board that indirect costs for Social Services still need to be paid for in the current budget. Mr. Ammerman shared due to staff vacancies there will be roll up funds available to assist paying for the temporary/emergency staff.

Ms. Scherling made a motion to approve hiring one emergency Social Worker III position, from October – December 2019, and three temporary Social Worker III positions from the middle of November – December 2019, pending approval by the state for permanent status. Duane Breiting seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, the Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Ammerman will request Commission approval at the September 16th Commission meeting before moving forward with the hiring process.

III. Operations Report

Mr. Ammerman stated Maddie Swanson and Nick Crocker have been hired as Social Worker III in the Child Protection Unit. Nick is a current CPS worker in another county who has been assisting with Cass County cases. Adult Service numbers are consistent this last month, while Economic Assistance numbers have increased slightly. Mr. Ammerman shared the Foster Care Picnic was a success with approximately 120 participants. A previous employee, Rose Vaudrin, donated funds for this purpose after her passing. Child Protection numbers were below average the last few months, due to the summer and school not being in session, which is a typical pattern for this season. Intake staff report the last few days of August have indicated an increase in reports coming in.


Mr. Ammerman distributed an overview of the hiring process for the Zonal Director, which needs to be completed by April 2020. It stated the Department of Human Services must be an active participant in the hiring process; however, it is the responsibility of the Zonal Social Service Board to lead the process.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Breiting made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:53 p.m. Mr. Ellingsberg seconded it. Meeting adjourned.



Chad Peterson, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board


Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder