

**CASS COUNTY HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING
APRIL 5, 2021**

MINUTES

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

Present: Mary Scherling, Rick Steen, Duane Breitling, Jim Kapitan, Chad Peterson, Brian Hagen
Guest: Robert Wilson, County Administrator; Linda Dorff, Family Services; Sidney Schock, Economic Assistance

Absent:

Presenter: Pearl Mell, Human Services Zone Director
(all present via Teams Meeting)

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Breitling made a motion to approve the January 19, 2021; February 1, 2021; and March 1, 2021 Board minutes. Mr. Peterson seconded it. Motion carried.

II. Senate Bill 2086

Ms. Mell addressed the changes to the Zone Board Composition 50-0102-01:

SECTION 12. AMENDMENT. Section 50-01.2-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

50-01.2-01. Human service zone board - Members - Qualifications.

The board of county commissioners of each county within the human service zone shall appoint the appointed members of the human service zone board based upon fitness to serve as members by reason of character, experience, and training without regard to political affiliation. Appointed members of the human service zone board must consist of local elected officials and other key community partners. If a human service zone consists of two or more counties, each county must be represented on the human service zone board by only one county commissioner of that county. If a human service zone consists of a single county, the county must be represented on the human service zone board by no more than two county commissioners of that county and the human service zone board must have at least five appointed members. Appointed members shall elect a vice presiding officer and appoint a secretary, and other officers as the human service zone board determines necessary. The human service zone director shall serve as presiding officer of the human service zone board as a nonappointed member.

III. Zone Board Recruitment & Appointment Effort

Mr. Wilson stated he and Mr. Breitling, Portfolio Commissioner, have had several conversations over the last month with Ms. Mell and representatives from several areas regarding the composition of the Zone Board. The feedback from other Zones have stated having community members has been a positive experience and has allowed for feedback on how the Zone is doing locally. Where services are doing well and where they are lacking. He has outlined his suggestions in a letter addressed to the Zone Board Members:

- Organize a (virtual) meeting of leaders of local public, private and non-profit organizations providing social services in our community. The primary goal will be to review the legislative intent of the make-up of zone boards and how it differs from previous county social service boards.
- With an understanding of the board's role, ask organizations and individuals who have an interest in joining the board to email Director Mell, describing their motivation to serve and the unique perspective they would bring to the board.
- Zone board appointments are the responsibility of the County Commission. After receiving feedback from interested parties, Director Mell, Administrator Wilson, Commission Chair Peterson and Human Services Portfolio Holder, Commissioner Breitling will review the list of interested individuals and prepare recommendations for the County Commission.

Mr. Steen believe Mr. Wilson's approach seems reasonable. The Senate bill mentions no less than 5 members and he wanted clarification this would not include the Director. Ms. Mell confirmed that would be the case. Five members plus the Director as a non-appointed member. He believes the Commission should determine the final number of members.

Mr. Breitling noted that Section 12 of Senate Bill 2086 states the size of the board must be in place by January 1, 2022, and as long as the minimum standards are met, the size is of the discretion of the Board. Ms. Mell believes it would be appropriate to recommend the number of members to the Commission for approval. Mr. Breitling also questioned if the two commissioners are or are not counted in the five appointed members and suggested there should be six or eight board members plus the Director if the Director is a voting member so there is an odd number in case of a tie breaker needed for a vote. Ms. Mell stated she believes the Commissioners count towards the 5 members and stated she would follow up to confirm.

Ms. Mell asked if there should be a meeting within a regular Board meeting to discuss the makeup of the Board members or if the discussion should be held outside the Board meeting. Mr. Wilson stated there was no discussion of when the meeting should take place. Mr. Wilson was thinking a meeting with the community organizations or stakeholders to share the information would be a good start, to see if there is interest from those members. Those who are interested will be brought to the County Commission for evaluation and decision. Mr. Breitling believes the appointment process and decision falls on the County Commission so the meeting should be directed by the County Commission with the Director of Human Services invited to the meeting. Mr. Wilson agreed with Mr. Breitling and offered to work with the Commissioners and Ms. Mell to help organize. The community meeting will not be held during a regularly scheduled Human Services Board meeting.

Ms. Mell also asked about the application process. She believes there is an ability to streamline the process for collecting the information and processing those who are interested is something to be worked on. Mr. Wilson feels the working group to look at the statement of interest should include. County Commission Chair, Zone Board Director, Portfolio Holder Commissioner and if there is interested in including the County Administrator and Mr. Wilson is happy to help as

well. Mr. Wilson would like Ms. Taylor to collect the applications and then forward them to the working group. Ms. Mell felt this was agreeable.

Motion: Mr. Breitling made the motion to move forward with Mr. Wilson's proposal for a special community meeting. process to collect the applications and present them to the Commissioners to decide on the future Board Members, Mr. Steen Second. No further discussion on the motion.

Outcome: Motion carries.

IV. Operational Report

Ms. Mell has one comment on statistics. Under the February statistics, on the line item titled Total Cass Custodial Children there was a typo. The report stated 177 but this number should be 235. This has been corrected on the spreadsheet but not before going out to the board members.

Ms. Dorff reported that since Centralized Intake was activated in the beginning of January, there has been a rise in reports the agency is receiving, the state was anticipating this as well. Ms. Scherling asked for clarification. Ms. Dorff clarified that as of January 1, 2021, through redesign, the intake department became centralized across the state. So, anyone who has a concern contacts Centralized Intake. This has created a better opportunity for individuals in the community and mandated reporters to file a report.

Ms. Mell stated that Cass County currently has two Intake workers as one resigned last week. This position will be advertised across the state, so if the candidate was hired in another Zone, the position number and budget authority will be transferred to the appropriate Zone. The purpose of centralizing the team was to have one number for anyone to call across the state. This allows for them to better assign the cases across the state. When they centralized the team they did see a bump in the cases across the state as expected with the easier process. Secondly, this is a new team and with employee leave they are short staffed and they are all learning a new process so there have been challenges. Ms. Mell is working with a team to offer more support to the intake team. To help them receive the support they need so they can meet all the targets promised.

Mr. Peterson wanted to make a general reminder that this is part of the efficiencies gaining through the revised legislative process. The intent is to create the central bank of workers to reduce the workload of any one area and in turn help with efficiencies.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Peterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:51 p.m. Mr. Hagen seconded. Motion carried.



Pearl Mell, Zone Director
Cass County Human Services Zone Board



Marla McIntyre, Recorder