

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

June 5, 2017

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

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

Absent: Glenn Ellingsberg, Brian Hagen

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Scherling made a motion to approve the May 1, 2017 Board minutes. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. **2018 Budget Request**

Chip Ammerman reviewed the information that was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting. This included: 2018 estimated revenue compared to the 2017 budget; 5 year trend of Social Service expenditures and revenues; 5 year trend with Mills and Social Welfare Fund balance; staffing patterns and staff turnover rate; weighted caseloads for Economic Assistance and caseload levels for Adult and Family Service programs; caseload comparison for Economic Assistance with Burleigh, Cass, Grand Forks, and Ward counties; staff and divisional requests; 2018 budget breakdown; and recommended purchases from the 2017 budget.

The Board discussed the staff turnover rate which has increased in the last few years, including resignations and retirements. The reasons for staff leaving appears to be related to the stress of the positions, the high caseload sizes with little hope that relief is going to be provided, and not being able to keep up with the demands. Suggestions were provided by the Board to include ways of providing recognition and support for staff and to explore whether it would be possible to hire retired or contracted staff to fill in during extended leave of absences or position vacancies. Mr. Ammerman outlined that there are challenges to contracting staff for coverage in the Economic Assistance and Social Work programs due to the required level of training/expertise and the policy changes that occur frequently. Mr. Ammerman outlined the strategies and practices that are currently taking place in providing recognition to staff for their work. Mr. Ammerman shared the ways staff are supported in the agency regarding the concerns of secondary trauma and stress due to high caseloads.

The Board reviewed the caseload reports for each Division. Mr. Ammerman stated that the long term trend is that approximately 10% of the County population utilizes social service programs. With the increase in population, the caseloads continue to rise at a high rate. Information was shared regarding the Economic Assistance caseload compared to the state caseload standards.

The Board reviewed the line item budget prepared by Sarah Heinle, Auditors Office. The estimated 2018 revenues including state and federal funding, contracts, and county funded programs is \$13,056,280.

There was discussion on the revised language in the Century Code regarding General Assistance, which indicates Social Services is responsible to provide this service. Because this is a county funded program, these funds would not be included in the Social Service budget without revenue being provided by the Cass County General Fund. In addition, Cass County has provided

a county funded Homemaker Program for approximately 30 years which is a gap program and has the goal of meeting the basic needs of the disabled and keeping people safe in their own home. Funds in the amount of \$210,000 would need to be provided from the County General Fund to provide the GA Burial and County Homemaker Programs.

There was discussion on the proposed expenditures for 2018, which includes a 4.2% increase in salaries and an estimated increase in health insurance of 10%. Recommended staff additions include a .5 FTE SW III position for Adult Protection, 4 Eligibility Worker I positions, and 1 Eligibility Worker Supervisor position for a total of 5.5 positions. There is also a recommendation to shift a position in the Day Care licensing unit from a .8 A13 position for self-declared day care to a C41 full-time licensing staff with a projected difference of \$17,842 addition to the 2018 budget.

Mr. Ammerman recommends purchasing the 2018 computer replacements, software, and equipment out of the 2017 budget. With this and other minimal changes in contracts and expenditures and including the proposed additions to staff, the proposed 2018 Expenditures would be \$13,469,240 leaving a deficit of \$429,960.

During the last legislative session, a cap was placed on the Social Welfare Fund of \$500,000. Ms. Heinle estimates Cass County's Social Welfare Fund balance at the end of 2017 could be close to \$1 million. Any amount over the \$500,000 will be returned to the General Fund which will reduce the revenues from the state in the future.

There was discussion on whether it was possible to pay for future contracts or other services out of the 2017 budget. Mr. Ammerman was instructed to meet with Mike Montplaisir, Auditor, to determine possible ways to balance the budget request.

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the 2018 budget proposal as amended. Mr. Peterson seconded it. Discussion occurred and the motion failed. Due to time constraints, the Board decided to table the discussion until additional information could be gathered with the hopes of having a balanced budget request. The Social Services Board will meet at 1:00 on Monday, June 19, 2017 to continue discussion on the 2018 budget proposal.

III. General Assistance Burial

Review of the current Cass County General Assistance Burial policy needs to be completed to ensure language is in compliance with the revised Century Code.

IV. Operations Report

The Board received the Operations Report prior to the meeting. Due to time constraints, there was no discussion.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Bennett adjourned the meeting at 3:01 pm.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder