

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

April 3, 2017

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

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

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Sarah Heinle, Auditor's Office

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the February 6, 2017 Board minutes. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. **Budget Review**

Mr. Ammerman deferred to Sarah Heinle of the Auditor's Office for a review of the 2016 budget. Ms. Heinle stated the agency's 2016 final budget was under the budgeted amount, mostly in part to employee turnover. When an employee retires or resigns, there is typically a month in between the employee leaving and the hiring of a new employee, which lessens the salaries and benefits. Also, when an employee retires, their replacement starts at the lower end of the pay scale, which also keeps the numbers under budget. Ms. Heinle stated that all significant bills are currently in, so the numbers reported in the Board's packet should not change. The amount added to the Social Welfare Fund, due to being under budget, was \$335,521.

III. **Review GA Burial**

Mr. Ammerman informed the Board that House Bill 1338, which discusses the payment responsibility of an indigent burial, has been updated with some changes to the language. The updated bill includes a list of people responsible for payment prior to the county's involvement. Each level of kin has the opportunity to say they are not interested in funding the disposition, but the county has the final decision because they are ultimately responsible. Mr. Ammerman was asked who is responsible for going through the list, whether it was the funeral directors or county staff. Mr. Ammerman stated that the agency currently only has one person that works on GA Burials and she would not be able to do all of that on her own. The responsibility of going through the list would be up to the funeral directors.

Recently, there have been a couple of situations brought to the attention of Mr. Ammerman in regards to GA Burials. Mr. Ammerman has brought those to the County Commissioners for discussion and approval. During one of the conversations, Mr. Ammerman was asked by the County Commissioners to discuss at the next Social Service's Board Meeting that he be allowed to make some of the decisions on GA Burials at his own discretion. It was suggested to propose to the County Commissioners to allow Mr. Ammerman to consult with the Social Service's Board about GA Burial exceptions. The Board would make the final decision as Mr. Ammerman stated he would not feel comfortable making a decision without consultation. Mr. Ellingsberg also stated he would be in favor of coming in for special meetings, as needed, for situations like these.

The Board requested further explanation of HB1338 as the language is confusing and seems to be contradictory to the agency's current policy. Once this has been further clarified, the GA Burial policy developed by the agency will need to be reviewed in order to be in compliance with any changes and verbiage consistent with HB 1338. It was suggested a small committee could be formed to complete the review once clarification is received. Mr. Peterson volunteered to coordinate a group to review the policy.

IV. Legislative Update

Mr. Ammerman stated the agency is tracking over 100 bills, keeping a close eye on 20-30 that would have more impact on the agency. He stated he would send a complete list out to the Board members. Two bills that Mr. Ammerman did briefly discuss were House Bill 1012 and 2206.

The Department of Human Services' budget is discussed in HB 1012, which includes funding for Adult Protective Services (APS). It is currently out of the committee with changes and will be presented to the Senate floor in the next couple of weeks. The funding is currently written at the level it was at in 2015-2016, which Mr. Ammerman felt would be sufficient. However, the concern he has would be the number of APS staff the agency has, which is three, versus their caseload as this agency handles one-third to one-half of all APS in this area.

Mr. Ammerman stated HB 2206, complete funding of Social Services by the State, passed the Senate as recommended. However, the House did not pass the bill and has made recommendations for a study to take place. There are many unanswered questions regarding this bill, such as where the money is coming from and how it will be reimbursed. There is concern that if the study is not passed, the bill will be killed. Mr. Ammerman stated HB 2206 is very questionable as there is not enough information being provided for it to pass. This bill was thought to generally be well-received but was then held back for the vote. The agency will continue to closely monitor HB 2206.

V. Operations Report

Mr. Ellingsberg thanked Mr. Ammerman for the change in the Statistical Report of showing the previous year's numbers with the current month's for comparison. It was also discussed the quarterly average is also provided after every third month on the report. After review, Mr. Ellingsberg stated having the quarterly number would be sufficient, so the monthly comparison can be discontinued.

Mr. Ammerman explained the first quarter was busy for all divisions and are high months in general. Child Protective Services tends to slow in the summer as schools are the most common reporters for child abuse/neglect reports.

Mr. Ammerman also made the Board aware of a staff member who recently lost everything to a house fire. There has been a fundraiser for her and her family, which consist of her husband and two children. They are currently looking for permanent housing and awaiting insurance approval.

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

Sharon Kleeman, manager of Adult Services, commented on the large increase of APS cases in comparing February 2016 (117 cases) and February 2017 (167 case). She stated, due to having new workers starting in February 2016, the previous employees tried to close out as many cases before they left, so the new employees would not have as high of caseloads when they first started.

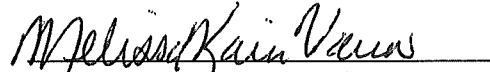
Pat Podoll, manager of Family Services, mentioned Leola Daul, Child Care Licensor, was nominated for Woman of the Year for her work with the Heart-n-Soul Café, which is a pay-what-you-can pop-up café. The food is donated and cooked by chefs that volunteer their work. This is a big honor with the finalist being announced at a ceremony in May.

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:28 pm. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder