

**CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
December 2, 2019**

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 2:09 p.m.

Present: Chad Peterson, Duane Breitling (by phone), Mary Scherling, Brian Hagen, Rick Steen, Glenn Ellingsberg, Ken Pawluk

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Pat Monson, Attorney; Robert Wilson, County Administrator

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the following Board minutes:

- a. September 3, 2019
- b. October 21, 2019
- c. November 4, 2019
- d. November 18, 2019.

Mr. Pawluk seconded it. On roll call, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Steen stated he had some questions regarding the minutes, but they could wait until the end of the meeting, as he was not requesting any amendments to them, just clarification. Ms. Scherling questioned the addition of the Sheriff's Report to the October 21, 2019 minutes as it was not attached to the minutes in the packet. Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder, stated they would be included with the official minutes that are posted on the Cass County website.

II. Social Service Survey Plan

Pat Monson, attorney from Center for Mediation and Consultation, PLLC in Fargo, presented her plan after discussions she had with Robert Wilson, County Administrator. Her contract is currently being reviewed by Mr. Burdick. Ms. Monson reviewed the Sheriff's Department report and felt she had a good understanding of the work environment concerns within Social Services. Her plan would be to create a cultural survey that would be administered to approximately half the staff within the agency, with a sampling from all divisions. She would proctor the anonymous survey at a neutral location in paper form. After all data was collected, she would compile it into a report to determine the underlying issues. Ms. Monson would do additional interviews with the people named in the Sheriff's report. Once completed, she would follow-up with the Board with her recommendations and a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). After six months of the PIP being in place, she would survey another sampling of staff to determine any noticeable changes.

Board members recommended the survey be administered online and to all staff within Cass County Social Services. Ms. Scherling explained that when county-wide surveys have been sent in the past to a sampling of staff, those not surveyed were frustrated as they felt they were not able to express their concerns. Ms. Monson explained her goal is to get nearly 100% response from the sampling of staff and in her experience, that is not typical with an online survey. Mr. Steen stated completing the survey on paper and then having someone type that information would be more time consuming than a site such as Survey Monkey that would combine all the

information gathered and put it into graph form, as well as include the written responses. Mr. Hagen suggested administering a Survey Monkey to all staff and then individually interviewing a smaller sampling of staff. Board members agreed it should be stressed to all staff the importance of completing this survey.

Ms. Monson planned to have the results of the survey by January. Mr. Pawluk questioned if once the Board receives the results, would the Zone Board be able to act on them with the State taking over Social Service funding. While this is not known, Mr. Steen stated he felt it would be a disservice to the employees not to do anything about the situation. He also stated he would not accept the position of Portfolio Chair in 2020 if that was the Board's decision.

Ms. Monson stated the cost of her services would be under the original amount of \$20,000. To date, she has not billed for her services. She stated she would not have agreed to accept this project, but based on what she has reviewed, it means something to her. She stated the concerns noted in the Sheriff's report need to be corrected and she wants to ensure changes are made within the agency.

Additionally, Mr. Ellingsberg stated he was disappointed to hear about the survey in the paper. In the future, he would request that notice be given to Board Members before it is publicized. Chair Peterson explained there is a communication navigator in the budget for 2020 that would assist in eliminating this issue in the future.

III. 2020 Contracts/Sponsorship Agreement

The contracts needing approval are for the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) county-funded services, such as Community Living Services and Fargo Cass Public Health. The contracts are the same as 2019, but with a slight increase in payment due to legislative approval. These contracts are funded through the State and are not in the County's budget. The Sponsorship Agreements are used to provide services the agency cannot, such as PATH Trauma and Stress Clinic and Youthworks. These contracts and sponsorships have been sent to States Attorney Birch Burdick for review. Mr. Burdick has contacted the Department of Human Services for clarification on the language to be used due to the transition to the Human Services Zone, but he has not yet received a response. The contracts for HCBS should not be an issue as these are already state-funded programs. The concern is the sponsorships and whether the State will assume the funding of these as of January 1, 2020. There were concerns voiced by members that if the Board signed the sponsorships the county would be liable for the payment if the State chooses not to fund the sponsorships.

Mr. Steen made a motion for the Social Service Board to make the recommendation to the County Commission to approve the contracts and sponsorship agreements, subject to State approval of funding for the sponsorship agreements. Mr. Ellingsberg seconded. On roll call, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Pawluk stated he would not agree to the County funding the sponsorships if the State does not approve them.

IV. Zone Board Member Recruitment

During the November 4, 2019 meeting, there was discussion to broaden the Zone Board to include community members, law enforcement, service providers, etc. Senator Judy Lee

recommended an advertisement be placed to recruit members for the Zone Board. Chair Peterson also offered to make an announcement via the radio. Mr. Ammerman liked these ideas but stated there would be certain professions he would like to have further conversation with the Board members. He suggested the ad could indicate certain professions the agency is looking for, stating some of the ideal candidates might be foster parents, PATH, Lutheran Social Services/Abound Therapy, representatives from schools, and healthcare partners. Chair Peterson suggested placing the ad first and then scaling down the applicants. Mr. Ammerman will bring a draft advertisement with potential contacts to the January 6, 2020 meeting.

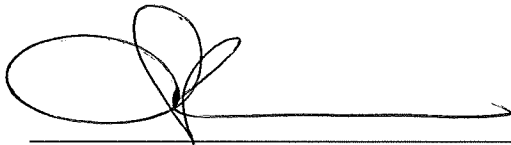
V. Operations Report

Mr. Ammerman explained the agency is starting to fill their current vacancies. Adult Protective Services received 48 reports in the month of October, which is atypical for that division. Home and Community Based Services are starting to transition to State employees by January. The vacancy for the supervisor position which will be shared by Cass, Traill and Steele Counties will close on Wednesday, December 4, 2019. Economic Assistance had growth this last month, due to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) starting in October. Mr. Ammerman explained there were 150 cases assigned in Child Protective Services in October and 78 in queue. Richland County has assisted in taking approximately 30 cases in the last three weeks. He anticipates January, February, and March will be higher as that is consistent year to year.

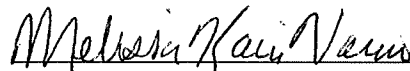
Mr. Steen asked to address the questions he had regarding previous meeting minutes. He wanted to follow-up with Robert Wilson from the October 21, 2019 minutes on progress or changes that have been made within the Child Protection Services Unit. He also questioned if Mr. Burdick looked into the definition of quorum needed for the Human Services Zone Board. Mr. Steen also asked if Mr. Wilson had created the work plans for the staff as discussed on November 4th. Mr. Wilson explained Mr. Ammerman has reviewed the Work Improvement Plan that was created, but Mr. Wilson has not had the opportunity to meet with the other staff regarding their plans. Mr. Steen then referred to the motion from the November 18, 2019 minutes and asked if a letter to terminate Mr. Ammerman's employee contract was provided to Mr. Ammerman. Mr. Wilson stated this had been completed.

VI. Adjournment

Ms. Scherling made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:16 p.m. Mr. Steen seconded it. Meeting adjourned.



Chad Peterson, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board


Melissa Kain Varho, Recorder