

**CASS COUNTY HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 30, 2020**

**MINUTES**

With quorum present, Director Mell called this special meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

**Present:** Chad Peterson, Mary Scherling, Rick Steen, Duane Breitling, Brian Hagen, Glenn Ellingsberg, Ken Pawluk  
**Guest:** County Administrator Robert Wilson (all present via Teams Meeting)  
**Absent:**  
**Presenter:** Pearl Mell, Human Services Zone Director, Sara Stolt, Department of Human Services Chief Operating Officer, and Kristen Hasbargen, Department of Human Services Director of Zone Operations  
(All present via Teams Meeting)

**I. Human Service Zone Board Roles Discussion**

Ms. Stolt and Ms. Hasbargen are in attendance to discuss the roles of the human Service Zone Board as requested at the last Board meeting on November 2, 2020.

Ms. Stolt opened the conversation by sharing the previous Social Services Boards were subcommittees from the county commission. A Human Service Board should have representation including community membership as well as county commission representation. It is a separate entity from the county commission responsible for the oversight of the Director of the Human Services Zone. It has been a challenge for all the zones so there is training being developed to help each group progress. Ms. Stolt will review the information from Chapter 50-01.2 County Social Services Boards

**50-01.2-03 Term of Office of Human Service Zone Board.**

Terms for the zone board includes a staggered term of 1, 2 and 3 years. The composition of the board will not exceed 15. The Director is the presiding officer/chair for the board. The members should comprise stakeholders in the community which are impacted by the zone. Their role is to advise the Zone to help identify community needs. Review services to have the ability to advise on needs to recommend for improvements. Will be establishing metrics and outcomes. Establish procedures for review and approval of invoices. Oversee personnel actions related to the HSZ Director. Hear and act on employee grievances in accordance with the zone plan and merit system requirements.

**50-01.2-03 Duties of Human Service Zone Board.**

The human service zone board in this state shall:

1. Provide information to the department relative to the community needs of the human service zone residents and advocate to meet those needs.
2. Review services and programs provided by the human service zone and make periodic recommendations for improvement in services, programs, or facilities.
3. Aid and assist in every reasonable way to efficiently coordinate and conduct human service activities within the human service zone by private as well as public organizations.
4. Establish procedures for the review and approval of all claims against the human service zone human services fund.
5. Supervise and take other personnel actions related to the human service zone director with direct consultation and involvement from the department. Hire the human service zone director with the express approval of the department. Employment must be

consistent with the provisions of any law, rule, order, or regulation of the United States classifications as a condition for providing funds administered by the department. A human service zone director must be hired by April 1, 2020.

6. Hear and act on employee grievances in accordance with the human service zone plan and in compliance with merit system requirements.

Mr. Steen ask for clarification on number 6 and if it covered employee as well as client grievances. Ms. Stolt stated the client's grievances are to go to the board and will be outlined in the GAP. Mr. Ellingsberg asked for clarification on number 6 and if it was within the rights of the board to act on grievances. Ms. Stolt clarified the board does advise but they can also act on grievances as outlined in #6.

Ms. Stolt addressed the list of 14 duties which is an expansion of the original 6 duties as outlined in Chapter 50-01.2, but with additional examples offered by the legal counsel of the Department of Human Services to help aid in clarification.

Human Service Zone Board has the following powers:

1. Review a proposed increase in staff from the human service zone director;
2. Receive appeals for general assistance under chapter 50-01;
3. Reduce access points upon agreement with county commissioners and the department of human services;
4. Establish procedures for the review and approval of all claims against the human service zone human services fund with the human service zone director or designee approving or ratifying all claims against the human service zone human services fund;
5. The human service zone director has discretion to hire or separate from employment a human service zone team member, on behalf of the human service board, subject to the allotted number of approved and funded staff positions by the department of human services and in accordance with the department of human services' policies;
6. Receive ongoing performance notifications from the department of human services related to the overall compliance with the standards of administration;
7. Receive recommended disciplinary action regarding a human service zone team member from the department of human services or the human service zone director;
8. Recommend to the department of human services the hiring of a human service zone director;
9. Hire, upon approval of the department of human services, a human service zone director;
10. Provide information to the department of human services relative to the community needs of the human service zone residents and advocate to meet those needs;
11. Review services and programs provided by the human service zone and make periodic recommendations for improvement in services, programs, or facilities;
12. Aid and assist in every reasonable way to efficiently coordinate and conduct human service activities within the human service zone by private as well as public organizations;
13. Supervise and take other personnel actions related to the human service zone director with direct consultation and involvement from the department of human services. Employment must be consistent with the provisions of any law, rule, order, or regulation of the United States or any federal agency or authority requiring civil service or merit standards or classifications as a condition of providing funds administered by the department of human services; and
14. Hear and act on employee grievances in accordance with the human service zone plan and in compliance with the merit system requirements.

Mr. Peterson feels one of the boards duties is to lobby for additional staff. Is the legislation written for inflators, such as a percent increase each year or is there a discussion each year? Ms. Stolt clarified the number of staff was set and cannot exceed the total number of staff in the

state. There are no inflationary increases currently allowed. The goal is to find efficiencies vs. hiring staff. For example, Economic Assistance caseloads are disparately high in Cass compared to the rest of the state. So, the eligibility system is being redesigned so talent can be hired anywhere within the state and the workload can spread around the state. This will help to ease the burden when FTE's cannot be added to Cass. Mr. Peterson is hopeful the efficiencies will happen or he may follow-up to ask for more staff so the current staff get the support they need.

Mr. Breitling asked if the legal staff have to run their determinations or recommendations by the office of the attorney general? Ms. Stolt stated employment law is run thru the office of the attorney general but other issues are brought there only depending on the topic. Any policy bill introduced by the department is reviewed before session by legislative council. Any policy brought forward by a legislature is reviewed during the session and there is a post vote to assure everything aligns.

Mr. Steen addressed the compensation for board members outlined in 50-01.2 and asked what compensation levels are being utilized around the state. Ms. Hasbargen stated most are paying \$50-\$85 per meeting. Mr. Steen asked for clarification if this comes from state statute for legislature meetings. Ms. Hasbargen confirmed. Mr. Steen stated we have not paid the zone members to date so should get something in order before the end of the year. Ms. Stolt clarified this is not a requirement but allows you to pay. Ms. Mell has a draft of the Human Service Zone Agreement which outlines the payment. This was signed by Mr. Ammerman December 18, 2019. Ms. Mell will send a copy of the agreement to the board members. Mr. Steen requested this be an agenda item on the December 7, 2020 meeting. Ms. Mell agreed.

Mr. Steen addressed composition of the board and would like to see the number of members limited to assure the discussions are productive. The term of each member should also be reviewed to assure it is balanced. Both topics are for future discussion.

Mr. Breitling has questions on the content of the appendices. Appendix B, paragraph C has the department developed a process for rescinding, termination, or modification of Human Service Zone Plans? Ms. Stolt clarified the department has not yet developed the process but it would be in collaboration with the zone board. The department will not act on any changes with the zone plan without working directly with the Zone Board. They did meet with every zone director and legal counsel to review and supply feedback on the zone plans. It is not a formal process but there has been a process utilized to make changes. Mr. Breitling's next question was regarding Appendix D, number 4, and the adoption formula for establishing the counties cost allocation for indirect costs established by the department. Has the formula been developed and can the board get a copy of the formula? Ms. Stolt's understanding is that finance worked with each department in terms of the county wide allocation plan. Ms. Hasbargen confirmed they worked with the budget from 2018 and added 25% of the indicated indirect that were reimbursed back to the host county for 2020 and 2021. Ms. Stolt stated it was and then communicated with the contact person within the zone in 2019. Mr. Breitling mentioned the formula developed by the department will control county and state share of indirect costs. Ms. Hasbargen clarified if there is more than one county in a zone the host county will be responsible to disperse the funds.

Mr. Steen asked if the intent of the motion subject to satisfied? Ms. Scherling feels the motion is satisfied.

Ms. Mell read the previous motion from the November 2, 2020 minutes. Ms. Scherling made a motion: move to approve the Cass County Human Service Zone Plan subject to additional information on the roles and responsibilities of the Zone Board subject to receiving that information and approving it.

Ms. Schering made a motion to approve the Zone Board Plan. Mr. Steen second the motion.

Ms. Mell asked for any further discussion. Hearing none roll call was requested.


Roll call: Mr. Hagen, (no vote, was excused from the meeting at 3pm). Mr. Steen, Yes. Mr. Peterson, Yes. Mr. Breitling, Yes. Ms. Scherling, Yes. Mr. Ellingsberg, Yes. Mr. Pawluk Ms. Mell, Yes. Motion carried.

II. **Adjournment**

Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:23 p.m. Mr. Breitling seconded. Motion carried.



Pearl Mell, Zone Director  
Cass County Human Services Zone Board



Marla McIntyre, Recorder