

**CASS COUNTY HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING
MAY 3, 2021**

MINUTES

With quorum present, Mr. Robert Wilson called the meeting to order at 2:11p.m.

Present: Brian Hagen, Mary Scherling, Rick Steen, Duane Breitling, Jim Kapitan, Chad Peterson,
Guest: Robert Wilson, County Administrator; Linda Dorff, Family Services; Sidney Schock,
Economic Assistance
Absent: Pearl Mell, Human Service Zone Director
Presenter: Robert Wilson, County Administrator
(all present via Teams Meeting)

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Breitling made a motion to approve the April 5, 2021 Board minutes. Mr. Peterson seconded it. Motion carried.

II. Proposed Zone Board Transition Schedule

Mr. Wilson informed the Board he and Ms. Mell drafted a process to begin recruiting for future members of the board as required by redesign. From the last legislative session there is a requirement to update the membership in accordance with Section 50-01.2-01 of the North Dakota Century Code. This process is being presented to the Zone Board and the Commissioners for their review and approval.

Draft Timeline/Process

Cass Human Service Zone Board Recruitment

April 14, 2021

April 26th Compile list of organization name, contact individual, phone # & email for groups to be contacted.

May 3rd Update Human Service Zone Board & review list of invitees.

May 4th Email all invitees.

May 24th Hold virtual meeting in Commission Conference Room. Any who wish to attend in person will be invited to join us in person would be welcome. Would be able to participate/listen in Commission Meeting Room. (Hard time limit – no longer than an hour.)

May 25th – 28th Mell & Wilson meet with anyone interested but unable to meet on 24th.

May 31st Mell, Breitling, Peterson, Wilson review initial list of interested individuals, suggest names for Commission to consider. (Mell & Breitling follow up conversation with identified new Board members.)

June 7th County Commission considers Board recommendations/potential current zone board resignations.

June 7th – July 1st Follow-up new Board Member orientation/Q & A w/ Mell & DHS rep.

July 6th First Zone Board meeting with new members.

Mr. Steen asked for clarification of the meeting on May 24, 2021. Mr. Wilson clarified it would be a larger group to allow for all interested stakeholders to attend. He expects this to be the

time for Ms. Mell to present the goals of the Zone Board and allow them to submit their names for consideration. There was discussion on the expedited timeline. Mr. Wilson clarified the timeline to fill according to Section 50-01.2-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is January 1, 2022 but they proposed this timeline to work through the process.

Mr. Steen agreed bringing members on early is a good idea to allow time for transition between current members and new members. Ms. Scherling agreed stating for example, if it is decided 9 is a good number of board members they can have 12 until January 1, 2022 and then 3 can resign.

III. Meeting Attendees and Invitations

Mr. Wilson stated the list of candidates is comprised of names pulled together from previous conversations. The list is intended to be a draft list to receive feedback. It is not the final list. Mr. Steen stated that although Mr. Hagen's name is not currently on the list, he would like to see him continue. Mr. Steen would also like to have the board look at the law again to assure the candidates come in with the proper background. If the law is more directed towards non-agency members than that needs to be considered. Mr. Hagen had previously given the name of Ms. Michelle Kommer and he would like to assure she is added to the list. Mr. Wilson assure she will be added to the list.

Mr. Wilson wanted to clarify this is an initial list and the timeline can be pushed back a month so the list can be refined and brought back to the board without greatly disrupting the timeline. This will allow time to coordinate again with Ms. Mell to review the list and is available to participate in the conversation.

Ms. Scherling is concerned the timeline is tight and she wants to assure there is time is taken to assure the right people are at the table. Mr. Wilson agrees and feels deferring in a month would help coordinate the efforts more efficiently

Ms. Scherling made a motion to assure the research is completed and all possible candidates are added to the list in the next month so the Board can meet in June to review the list and agree upon who will be invited to the virtual meeting originally proposed for May 24, 2021. Mr. Steen agrees. Motion carries.

IV. Operational Report

Mr. Wilson opened the floor for questions. Mr. Steen asked about the narrative on the Operational Report regarding the following statement in paragraph three under Economic Assistance: "Those efforts are quickly disintegrating with DHS focusing all energies on Process Management (i.e. a Call Center design), abandoning the Service delivery system that stands as a major component of our efforts in supporting residents of our county. This reporter fears that the Agency will soon lose the very best of our staff upon their forsaking their previous plans to engage in this profession until their own retirement."

Mr. Steen finds this statement concerning and feels it is the board's primary purpose look out for the concerns and well-being of the residents of Cass County.

Mr. Schock addressed Mr. Steen's concern and stated that one of the issues includes the extremely high caseloads in certain counties including Cass County Human Service Zone. The issue stems from the agreement in legislature to hire no more staff. This decision led to case load leveling to balance the caseload between zones through process management. His comments on the operations report derived from the staff who have shared they do not want to work in what they perceive to be a call center and his own concern the connection with families may not occur with the new system.

Mr. Steen would like to see the board work with the Director, Ms. Mell to advocate for the employees and the county residents. Ms. Scherling asked if Mr. Schock had a solution. Mr. Schock believes caseload leveling is a good idea, but he does not have a solution for all the case load related issues. He stated there are options to help clients from other zones who have minimal needs but there are also families who need to talk to people and will need someone local to work consistently with them. Ms. Scherling agrees with Mr. Steen that the Zone Board should be able to do something to help.

Mr. Breitling asked if Mr. Schock feels the idea of call centers is inappropriate. Mr. Schock stated there are some good opportunities for automation but if the responsibility is to engage with families to help them reach the highest level of self-reliance then they cannot do that with a call center.

Mr. Hagen suggested to bring together a small group, including Ms. Mell, a couple board members and the head of the Department of Human Services to discuss the issues. Call centers can work if it is appropriately modeled but a small group may help to fix it now instead of later. Mr. Schock stated he would like to see a pilot process initiated.

Mr. Peterson stated he appreciates Mr. Schock's institutional knowledge. He clarified the state budget is short of money and so the best way to make that up is to not hire staff. Without replacing staff Mr. Peterson had understood there were currently enough staff to cover the workload, but it is clear Mr. Schock does not feel that is the case. Mr. Peterson feels he can reach out to others in the state to discuss the concerns and learn more himself on the overall intent. Mr. Schock stated he would provide caseload numbers to Mr. Peterson to help support the conversation.

Mr. Wilson appreciates the conversation and offered any assistance possible to help make the Zone successful. He feels getting the new board members identified and onboard would be key in helping the process.

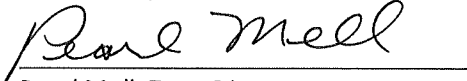
V. Adjournment

Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:12p p.m. Ms. Scherling seconded. Motion carried.

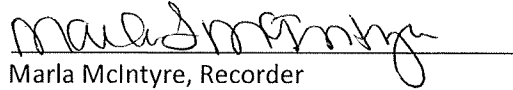
VI. Addendum

Ms. Mell was unable to attend the Human Service Zone Board Meeting on 5/3/2021. She reviewed the recording of the meeting and provided email follow-up to the Human Service Zone

Board Members as well as Mr. Sidney Schock, Ms. Linda Dorff, and Ms. Marla McIntyre on 5/27/2021. The intent of the email was to provide clarification on some meeting topics. The email provided additional information about Economic Assistance Case Loads across the state and included a spreadsheet of data provided by DHS. Ms. Mell also provided further clarification about State Employees v. County Employees, stating, *"Cass County Human Service Zone Staff are not state employees, they are Cass County employees. All human service zone (across the state) positions are classified under the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Human Resource Management Services (HRMS) and thus subject to the North Dakota Century Code and Administrative Code."* Ms. Mell also provided additional information related to NDAC 4-07-13 Annual Leave, and why Human Service Zone Staff were required by law to transition from the Cass County Annual Leave Accrual Schedule to the Merit System Annual Leave Accrual Schedule.



Pearl Mell, Zone Director
Cass County Human Services Zone Board



Marla McIntyre, Recorder