

**MEETING OF THE
WINNEBAGO COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES BOARD**

Minutes

DATE: Thursday June 17, 2021

TIME: 8:30 a.m.

PLACE: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Larry Lautenschlager, Donna Lohry, Mike Norton, Jerry Finch, Karen Powers, Harold Singstock

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Chris Kniep, Nicole Neuhoff

STAFF PRESENT: Bill Topel, Renee Soroko, Janet Rohloff, Beth Roberts, Ann Kriegel, Annette Beattie, Heather Foust and Pam Bartelt

Larry Lautenschlager, chair of the Department of Human Services Board, opened the hearing at 8:30 a.m. by welcoming those present in the audience. Larry explained that the intent of the public hearing is to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on programs funded by the Department of Human Services for residents of Winnebago County who are affected by developmental disabilities, chemical dependency or mental illness, and on the financial and social service programs available through the Department. Larry reviewed public hearing guidelines.

Bill Topel mentioned that due to the unusual nature this year there are differences from past years. Under 46.23 state statutes, the Human Services board is tasked with developing a budget for the Human Services Department that will go to the County Executive to be incorporated into the county wide budget. Budget target by County Executive and Finance Director is to reduce the tax levy portion of the Human Services budget by \$2.6 million over this year's amount. Our initial 2022 budget represents \$1.8 million reduction in operational expenses and/or increased revenue projections. It also represents a \$1 million reduction in county tax levy compared to this year. Any requests for new services or reducing tax levy further will result in additional cuts in programs and/or staff lay off. The management team and staff have work diligently over the past year to create new ways of serving clients and families which has paid off with better service outcomes and reduced costs. This may have appeared to be easy but, in fact, it required skilled staff, greater collaboration and improved flexibility with support and funding. This budget is not so much realistic as it is a very optimistic where everything will need to go well next year to break even. For those attending this hearing, it is important to note that Human Services is primarily a contracted agent of the state departments of health services and children and families. The state and federal government provides two thirds of the funding for contracted services. The amounts have remained fairly flat for several decades. The county tax levy portion of our budget is about one third of expenses and levy is considered a match requirement to the state funds in many areas. Our first priority is to provide mandated services required by the state. The county can choose whether to offer optional services or provider grants which are levy funded.

For those testifying at this hearing, in addition to asking for additional services or funding increases or decreases, you can also send your request by email to btopel@co.winnebago.wi.us or by phone at 920-236-1195.

The following information is testimony:

Angela Steuck: Angela is with Family Services, New Parent Connection Program. Present to request continued grant funding support as well as an increase if at all possible. They currently work closely with 'First Five Fox Valley' that takes a tri-county focus and is advocating the consideration of tapping into American Rescue Act funds. They hope to earmark a portion of the funds for prevention type services. Past studies have identified many families struggling with issues such as financial, mental health, addiction and anxiety with the Covid-19 pandemic having additional impact. Investing in a child's well-being at an early age, there is a direct correlation with the overall well-being of the entire community. There are better health outcomes, fewer adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) and more stable families. Angela mentioned the fantastic success rates with health visitation and families recognizing when they need assistance and participating in services. Funds coming into Parent Connection has been stable over the last several years, however, this does not cover a full-time staff. Family Services is putting in \$20,000 - \$30,000 to stay in Winnebago County for some of these core services. Any future consideration will be greatly appreciated.

Kelly Hintz: Kelly also works with Family Services. She states the Parent Connection program is located in Oshkosh and was one of the first home-visiting services in Wisconsin. They are a blue-ribbon affiliate of "Parents as Teachers" which is a nationally recognized home visitation program. Parent Connection serves families pre-natal up to age three. The families have specific risk factors identified to be eligible for the program such as mental health issues, low academic achievement, and past or current interaction with child welfare services. Families need effective parenting support to avoid further court ordered action and/or involvement with child protective services. Agency staff visit with families depending on needs. Visits educate parents on child development and the appropriate expectations of each age level. Developmental screenings can be done for social/emotional and development delays to identify early. A lot of work is done with resource connections and eliminates barriers that may help the family make a good connection. A lot of safety supplies are provided for the home. Social connections are also a focus of the program. They have a waiting list which is growing each year due to more families than staff, service availability which is largely due to funding. The longer they are on the wait list, the more likely the family will be denied services once they are eligible.

No written requests were received at this time. With no further testimonies, the public hearing was closed at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Pam Bartelt, Human Services Department/pb