

HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
Minutes of Meeting, October 1, 2009

CALL TO ORDER: 6:35 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Lenehan, Marc Meulman, Amy Tuley, Joanne Willson, Logan Wessendorf (Youth Advisory Committee Liaison)

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Diane Durian, Elma (Pat) Maye, Mike Thomspson

STAFF PRESENT: Vicki Georgeau, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services

OLD BUSINESS:

Red Ribbon Week (October 17-25, 2009) Activities – Willson and Tuley Overview: Willson reported that Amberly Elementary students expressed an interest in presenting the proclamation at the October 20th City Council meeting. Tuley will attend the Council meeting and provide red ribbons to City Council. Staff will have Red Ribbon banners displayed at City Hall, the Portage District Library, and City of Portage Police and District Court lobbies.

NEW BUSINESS:

Overview of Human Services in Kalamazoo County – Peggy Gagen, Greater Kalamazoo United Way and Diane Schrock, Portage Community Center: As requested by the Board, Peggy Gagen provided an overview of the system employed by the United Way to educate the community and service providers regarding available human services. Ms. Gagen reviewed the 2008 Service Maps (included in the agenda), the Emergency Services Guide, Out of School Time Guide, and Mentoring and Tutoring Guide. In addition, the United Way provides annual forums to train service providers on emergency financial assistance, food assistance, medical assistance and housing assistance to ensure that proper information and referral is accomplished for clients seeking assistance. Gagen noted she was encouraged by the recent article in the Portager that promoted the 2-1-1 service, and encouraged the Board and city to consider broader use of the Portager, Cable Access, the city-web site (with links to 2-1-1, assistance guides and other information), and information kiosks in public buildings for information and education on human services available to assist Portage residents. Gagen indicated ongoing, repetitive advertising and outreach is needed to ensure residents know where to go for help. Gagen noted an effort is underway to privately fund a state-wide “benefit access” software system that service providers can use to determine eligibility for federal, state, local public and private human service. Such systems are used in other states and can achieve cost and time efficiencies in assisting clients. Lenehan inquired as to how an agency becomes a United Way agency, and an overview of the United Way’s annual fund allocation process. Gagen explained the United Way needs to determine services provided are not duplicated by another agency, and that if found eligible, it generally takes several years to become a United Way agency. With regard to the funding process, there are four focus area teams of community volunteers that serve for two years and that each team conducts agency visits over the funding cycle and reaches fund allocation decisions on a consensus basis. Diane Schrock of the Portage Community Center (PCC) described their information and referral services and the manner in which PCC packages assistance for food, utilities, prescription drugs and other emergency assistance in partnership with other agencies such as the Michigan Department of Human Services, Salvation Army and area churches. Schrock indicated they complete a comprehensive client intake to ensure all potential client needs are identified. Schrock concurred with Gagen’s comment that repetitive advertising and outreach is needed to educate the public regarding available services. With regard to the PCC facility, Schrock indicated that the Family Health Center is expanding at PCC, which will increase health care services and raise additional monies for PCC.

Metro Transit ADA Advisory Board / County Transit Authority update: Lenehan reported the City of Kalamazoo millage proposal will be voted on in November, and that the new vendor for demand-response service will start November 1st. In addition, the demand-response service will have a new name for the entire system which is Metro County Connect. Willson expressed concern regarding who citizens call for the new integrated service. Lenehan indicated the current phone numbers should continue to work for service requests. Lenehan also noted that the rides for the demand-response service has increased significantly (over 200%) since this time last year, especially for specialized medical care appointments. Consequently, the ADA Advisory Board is evaluating revising its policy on prescription transit services. Finally, Tuley noted that a communication from Bill Schomisch was included in the agenda regarding a fare increase proposal and that there is a 30-day comment period through October 19, 2009.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: The Board meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Georgeau, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services