

CITY OF PORTAGE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

Minutes of Meeting, July 31, 2014

CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Shawn Havens, Effie Kokkinos, Ray LaPoint, Elma (Pat) Maye (arrived 6:35), Sandra Sheppard, Amanda Woodin (left at 7:35) and Sharat Kamath (Youth Advisory representative)

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Woodin moved and LaPoint supported excusing Diane Durian, Nadeem Mirza, and Edward Morgan. Motion passed 5-0.

STAFF PRESENT: Elizabeth Money, Neighborhood Program Specialist

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Woodin moved and Kokkinos supported approval of the minutes as submitted. Motion passed 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Human/Public Service Application/Summary/Criteria Review- Sheppard: Maye excused herself from the discussion as her employer, The Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan, is a sub-recipient of funding. The Board reviewed proposed changes suggested by staff. Woodin questioned if the changes would negatively affect any current applicants and still questioned the definition of 'basic needs'. Staff explained that, as the Board had requested clarification/documentation on basic and critical needs, it was concluded the two needs could be combined into one criterion with some wording changes. The proposed criterion wording was now such that many applicants could be placed into a category dependent on their funding requests. Those that did not easily fit into one category, or, if the services they provided were in conjunction with other organizations, would have to be reviewed by the Board on a case-by-case basis. Sheppard asked if the criterion was provided to the applicants. Staff indicated it was not but since it was included in many agenda packets that they did have access to it. LaPoint thought it was appropriate how the criterion was worded and indicated that there would always be some applicants that the Board might have to discuss and decide as a group where to place. LaPoint moved that the proposed changes be accepted, Havens supported. Motion passed 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Enhancement of Human Services Information & Referral: Sheppard provided an introduction and staff referenced the memo in the agenda packet and indicated that input from the Board was being requested. Kokkinos asked if there was an increase in homelessness or if it was just more visible. Staff indicated that it was more visible but that homelessness has been present throughout the city including along the trails and occasionally along certain intersections. A discussion occurred about the increased panhandling along South Westnedge Avenue and how the altered highway interchange (with the addition of stop lights and traffic patterns) created a situation where it became more feasible to panhandle. The Board discussed actions the city was taking and the possible production of a small card for city staff (primarily Police Officers and Park Rangers) to hand out to persons in need of assistance. Kokkinos indicated that in providing materials to the public, the city needs to keep in mind not all citizens are literate or speak English fluently. Several Board members discussed the most effective methods to assist those in need. Existing emergency shelters, organizations that provide hot meals and food, and locations that can assist person in need of housing, medical treatment, and other assistance are more effective methods for the public at large to assist homeless persons than by giving money directly to a panhandler. The Board discussed some possible educational opportunities but decided perhaps other communities may have existing examples that could serve as guidelines. LaPoint made a motion to discuss this topic further after the Board has had an opportunity to research what other communities have done, Kokkinos supported. Motion passed 6-0.

2. Kalamazoo Transit Authority LAC update - Maye: Maye had nothing new to report as the previous meeting involved electing officers and filling positions.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business before the Board, Maye moved and Haven supported adjournment. Motion passed 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Money, Neighborhood Program Specialist

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