

CITY OF PORTAGE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

Minutes of Meeting, September 4, 2014

CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Diane Durian, Shawn Havens, Effie Kokkinos, Ray LaPoint, Elma (Pat) Maye, Edward Morgan, and Amanda Woodin.

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Woodin moved and Kokkinos supported a motion to excuse Nadeem Mirza and Sandra Sheppard. Motion passed 7-0.

MEMBERS UNEXCUSED: Sharat Kamath (Youth Advisory representative)

STAFF PRESENT: Elizabeth Money, Neighborhood Program Specialist

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Maye moved and Havens supported approval of the minutes as submitted. Motion passed 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Enhancement of Human Services Information & Referral: Havens indicated that, based on the research he conducted, the most effective method of dealing with homelessness and panhandling was through education efforts, such as handouts and direct contact, and that making arrests seemed to be the least effective deterrent. LaPoint added that in addition to handouts many communities utilize signs that varied in size between small bus-stop sized signs to billboards. The subjects of the signs varied from where to seek assistance if you are in need to requesting that people do not give to panhandlers. The Board noted that fewer panhandlers were present at the South Westnedge Avenue and I-94 interchange. With regards to the handout being developed, Woodin questioned why the Gospel Mission was the only shelter noted. Staff indicated that anyone could find shelter at the Gospel Mission in an emergency and that they could contact 211 or Portage Community Center during normal business hours to receive help finding another shelter that had space available. Durian asked if the handout was going to be given to people who come into City Hall. Staff indicated that it could be given out at any time but it was generally thought the police and park rangers would utilize them the most by giving them directly to homeless persons and panhandlers. Maye indicated that in her research, Savannah, Georgia has an ordinance similar to ours and they enforce it and provide educational information. The Board asked if there were specific areas of homeless encampments within Portage and if there were any shelters located in Portage and any other service agencies in Portage. Staff indicated there were some areas along the public trails people were prone to staying and a few businesses have had people sleeping on their properties. Further, staff noted the Portage Community Center was the major service agency in the city and they did not provide any shelter. Kokkinos suggested giving the handout to local restaurants and stores that may be frequented by either homeless or panhandling individuals. After a discussion on homeless verses panhandling individuals, the Board indicated that the handout as drafted would likely prove effective at helping those that were actually interested in receiving help.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Red Ribbon Week (October 23-31, 2014) Activities: The Board discussed Red Ribbon Week activities and LaPoint suggested that contacting the Student Councils at each school and requesting 2-3 representatives per school would be a way to incorporate more schools each year. The Board requested that staff contact the Mayor to determine how early he could meet with students before the

meeting and to check if the city had a list of schools and contact numbers for the Board to use. LaPoint volunteered to lead the Board's Red Ribbon Week organizational efforts for this year.

2. Kalamazoo Transit Authority LAC update - Maye: Maye had nothing new to report as they had not met since the last meeting.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business before the Board, Maye moved and Woodin supported adjournment. Motion passed 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Money, Neighborhood Program Specialist

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