

Minutes of the Human Services Board of Director's meeting of February 21, 2023.

Meeting held via Audio/Tele Conferencing.

Donna Nunno called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Present: Donna Nunno, Brendan Casey, Joan Campbell, Joy Duva,
Melissa Tranquilli and Barbara Genovese

Absent: Rev. Karl Duetzmann, Alderman Matt Arciuolo and
Alderman Dan German

Also Present: Deepa Joseph and Beth Simpson

2. Public Comments

None

3. Minutes

A motion was made by B. Casey, seconded by B. Genovese, that the minutes of November 15, 2022 be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Director's Report

D. Joseph wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Since the last meeting, a Youth Services Program Coordinator was hired. Doug Mills started employment in this position today. His experience includes working at Clifford Beers and New Haven Job Corps. He has also done a lot of work with the youth of New Haven. Doug will be working on a variety of youth programs.

Youth & Family Services (YFS) has an established partnership with The Academy pertaining to therapy services. YFS utilizes the CT Department of Children and Families (DCF) grant funding to provide therapy to teens attending The Academy. These services started last year in 2021-2022 through a program where YFS partnered with Bridges Healthcare, Inc. Bridges fees are paid for through the DCF grant administered by YFS if the student does not have health insurance and/or the student/family has a high deductible health plan and cannot afford the out-of-pocket expense. Last year, there was limited space at The Academy, therefore, we have made one of the YFS therapy rooms available for counseling, one day a week, during set hours. Doug will be working with the Bridges staff on this program.

J. Duva asked if there is a wait list for students to participate. Deepa responded that since the therapy services are specific to The Academy students, there is currently sufficient capacity. Regarding mental health services for youth in general, there are wait lists for many mental health providers in the region. The Program Coordinator will be looking at ways to expand capacity

and interim options while youth and/or families are on wait lists in collaboration with community partners.

On the Department of Human Services (DHS) side, we had a very busy Thanksgiving and holiday season. As with all our services the need increases during the holidays,

Relative to Outreach Services, during the period from November 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023, DHS staff conducted 60 Outreach meetings totaling 130 Milford residents. DHS staff is seeing a significant increase in need for help with utilities, rent and food. The department is currently utilizing three grants to fund assistance to residents in these areas. This funding is from the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) Phase 39 and additional funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) set up through EFSP as Phase ARPA-R. DHS also receives grants from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). For EFSP and CDBG we have already submitted applications for the next phases of this funding. DHS staff partners with agencies within the community to make sure that residents are provided with assistance, but that services are not duplicated.

During Thanksgiving, DHS staff coordinated a variety of ways that helped residents. 338 Thanksgiving baskets were delivered to Milford residents, 20 baskets were picked up at the DHS office, 28 boxes of pre-cooked food were picked up at Shoprite, 19 individual hot meals were delivered on Thanksgiving Day and 35 food gift cards were mailed to clients. All this was possible through partnerships and the generosity of Milford agencies and donors, such as W.O.M.E.N., Inc., Precious Blood Parish, St. Raphael Parish, Napoli Motors, and Milford Boy Scouts, as well as private donors. Families and individuals that received help were very grateful.

The Adopt-A-Family (AAF) program was also a success during the holidays. 63 Milford families were adopted comprising 204 individuals, 112 were children. This was the largest number of families that we've had participate. The AAF program was possible thanks to 39 donors. Deepa thanked Board members that donated.

The DHS staff will start planning for the holidays earlier next year, and possibly tweak a few things, since there is a constant increase in need and it's such a busy time for our department.

The Energy Assistance (EA) program also started up in the fall. DHS staff continues to assist TEAM, Inc. by taking EA applications over the telephone, electronically and through paperwork drop off. The State of Connecticut is trying to expand EA benefits to included households where the cost of heat is included in rent. DHS will assist TEAM, Inc. in getting clients approved for this program.

Regarding department administration, there is a Board of Finance meeting on Thursday where Deepa will request a flat budget for Human Services/Youth & Family Services.

5. Old Business

None

6. New Business

J. Duva shared that she attended a meeting, coordinated by State Senator James Maroney, called Pints & Policy. At that meeting they discussed food insecurity. Joy said that Senator Maroney is starting a food counsel and asked if she should suggest to him that Milford Human Services be part of the group. Deepa agreed and added that the Milford Health Department also leads a food insecurity work group of about 20 people representing various agencies in the area. Joy will let Senator Maroney know about the Health Department led food insecurity group.

7. Adjournment

B. Genovese made a motion to adjourn the meeting. B. Casey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Nunno adjourned the meeting at 5:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Simpson".

Beth Simpson
Recorder