

Minutes of the Human Services Board of Director's meeting of September 15, 2020.

Meeting held via Audio/Tele Conferencing.

Donna Nunno called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

**1. Roll Call**

Present: Donna Nunno, Sue Stango, Brendan Casey, Jessica DeYoung, Rev. Karl Duetzmann, and Joy Duva.

Absent: Joan Campbell, Barbara Genovese, Aldermen Ellen Beatty, and Aldermen James Tranquilli.

Also Present: Deepa Joseph and Beth Simpson

**2. Public Comments**

None

**3. Minutes**

A motion was made by Rev. Duetzmann, seconded by B. Casey, that the minutes of February 18, 2020 be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**4. Director's Report**

It's been a long time and a lot has happened since our last meeting in February 2020. The global pandemic has shifted many things for the Department of Human Services (DHS) and for Milford as a whole.

The City of Milford buildings, including our office, were closed to the public as of mid-March, except by appointment. During the early months of the pandemic, the DHS staff was split into Team A and Team B, alternating the days in the office. This scheduled allowed for adequate social distancing at a time when Connecticut positivity rates were high. The staff is now back in the office full time, although the office is still closed to the public, except by appointment.

Outreach continues to provide services and administer programs, via telephone appointments. There has been an increase in calls due to residents impacted by the physical, mental health and financial aspects of the pandemic.

The staff has been providing emergency assistance in the areas of food, hotel, rent and mortgage, and utilities. Food insecurity has been the greatest concern and the most wide spread at this time. The staff continues to provide assistance in this area. The spring holiday food basket program was shifted to a gift card program where Shoprite gift cards were provided to Milford residents.

The Renters' Rebate program has been redesigned and shifted to mail in and drop off documents. Over 360 applications have been processed. The Renters' Rebate program runs through October 1st.

A drop box was installed outside of the main door at the office. It has been working extremely well as a system to collect required paperwork and documents.

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) funding for Phases 35 and 36 has ended. In May, DHS was approved and granted funding under EFSP Phase 37. Supplement funding was also awarded to our agency through EFSP CARES and CDBG-CV. This additional money will be used to provide assistance to Milford residents in need of COVID-19-related relief.

DHS is ending its first year as an intake site for the Dollar Energy Fund, through South Central CT Regional Water Authority (where clients are provided with up to \$175 assistance towards their water bill). The staff has processed almost 30 applications.

The Energy Assistance program began on August 1st. TEAM, Inc., in Derby, has been processing applications for Milford residents over the phone. The DHS staff will also begin to take applications over the phone, through email and U.S. mail.

Youth & Family Services (YFS) slowed down in March, due to the pandemic.

Typically, the Mayor's Youth Award (MYA) occurs in April/May. YFS staff felt that it was important to acknowledge the achievement of youth. Deepa, Mayor Blake, Dr. Cutaia, and Lesley Darling, Program Coordinator, filmed a virtual celebration where 339 Milford youth were recognized. The virtual MYA ceremony was very well received. Parents reached out to YFS and expressed that they were happy to have a positive event and thanked the staff for the opportunity.

In February, Lesley began coordinating the 13-week Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (Parents SEE) parent leadership training program focused on education. Due to COVID-19 this Parent SEE curriculum was not completed. We are hoping to resume the program because of its mission of working together with the educational system and advocating on behalf of children. This mission is relevant all the time, but even moreso now.

YFS continues to partner with various agencies in the community to rethink programs pertaining to youth and families.

As in prior years, YFS coordinated with the Salvation Army to provide back packs and school supplies to Milford students in need. This year, a drive through pick-up system was set-up, where families received back packs and vouchers for shoes.

DHS/YFS continues to work with H.U.M.A.N., the multi-agency network focused on homelessness and unsheltered populations in Milford. This is also an important piece to our COVID-19 response. On Monday, Lesley participated in a virtual forum, as we have been hearing concerns regarding panhandling within the community, which have increased over the recent months. This forum was a joint endeavor by several agencies, including YFS/DHS, Beth El, and Bridges. We put together virtual events to talk about and bring back our



Have a Heart, Give Smart campaign relative to panhandling. This forum will go live on Milford social media next week.

DHS/YFS had a meeting with the community partners of our Thanksgiving food basket programs. Noting that the area of emergency food assistance is an area where we have seen an increase, we felt it was important to continue with a version of the holiday food basket programs. We will be partnering with all of the agencies that we typically partner with as all partners are interested in continuing the program. The largest supporter is the Boy Scouts with its Thanks For Giving food drive. That food is used to create the baskets. They are working on submitting a written plan to the Health Department to make sure that this activity is in compliance with all of the COVID related sector rules for events. As in years past, DHS will be working on compiling lists of those in need, so that they can disseminate the lists of families to our partners in the community.

Rev. Duetzmann noted that normally the Clergy Association has a Thanksgiving community wide prayer service, with an offering that goes to numerous places within the city, including fuel assistance. However, due to the current pandemic, a large community service is not practical this year. The Clergy Association will come back to it for next year.

**5. Old Business**

None

**6. New Business - Nomination of Officers**

B. Casey made a motion to keep officers the same.

Rev. Duetzmann seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Accepting the positions are:

Donna Nunno – Chairman

Sue Stango – Vice Chairman

**7. Adjournment**

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

D. Nunno adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Beth Simpson*

Beth Simpson  
Recorder