

Minutes of the Human Services Board of Director's meeting of September 21, 2021.

Meeting held via Audio/Tele Conferencing.

Brendan Casey called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

**1. Roll Call**

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

Absent: Rev. Karl Duetzmann, 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 B. Casey, seconded by J. Duva, that the minutes of May 18, 2021, be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**4. Director's Report**

D. Joseph welcomed new board member, Melissa Tranquilli.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Community Outreach Workers continue to provide services in the areas of emergency rent/mortgage, utility and food assistance. DHS staff also helps clients in need of diapers, utility, housing and budget counseling.

From May through September 2021, there have been 57 outreach meetings conducted primarily via telephone.

The Renters' Rebate program will end on October 1, 2021. To date, 324 Renters' Rebate applications have been process, totaling \$172,989.

DHS continues its partnership with Dollar Energy Fund. Fifty-three applications were processed from May through September 2021, totaling \$9,275.

DHS provided farmer market vouchers (FMV) to qualifying seniors through the 2021 Senior Farmers' Market Nutritional Program (SFMNP), administered by CT Department of Agriculture. Farmers' market vouchers were also distributed through the department's partnership with The Salvation Army. DHS staff were able to distribute The Salvation Army sponsored FMV to families in need, with no age or income requirements.

The Energy Assistance (EA) program has started. DHS continues its partnership with TEAM, Inc., Community Action Agency, located in Derby. TEAM began taking appointments for EA applications two months ago. DHS staff will begin appointments at the end of September. Most of these appointments will be conducted in real time (i.e. when clients call to apply for the program). EA applications will be completed utilizing telephone, email or U.S. mail.

During the eviction moratorium, Connecticut began a program “UniteCT” to provide emergency rental assistance. The UniteCT application process can be cumbersome to navigate through, therefore DHS staff began working with clients to help them apply. The assistance provided through this program can be substantial. DHS successfully assisted 3 Milford families with the UniteCT process. These households received rental assistance totaling \$30,000 and utility assistance of \$2,327, through UniteCT.

DHS has been awarded additional COVID-19 related grant funding through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

With the utility moratorium coming to an end, the department anticipates an uptick in calls for utility assistance.

B. Casey asked if there was an increase in Energy Assistance applications last year due to COVID.

D. Joseph responded that the EA applications taken last year were status quo but expect an increase this year because the Department of Social Services (DSS) has made eligibility easier.

Youth and Family Services (YFS), Program Coordinator, Lesley Darling participates in the Homeless & Unsheltered Multi-Agency Network (H.U.M.A.N.) and Milford Collaborative where they pull together resources within the community.

YFS Program Coordinator partners with Bridges to provide support for youth and mental health related programs. YFS grant dollars were utilized to fund Bridges Healthcare coordination of individual and group therapy services. This assistance allowed families, who didn’t have health insurance, or had a high insurance deductible, to obtain mental health services.

YFS grant awards also funded a webinar series, developed by YFS staff, entitled “Strong Families Create Strong Minds: A Positive Strategy.” This three- part series features Dr. Lisa Damour and Reena Ninan, Alicia Farrell, Ph.D., and Jennifer Ju, MD. Each webinar is designed to address the challenges of parenting in this complex time and provide practical skills to support families and assist in forming meaningful community connections. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, Dr. Lisa Damour and Reena Ninan presented their webinar “Ask Lisa-The Psychology of Parenting.” The next two webinars will be held in September and October 2021.

In addition, YFS partnered with Boys and Girls Club of Milford and Jennifer Ju, MD to present a 5 week after school program to all youth enrolled in the Boys and Girls Club program. Titled, “Hello Best Self,” this virtual program focused on mindfulness and health and wellness, topics that had been identified by staff and students as challenging to address/maintain during this time. Approximately 300 students participated.

On May 19, 2021, Milford Youth & Family Services hosted the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Mayor's Youth Award, recognizing outstanding volunteer service to the community. Due to COVID restrictions, this year's ceremony was held outdoors at the Milford Academy Upper Field with limited attendees. A total of 151 youth received awards.

J. Duva asked about homeless and the effects of COVID-19.

D. Joseph responded that at the beginning of the pandemic the homeless shelter residents had to be decentralized at a local hotel. Since then, the residents have moved back into the shelter. The Beth El Shelter has COVID-19 health & safety policies and protocols in place for COVID inclusive of screening, testing, quarantine and isolation. Unsheltered individuals are able to access testing and vaccination at Beth-El Center on weekly basis as well. .

J. Duva asked if there has been any engagement with homeless individuals who are panhandling.

D. Joseph responded that the City of Milford has had a campaign in place for several years—"Have a Heart, Give Smart"—that encourages individuals to give to local social services agencies who can help individuals on a path to long-lasting self-sufficiency. Through H.U.M.A.N. local providers meet and coordinate outreach and engagement efforts primarily conducted by Beth-El Center staff with unsheltered individuals within the community, including those who panhandle.

The next Human Services Board of Director's meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 16, 2021.

## **5. Old Business**

B. Casey congratulated Deepa and the Milford Health Department for receiving the Community Services Award, from the Democratic Town Committee, in June 2021.

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

A motion was made by B. Casey, seconded by J. Campbell, to nominate Donna Nunno as Chairman. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by D. Nunno, seconded by J. Duva, to nominate Brendan Casey as Vice-Chairman. The motion carried unanimously.

Accepting the positions are:

Donna Nunno – Chairman

Brendan Casey – Vice Chairman

**7. Adjournment**

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

B. Casey adjourned the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Beth Simpson  
Recorder