

Minutes of the Human Services Board of Director's meeting of February 16, 2021.

Meeting held via Audio/Tele Conferencing.

Donna Nunno called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Present: Donna Nunno, Brendan Casey, Joy Duva, Sue Stango, Joan Campbell, and Barbara Genovese.

Absent: Jessica DeYoung, Rev. Karl Duetzmann, 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 November 17, 2020 be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Director's Report

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Community Outreach Workers continue to respond to and work with clients in need of assistance. The DHS staff follows COVID-19 protocol by servicing clients remotely, utilizing telephone appointments, email and drop box for documents. It has been quiet in terms of outreach, as there may be many clients using the current moratorium on rent & mortgage and utility to delay payments. The Outreach staff is working on a strategy, in conjunction with the Milford Social Services Network and H.U.M.A.N (the Milford Homeless Workgroup), to communicate to residents the importance for them to be on payment plans for these expenses. While the moratorium is helpful during this time, we are preparing to respond when the moratorium is lifted and residents may be facing evictions and/or utility shut-offs due to non-payment.

In the effort to help alleviate food insecurity, particularly due to the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and families, staff continue to distribute emergency food vouchers to meet this critical need. Outreach staff also refer clients to the Farmers to Families Food Box Distribution Program. Three faith-based organizations—Kingdom Life Church, Cornerstone Community Church, and The Storehouse Project—have taken the lead on this program in Milford. Milford is a distribution site for the Greater New Haven Region.

The Energy Assistance program is in progress. Application appointments have been conducted over the telephone and online. This year, TEAM, Inc. proactively reached out to many Milford

clients at the beginning of this heating season and started the application process over the telephone. At this point in the program, DHS outreach staff is not as busy with Energy Assistance appointments as in previous years as many Milford Residents have already applied. Some of the Energy Assistance procedures that have been adapted because of COVID-19 may be continued after the pandemic.

Outreach has expanded its work on Dollar Energy Fund applications, where Milford Residents can receive up to \$175.00 credit, annually, on their water bill.

The Adopt-A-Family Holiday program shifted to a gift card model this year, due to the pandemic. At first it was challenging for donors to make the shift to gift cards from tangible presents, but as we worked through the program, the change to gift cards became very successful. Forty-four donors participated providing gift cards to 69 adopted families totaling 264 individuals.

The DHS received additional COVID-19 relief grant funding through the CARES act. Some of this funding has to be spent by the end of May 2021. We do not know what the CARES funding will consist of following the end of these grant periods.

Youth & Family Services (YFS) programming has adjusted to the Milford Public Schools (MPS) hybrid model.

Before the pandemic, Deepa and Lesley Darling, YFS Program Coordinator, coordinated a relationship between Bridges, Inc. and the MPS to provide therapy services to students. This program is funded through a YFS grant award. Partnering with Bridges is a great way to provide both individual and group therapy to MPS students, especially since mental health needs have increased due to the pandemic. Lesley also sits on the H.U.M.A.N. group where they pull together resources for mental health education and awareness, particularly as it relates to homeless and unsheltered individuals in Milford.

Mayor's Youth Award was a virtual event last year because of COVID-19. This year we are thinking though the event and it may be both virtual and hybrid. More information to follow as planning continues moving forward.

The Board of Finance hearings have kicked off. The DHS/YFS presentation is scheduled for Monday, February 22nd. We have requested, and the Mayor has approved, a flat budget.

5. Old Business

None

6. New Business

None

7. Adjournment

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

D. Nunno adjourned the meeting at 5:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Beth Simpson
Recorder