

Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners
Meeting Summary
of
May 23, 2012

Board Members Present: Bill Sinclair, Marlen Santana Perez, Kristine LaLonde and Mary Rolando

Board Members Absent: Frank Boehm, Renard François and George Price

Metro Legal Advisor: Corey Harkey

Mayor Liaison: Hershell Warren

Commissioner Sinclair called the meeting to order by welcoming everyone to the May Metro Social Services (MSS) Board of Commissioners Meeting.

Commissioner Sinclair made a motion to approve the April meeting summary with one correction. Board Members Present should include Commissioner Sinclair who was in attendance. With this correction, a motion was properly made, seconded and accepted unanimously.

Finance

Pam McEwen stated that MSS is getting close to the fiscal year end and the actual activity through the end of April MSS was \$384,000 under budget. Ms. McEwen is projecting that year end will be around \$340,000 under budget.

Funds for the client tracking software project to date are in the 4% Fund with \$35,000 spent. Metro Social Services donation fund has a balance of \$29,038.00.

MSS met with Metro Council regarding the 2013 fiscal year budget proposal. MSS started with the current year budget being \$7,746,800. With the Mayors proposed budget, MSS would lose a social worker associate position, the bonus in lieu of increments, \$29,000 in meal preparation, \$10,000 bus tickets and \$6,600 office supplies. This will leave total reductions being \$138,500 with additions of \$100,000 to the Guest House Contract and the internal service fees with total additions being \$102,500 with net decreases being \$36,500. However, there is a proposed increase for employee salaries, 4% staff and 2% management, not reflected in the current numbers provided. Ms. McEwen stated that MSS would not have the accurate numbers until the budget is finalized sometime after July.

Program Reports

- *Adult & Family* – Commissioner Perez noted the great job done by MSS and that it is important to address unmet needs. Tarver Smith, Manager of Adult and Family Services stated that there has been an increase in people coming to MSS for medical benefits primarily due to loss of employment.

The greatest need is for emergency financial assistance. This includes 35% needing rental assistance, 21% utility assistance and 7% were in need of mortgage assistance. People who live in Section 8 are subject to losing their housing if utilities are cut off, so it is important that resources be available so they can retain housing. Mr. Smith further stated that with the schools closing, MSS is anticipating a greater need in access to more emergency food. When kids are at home each day, parents are preparing breakfast and lunch.

Commissioner LaLonde suggested we discuss the charge of being on a Commission. Commissioner Sinclair commented that the purpose of meeting with the programs was discussed at an earlier meeting, with the intent of Commissioners to become well-acquainted with what the services are. In addition, the departments have discussed gaps in services, and the challenge for the board is to find a way to address these gaps.

- *Homeless* – Commissioner Sinclair stated that he met with Giovanni Corley and the primary things discussed were the quality of service. The Homeless unit currently has 104 active cases and this averages out to about 21 cases per person. Year to date, 75 individuals who received permanent housing.

Commissioner Sinclair continued his report by stating that the 4th quarter of the fiscal year is generally the time when the staff does more outreach. Commissioner Sinclair closed by stating that if staff ever needed a board member to go out to the community and speak on behalf of the agency to let them know.

- *Homemakers* – Commissioner Rolando stated that statistics has been reported on this program a couple of months ago. Pat Wingfield and Commissioner Rolando had been on a home visit to a customer. Commissioner Rolando was pleased to report on the benefit of these services to a client who also receives services from the Nutrition program.

Commissioner Rolando stated that the program should be marketed more by possibly finding a way to meet with groups in the senior residential buildings and to find someone to give testimonies on services they have received.

Ms. Pratt stated that we will be working with Judy Tackett, MSS Communication Coordinator, to assist with marketing the Homemaker Services and we will be running the information on Channel 3. We will also use community events to help market the program.

- *Burial Program* – Carol Wilson made comments on behalf of Commission Price in his absence. Ms. Wilson stated that she wanted to comment on three goals that were discussed by the board.
 1. Changing the language in the policy (discussion is pending)
 2. Indigent burial property
 3. Cemetery at 18th Avenue (needs new gate and upkeep)

Ms. Wilson stated that we only had 7 burials last month and no cremations. Ms. Pratt stated that a report has been sent to Rich Riebling and Tahlia Lomax regarding the

indigent burial program and the 10 acres needed. This report on indigent burials was prepared by Abdelghani Barre with Planning and Coordination along with Carol Wilson.

Corey Harkey with Metro Legal provided information on the state requirements for burials and that Metropolitan Code of Laws requires MSS to provide indigent burial. Ms. Harkey stated that the commission has the authority to define residents in whatever manner necessary.

- *Nutrition* – Carol Wilson made comments elaborating on the Nutrition Program in the absence of Renard François. Marketing and outreach are ways of making the public aware of the Nutrition Program. The Nutrition Program and the Homemaker Program has started to partner and have Open Houses at the various sites providing information on services. Ms. Wilson stated that as a result of the marketing outreach for the last two months, 54 new applicants signed up for the congregate meals. These open houses will be held at various sites for the remainder of the fiscal year.
- *Planning & Coordination* – Commissioner LaLonde stated that 75 people attended the Community Needs Workshop which was very successful. Commissioner LaLonde stated that she and Dinah Gregory have assisted with a grant proposal to Bloomberg Philanthropies with United Way and the Mayor's office for a financial empowerment centers. She noted that the Executive Committee of the Poverty Council will meet on Wednesday, May 30.
- Ms. Gregory commented on another workshop (The Interfaith Poverty Workshop), tentatively scheduled for late September that will be co-sponsored by Metro Social Services and Catholic Charities of Tennessee.

Executive Directors Report

Renee Pratt began commented on the Budget Hearings which were held before council the previous day. Two council members made comments about the reductions and the concern with reductions in the Nutrition program along with the bus passes. The council members expressed interest that the funds will not be taken from either of these programs. Ms. Pratt felt that it was a very positive hearing and she was pleased with the outcome.

Ms. Pratt then commented on Dinah Gregory and the Planning and Coordination team that had already supplied the council with demographic information for the council districts along with maps and reports. Ms. Gregory also sent out the Community Needs Evaluation and the council was very complimentary of the MSS staff.

Homemaker Program just went through the State Audit Report on May 2nd. Homemakers had no findings and Ms. Pratt thanked Pat Wingfield, Manager of the Homemaker Program along with her staff for all their hard work.

Ms. Pratt then stated that the Homelessness Commission held there Annual 5K Run for the Homeless along with the Key Alliance. They had over 500 participants and it went extremely well. Ms. Pratt again thanked the Homelessness staff and the volunteers for a job well done.

In closing, Ms. Pratt stated that the Case Management System presentation will be held at the June Board Meeting.

New Business

Old Business

Commissioner Sinclair called for the meeting to be adjourned.