

Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2019

Board Members Present: William Harris, Michael Bradley, Steve Meinbresse, Betty Kirkland and Phil Orr

Board Members Absent: Brandon Thompkins and Charlotte Peacock

Metro Legal Advisor: Alex Dickerson

Mayor Liaison:

Commissioner Harris called the August Metro Social Services (MSS) Board of Commissioners meeting to order.

Commissioner Harris requested a motion to approve the June Meeting Minutes. The motion was moved and seconded and accepted unanimously.

Finance Report – Lisa Ricketts, CFO

For the month ending June 30th, Ms. Ricketts stated the expenditures year to date is under budget due to open positions. Burial expenses are over budget \$77,603. MSS donation fund at the end of June we have \$66,914.02 and this include Camilla Caldwell, Two Generational and Meals on Wheels. The Metro Homeless Grant Funds has a balance of \$299,000 at the end of June.

Director Pratt reminded the Commissioners of the Two Generational Fund and the first annual fundraiser was held last month and we made of \$1600.00.

Commissioner Harris asked for a motion to approve the August Finance Report. The motion was moved by and seconded and accepted unanimously.

Directors Report – Director Pratt, Executive Director

Director Pratt began her report by commenting on the budget cycle that started in July and Metro Social Services (MSS) received a request from Finance to have a departmental savings of 2% again this year which come to a total of \$192,800.00. So, the MSS budget is being watched very closely.

We have looked at the current vacancies that are open and possibly lowering some of the classifications of the open positions or not filling them at all right now in order to meet the request. Director Pratt stated that a meeting was held with the budget analysis and they agreed to the proposal.

Next, Director Pratt discussed the Winter Overflow Shelter and that MSS is in the process of putting together a proposal. Director Pratt stated that she and Judy met with the Nashville Rescue Mission, Room in the Inn and the Salvation Army to discuss how they could work together to operate the overflow shelter for this winter. After this meeting, Director Pratt and Judy Tackett made a proposal to the Nashville Rescue Mission, Room in the Inn and Salvation Army about what can be done to help with this process.

Director Pratt stated, based on the data, even though Metro open the Winter Overflow Shelter there are still vacant beds in the city that can be used. The proposal will be presented to the Mayor's office and Judy is trying to schedule a meeting with the Vice Mayor to give him an idea of what the proposal look like.

Lastly, Director Pratt stated that MSS Strategic Planning and Research will host a forum intitled around "21st Century Systems Approach to Economic Well Being in Nashville". This forum includes the Center for Non-Profit Management, United Way, Vanderbilt and Judge Linda Jones Court. The forum will be held in October, but a specific date has not been determined.

Family Support and Two Generation – Lonnie Wade, Program Manager

Mr. Wade began his report by giving a little history on the Two Generation Program. Two Gen give MSS the approach to work with both the adults and the children together. MSS currently has some families in the Pilot Program for Two Gen and it is working great.

What has been discovered while working with the pilot is the time frame that the customer must commit too and it typical fluctuates between an eighteenth month program or longer. However, the client comments to time frame on the front end but once the crisis ends the customer loses interest in the time commitment to the program. So, we are looking at shorting the time frame or working on ways to keep people motivated to carry out the full process.

Mr. Wade stated that MSS found out about a grant that we could use for Two Gen and then we found out that Salvation Army had applied for the same grant. So, instead of competing with Salvation Army for the same grant, we decided to partner with them Salvation Army and co-write the grant. Salvation Army has been approved for the second interview process of the second phase of the process. Mr. Wade did mention that part of the process for this grant is that two staff will be hired under this grant to operate the Two Gen program from within MSS.

Commissioner Meinbresse asked if this is a twelve-month pilot for Davidson County or state wide? Mr. Wade stated that it is a state-wide pilot.

Director Pratt asked for all the Commissioners read over the Knowles Foundation information that was sent out a couple weeks ago and be ready to discuss and vote at the October meeting.

Strategic Planning and Research – Abdelghani Barre, Director

Mr. Barre began by stating that he and his team has been working for the last few months on what direction to go after 10 years of the Community Needs Evaluation. The question always come up, "What is next?" If you look at the MSS mission, it is to "Achieve the Stability of Social Well-Being". We need the community to understand what this statement means county wide.

So, if we look at what has happened for the last 10 years some observations has been made especially concerning the poverty level in Davidson County. For instance, in 2010, The Poverty Reduction Initiative was done in Nashville and we came to realize that telling poor people to get a job and the problem will solve itself. But those recommendations from 10 years again have a gap in the data that need to be resolved. When we start to try and understand how fragile households are in Davidson county, do we really understand how to address poverty? It has been said that 4 out of 10 adults in the United States could not get \$400 in case of an emergency and we are sure that several people in the Davidson county area could fall into this category.

For instance, in 2005 there were about 78,000 people in poverty here in Davidson County and that was before the recession along with unemployment in 2018 at 2.6%.

Looking at all the construction you would think the economic would grow tremendously with unemployment at 2.6%. But we still have 97,000 people in poverty. You would have thought poverty would have went down, but instead it has grown even before the recession. So, the numbers show us that economic growth does not eliminate poverty for the low income or middle class.

When we look at certain occupations in the Nashville, they only pay the poverty rate, it is hard for a family to make enough to pay their bills, that is why MSS tries to empower the clients we serve. Mr. Barre stated that in reality; we have people moving out of Nashville to the surrounding counties because it is too expensive to live in Davidson County. So, this leaves room for people to move into Nashville to purchase all the expensive apartments that the average person cannot afford. Mr. Barre also spoke on segregation that has created isolated neighborhoods when it comes to transportation, jobs, education and incarceration.

Mr. Barre stated there are certain steps Metro Social Services must take to address the financial hardships of poverty in the Nashville area. We must first focus on mobility in the Nashville area. We need to look at the entire systems approach and not just one thing. Giving a family a box of food or paying one months rent will not answer the question for poverty.

Then when we look at the children, they are raised in poverty which they may come up living the same way as their parents. This is another example as to why mobility is needed in the Nashville area.

If MSS wants to change the social well-being or economy in Davidson County, we must start to focus on mobility. So, if we stay on the same path, we will continue to see the same amount of people in poverty. Mr. Barre stated that we need to have a systems approach where we look at everything and not focus on one thing.

Strategic Planning and Research is making a case for a new direction. Mr. Barre stated that a strategic vision must be developed which will include mobility and a new understanding of well-being. We must start at our education system.

Commissioner Bradley asked how we can tell when a family is making progress. Mr. Barre stated with the help of the forum it will give us an opportunity to hear from other non-profits or agencies that could provide input in this area.

Commissioner Orr stated that this is such an ingrained issue in our society, with hundreds of years of history. So, the conclusion Commissioner Orr has come too is that we must try and get non-profits and local governments to work together. But realistically it must be Federal Government since they have the resources and the power.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Barre spoke on the upcoming forum and how the forum can be used to help spread the word.

Director Pratt stated that we have one more MSS Commission meeting for this year and that will be in October and the agenda for 2020 will be forthcoming.

Commissioner Harris called for the meeting to be adjourned