

**Metro Social Services Virtual Board of Commissioners**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 24 ,2020**

**Board Members Present:** Michael Bradley, William Harris, Charlotte Peacock, Brandon Thompkins, Phil Orr and Michael McSurdy

**Board Members Absent:**

**Metro Legal Advisor:** Derrick Smith

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

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

Commissioner Bradley then reads the following statement per Metro Legal since this is a virtual meeting: *I move that the items on the meeting agenda constitute essential business of this Board, meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans considering the COVID-19 outbreak, and any rule conflicting with the Governor’s Executive Order permitting electronic meetings be suspended.*

***Commissioner Bradley then called for a motion of approval for the essential meeting agenda. The motion was moved by Commissioner Orr and seconded by Commission Harris and accepted unanimously.***

Finance Report – Loan Huynh

Ms. Huynh stated that she will be reporting on the month of July the first one in the FY21 and according to July 2020 the FY21 budget has a total of \$6,893,100 and the estimated budget being \$574,425. Ms. Huynh stated that the July expenditures appear to be under budget due to the ledger is still open and all the expenditures have not been posted.

Ms. Huynh then spoke on the Special Purpose Funds’ and that the expenditures appear to be over budget because the FY21 budge has not yet loaded into the ledger and the COVID-19 will appear over budget throughout FY21 because of the expenditures incurred due to Coronavirus pandemic. Ms. Huynh stated that the majority of this expenditure is related to the shelter at the Fairgrounds

Next, Ms. Huynh spoke on the Homelessness Grant Fund and this fund currently do not have a budget because the Social Services finance team is still working on estimated lei time to carry forward budget for FY20/21

, Ms. Hancock wanted to focus on the upcoming budget fiscal year 21. However, before doing so, Ms. Hancock wanted to go over the Finance report located in each of the board packets.

Ms. Hancock stated that MSS is coming in under budget by \$827,119, however by programs, the Warming Shelter and the Burial Assistance program both remain over budget. Ms. Hancock did state that a great deal of the MSS expenditures have been reclassified and redirected to the COVID 19 fund that does not directly affect our operating budget.

Ms. Hancock also commented on the Mayor's recommended budget and that it was not adopted or approved by Council, instead it was Councilman Mendes budget that passed. However, there has not been any official information or funding details released by OMB.

Ms. Hancock stated in terms of the MSS 2021 fiscal year budget we will receive an additional \$100,000 in funding for our burial program due to the changes in Davidson Counties population. Additionally, there will be a \$200,000 reduction for the elimination of Community Partnership Funds at this time, along with the \$450,000 elimination of the Direct Appropriation for the guest house for "The Room in the Inn".

Ms. Hancock further stated as for general government employees, there will be no longevity pay for fiscal year 21' as well as no merit increases for either open range employees or step increments. Employees will receive a 1% cost of living adjustment for all Metro Government Employees across the board that will be effective July 1, 2020.

Ms. Hancock then spoke on the departments goal and plans for restructuring the MSS Administration Division/Business Office. Ms. Hancock will oversee both the Human Resource and the Finance Department, along with Loan Huynh who will serve as the Finance Administrator and Crystal Lee as the Payroll Specialist. With this new team approach everyone will be cross trained in order to serve as a backup for one another.

#### Executive Directors Report – Renee Pratt, Executive Director

Ms. Pratt began her report by thanking Yuri Hancock for stepping in to assist in the Finance Dept. and Ms. Pratt also thanked staff for all their hard work. MSS has kept the doors open during COVID with staff seeing customers by appointment only. Ms. Pratt also stated that staff has also been on the front lines during the tornado efforts. The tornado hit on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and MSS staff were out assisting on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Ms. Pratt further stated that MSS has also maintained the Homeless Shelter which was a result of the Nashville Mission asking the Mayor's office for help with social distancing at the Mission. So, to help with this request, MSS opened the Fairgrounds on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 24

hours a day, 7 days a week to both men and women that came from the Mission. Ms. Pratt thanked staff that has kept the shelter going along with temp agencies, other staff and community partners along with other Metro Departments.

Ms. Pratt stated on March 2, the tornado devastated areas around Davidson County. The MSS building was damaged and we were unable to enter the building for 3 weeks. Ms. Pratt stated that MSS staff was out working in the areas that were in the path of the tornado providing service. Ms. Pratt thanked Commissioner Harris who offered his church as an office for MSS since we were displaced. MSS staff and our Strategic Research Division is continuing to work in these areas to determine the next move for MSS.

Ms. Pratt further stated that MSS has developed several infographic materials that have gone out into the community as well as posted on the MSS website regarding impact of the tornado. The material has also been distributed to over 4,000 recipients providing a current assessment along with economic impacts regarding the tornado and COVID events on groups that would most likely be adversely affected.

Ms. Pratt further stated that the MSS Strategic Planning and Research division has conducted a virtual release of the 2020 Community Needs Evaluation and this is the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the CNE 2020. The 2020 Community Needs Evaluation is posted on the MSS website and MSS is also planning on presenting a Webinar over the next month or so regarding the Community Needs Evaluation and the information we found from last year along with census data, economic data and demographic data.

Ms. Pratt also stated that the Overflow Shelter is currently fully staffed; and Ms. Pratt also reported that any staff working the shelter and that have worked with the homeless population are eligible for hazard pay. Renee stated that she is glad some effort is being put out to award the staff on the front lines and our essential workers.

Ms. Pratt then commented on the Strategic Planning and Research staff who has participated as members of the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster better known as the VOAD since the Nashville tornado. The VOAD was designed by the Mayor to coordinate activities addressing all types of needs of effective population in communities. Metro Social Services has been designated as the key data resource for this initiative by conducting a weekly call sharing information and resources that will help the community as it relates to disaster.

Ms. Pratt also commented that MSS participated with key local initiatives and offices addressing recovery from an impact of both events. Participants include Middle Tennessee Donors Forum, Martha O'Bryan, the Mayor's Office and others. The initiative for this group is to gather new insights for data and research oriented toward new insights into service delivery for populations most affected.

Finally, Ms. Pratt stated the board will hear from MSS to establish availability of dates for a summer retreat and more information will be forthcoming. Ms. Pratt also stated that MSS is in the process of reviewing the last Strategic Plan. Ms. Pratt stated that this plan has been in place for almost 3 years, which means it is time to review the

accomplishments by determining if the goals were met and create new baselines. Ms. Pratt stated that MSS is working on a new series to prepare for the Strategic Plan and will be gathering input from staff, stake holders, Metro partners and Community Partners as it relates to the direction Metro Social Services need to move in. MSS continues to address the many needs of our customers in the Davidson County area.

Ms. Pratt stated that MSS is excited about the area of social planning and we are looking forward to working in the community and addressing needs that come up everyday as we move through the Social Services planning process.

Ms. Pratt stated that each Commissioner is required to attend a mandatory board training that is presented by Metro Human Resources. Each Commissioner will receive information regarding this training in the next few weeks in order to set up a time.

Ms. Pratt closed by making mention of the new MSS Board of Commissioner Michael McSurdy. Commissioner McSurdy is the CEO and Director of Family and Children Services. Commissioner Thompkins was also reappointed, and we thank Commissioner Thompkins for agreeing to serve an additional 5 years. Ms. Pratt also stated that Commissioner Meinbresse was not reappointed to the Commission, however, Mr. Meinbresse has agreed to stay on in an advisory capacity and will continue to work with MSS around the efforts of Strategic Planning and Resources.

Commissioner Bradley thanked Ms. Pratt for the leadership here at Metro Social Services along with the great staff. Commissioner Bradley also thanked Pastor Harris for the services offered to MSS during the time MSS was displaced.

#### Homeless Impact Division (HID) – Judy Tackett, Executive Director

Ms. Tackett began by stating that MSS was asked to submit to Metro Council by May 31<sup>st</sup> a Cold Weather Shelter Report and since COVID happened around the same time the report was not submitted. So, HID submitted a report based on last year's approach. Ms. Tackett stated that this report included an evaluation and an assessment which highlighted the operational cost across different departments.

Ms. Tackett stated regarding the COVID 19 epidemic, HID really needs to watch what is happening with the Metro shelter and to evaluate what is currently happening with the systems approach at the shelter. Ms. Tackett stated that this could give us an opportunity to see what the system looks like and find what the gaps are and see if there are any opportunities to get people into housing.

Ms. Tackett stated that Metro has received technical assistance since the tornado and then shifted to COVID 19. HID is now working with MDHA, the Mayor's Office and MSS to look at long term funding prioritization and focus on the Emergency Solution Grant (ESG). Emergency Solutions Grant are administered by MDHA and Nashville received an allocation this year in the amount of \$450,000. However, there were two additional rounds of ESG funding. First round Nashville was allocated an additional 1.5 million and round two another 8.5 million dollars with approximately 2 years to have it spent.

Eligible activities for the ESG are emergency shelter, street outreach, expanded staff and Rapid Re-Housing Prevention. This is the focus HID is working on with the technical assistance provider from the department of Housing and Urban Development.

Ms. Tackett also stated that Nashville received \$5.3 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). So, the technical assistance is looking at the emergency solution grant dollars to see how it can be leveraged with the other additional funding Nashville is receiving through COVID. Ms. Tackett stated that she and Ms. Pratt are on the leadership team to advise and assist with any needs that may come up.

Ms. Tackett stated that HID is also looking at the hot weather and how they have been speaking with providers to decide on what can be done during hot weather. They have reached out to the libraries just trying to figure out ways to help the homeless stay cool. Ms. Tackett stated that she has been involved with the encampment situations and HID has identified up to 560 people live in encampments. Encampments are identified as a structure where people are living. Three of the encampments have up to 40 people or more and the largest encampment have anywhere from 75 to 100 and overall there are approximately 86 encampments in the Davidson County area. Ms. Tackett stated that they are working with various outreach to make sure who is providing services. So, there is a lot going on with encampment coordination and what need to happen.

Ms. Tackett then spoke on a partnership HID has with Community Care Fellowship and the primary focus being on housing. HID and Community Care Fellowship is currently doing a pilot program on motel vouchers. Ms. Tackett stated that it is a small project, but they were able to put a model and budget together to get people to use coordinated entry and refer people to hotel rooms through the coordinated entry program. HID has partnered with Bloomberg Associates to help with evaluation tools.

Ms. Tackett stated that the goal has been reached to get the most vulnerable off the streets and partnerships has been formed. The hotels that are currently being used are familiar with the homeless populations and HID will be looking at this from a data approach to get people into housing as quickly as possible.

In closing, Ms. Tackett stated that the general CoC (Continuum of Care) funding allocation for Nashville has increased approximately 22% over the last two years and this increase was announced before COVID hit. Ms. Tackett wanted to credit the increase to the community's assistance approach and focusing on coordinated entry to the changes that has been made with the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Ms. Tackett stated that Nashville should be proud for taking the systems approach.

#### Program Reports – Carol Wilson and Lonnie Wade

Ms. Wilson began her report with providing information on the Nutrition Program from the fiscal year July 1, 2019 to the current May 31, 2020. Ms. Wilson stated that MSS Nutrition Program was able to provide 145,350 units of meals to 766 seniors. These are seniors that were participating with the congregate meal site and homebound seniors.

Ms. Wilson then broke down by month the number of meals that have been provided. On March 17 is when the COVID meals began for the MSS Nutrition Program and 2,183 units of meals were provided to seniors. The MSS Nutrition Program was able to get a grant from GNRC that would provide meals to our seniors with our grant continuing through 2022. The grant totaled 1,068,305 which was to cover the COVID meals in which we are continuing to add on new seniors as needed. Ms. Wilson stated that the Nutrition Program is focusing more on providing hot meals to most of the seniors at this time.

Ms. Pratt further stated MSS was approached by the public and other Metro departments as well as the Mayor's office asking for MSS to assist with delivering meals to people that were COVID positive. MSS staff did take that on as well and delivered meals to the COVID positive people in the community. So, with that being said; essential staff are doing an essential job to ensure people are fed. Ms. Pratt and Commissioner Bradley thanked the Nutrition Program for a job well done.

Ms. Wilson then reported on the Indigent Burial Program and that the program is still providing services to those who are not able to afford a respectful burial. Ms. Wilson stated that over the past year the MSS Indigent Burial Program has provided 142 burials, 44 cremations and one COVID person for the month of May.

Lonnie Wade began his report on the Family Support Program by continue to reiterate the wearing of PPE's as MSS continues to provide service. Mr. Wade continue to remind staff of the social distancing, washing hands, wearing mask and cleaning the area daily. Mr. Wade stated that the agency has made some slight adjustments in terms of how we are seeing our customers. Customers are currently being seen by appointment only, however customers can call in and if they walk in the security guard will notify us in order to schedule an appointment with that customer. Mr. Wade did state that no services have stopped and if a customer come without a mask MSS will provide them with a mask. Staff are being encouraged to take down as much information over telephone as possible to shorten the face to face meeting. Staff are also being encouraged to do more telecommunication apps in lieu of face to face meetings.

Mr. Wade also commented on the training that was given to staff on Compassionate Interviewing and Empathic Listening to make things better for the customer and to give them hope. Mr. Wade stated that numbers were down for a while due to the safer at home and social distancing mandate. However, when Davidson County started to reopen, MSS started to see an increase in customers calling and making appointment.

Mr. Wade closed with stating throughout the tornado and all the pandemics, MSS was still able to find people housing. Family Support found housing for 3 people in the month of April and 6 people for the month of May.

#### Strategic Planning – Garrett Harper

Garrett Harper begin by stating that recently our society encountered some challenging issues related to social and economic inequities experienced by African American

communities. Nashville along with other cities are experiencing unrest and grievances and there is a widespread belief that the minority population is stuck in poverty as a result of systemic racism.

The Metro Charter designates the Metro Social Services Commission to study and report on topics of economic and social disparities in Davidson County. For the past 11 years MSS has documented, analyzed and shared data and information through the annual Community Needs Evaluation. This agency has reported on trends and patterns that affect residents of Davidson County as it relates to poverty, income, education, housing and other aspects of daily life. This type of research is what can truly move people from poverty.

Some of the results from national research are:

- Disparity is often deep and enduring (race, ethnicity, age, gender, neighborhood characteristics, family structure and other characteristics represent ways that economics and social disparities result and continue.
- Economic mobility for individuals and households secures enduring financial stability (the ability of one generation to advance out of poverty)
- Meaningful and sustainable mobility from poverty encompasses several dimensions (economic success, power, being valued in the community, strong and health families, supportive communities and opportunities to earn and learn)

Policies that increase mobility from poverty takes time through the course of people's lives or even their children's lives and this demonstrates long term investments.

The opportunity for MSS to develop meaningful, sustainable Social Planning is an important fulfillment of the agency's Metro Charter mission. MSS must focus attention and effort on Social Planning.

Mr. Harper stated that it really is an exciting time for Metro Social Services to bring poverty, mobility and opportunity to the forefront. Mr. Harper also thanked the board for their support and encouragement in ways for MSS to be the city's leading agency to analyze, help inform and guide the community.

#### Budget – Renee Pratt

Ms. Pratt stated that Ms. Hancock had already spoke on the budget earlier during the Finance Report and the proposed budget recommended to Council by Councilman Mendes was the one that was accepted. Ms. Pratt stated that MSS does not have a final budget, but we hope to receive the information over the next few days and then we will share that information with the board as to what our budget will be for the coming year.

***A motion was made by Commissioner Bradley to accept the Budget Improvement Request as it was presented. The motion was accepted by Commissioner Peacock and seconded by Commissioner Thompkins.***

**Commissioner Bradley called for the meeting to be adjourned**