

**Tri-County Opportunities Council
Board of Directors Meeting
September 26, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Harmon.

The membership recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Jacob, Board Secretary, took roll call. A quorum was present.

Members Present: (In-person participants are bolded)

Sue Britt; Susan Bursztynsky; **Robin Camplain; Mary Cork; David Ditzler; Al Harmon; Bob Henkelman; Marcia Heuer; John Hockstadt; Tom Howes; Betty Johnson; Lisa Johnson; Julie Jacobs; Don Koehler; Donna Koehler;** Kenneth Krogulski; Michael McEmery; **Linda Pennell;** Ronald Preston; Juanita Randklev; **Angela Shippert; David Torres; Marissa Trumper;** Jeanne Vargas; Laura Watters; Derek Whited.

Members Absent:

Charlotte Balensiefen; Karla Belzer; Mary Jo Credi; Bernene Dahl; Kim Dahl; BJ Holocker; Betsy Kinder; Ron Kleppin; Brad Lindstrom; Ginny McPerryman; Inga Neuner; Lorene Winfield.

Others Present:

Jill Calkins; Rachael DeSpain; Dawn Kanzler; Brandi Newell; Tammy Saenz; Wayne Thompson; Neddie Watts.

Minutes:

The August 31, 2023 Board minutes were previously sent to all members for review. Mr. Hockstadt made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Koehler seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Financial Report:

The July 2023 Financial Reports were provided to the membership prior to tonight's meeting for review. Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to accept the July 2023 Financial Reports and file for audit. Ms. Koehler seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Fiscal Report: Dawn Kanzler

Ms. Kanzler shared that the ending book balance for August was \$323.89. A balance of \$307,000 was owed on the line of credit to Sauk Valley Bank as of August 31, 2023. Mr. Krogulski asked about the decline in the Edward Jones Unrestricted Funds and Ms. Kanzler explained that it has been going up and down with the market.

CLA is working on preparing the Agency's 2022 403(b) Thrift Plan Financial Statements and IRS Form 5500. Unfortunately, they have had challenges getting and have received late documents from the service providers. Therefore, she will have to schedule a virtual Executive and Audit/Finance Meeting in the next few weeks—more information to come once available. She will mail the documents to

members as soon as they are received. The 5500 must be filed with the Department of Labor by October 16, 2023.

Program Reports:

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG): Neddie Watts

Ms. Watts stated that last month, she mailed out a copy of the Community Action Plan (CAP), which was inclusive of the 2023 full Community Needs Assessment. She stated that the attachments were not included since the entire plan was 240 pages. Tonight, she brought copies of two surveys; one was labeled Attachment A1 and the other Attachment A2. She pointed out that on the Attachment A2 survey, she did eliminate approximately 40 additional pages that included numerous pages of text such as “yes,” “no,” zip codes, and a numeric number indicating the household size to save paper. These are the two Client Needs Assessments included in the CAP Plan. She felt it was necessary to share these complete surveys with the Board and will mail copies to those not in attendance tonight. Following the discussion, Ms. Watts sought Board action to accept and submit the 2024 Community Action Plan, which is inclusive of the 2023 Full Community Needs Assessment, to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to accept and submit the 2024 Community Action Plan. Ms. Randklev seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Ms. Watts followed up on a question that was asked last month regarding the Survey Comparison and counting the “None of the Above” for each question. She explained that all surveys are collected using SurveyMonkey. She played around with the system for a while to see about removing the “None of the Above” question to help get more precise percentages on many of the questions. She has not found it yet, but before next year, in developing the plan, she will reach out directly to SurveyMonkey and ask for some guidance or see if they can add a filter to the surveys when analyzing the results.

She reported that the new program, Department of Human Services (DHS) Rapid Rehousing, will start in a few weeks. This program will help literally homeless individuals (staying in a shelter, living in a car, a park, or anywhere not meant for human habitation) sustain affordable housing. It will also assist in supportive services such as client moving costs, basic household provisions, child care, education services, employment assistance and job training, health services, substance abuse treatment, transportation, and utilities. She is very excited to begin this new program and is looking forward to reporting back with outcomes and success stories. Ms. Watters asked if being a US citizen was a requirement for the program. Ms. Watts explained that, yes, for all DHS-funded programs, customers must have a valid SSN but that it is not a requirement for CSBG-funded services.

In closing, Ms. Watts shared a report from Ms. Vos on the outcome and successes of the 1st Annual Softball/Family Picnic Engagement Event.

Foster Grandparents: Brandi Newell

Ms. Newell reported that three of the fifty-four grandparents the program started with in August have left the program for a variety of reasons. The program is now at a count of 51 Foster Grandparents. The

program is currently funded at 48. Preliminary figures indicate that they are still well within the range of meeting their output goals for service hours with the remaining volunteers. Therefore, additional volunteers will not be brought in at this time.

They had an outstanding in-service on September 1st. Jenine Patty-Anderson from EHS/HS gave a wonderful presentation on the Early Head Start/Head Start program. Volunteers loved interacting with her and especially felt a connection when she fondly remembered her own Foster Grandma from her classroom. Volunteers received a book from the author Greg Forbes Siegman called "The First Thirty." The book is a biography detailing Forbes-Siegman's relationship with his grandmother and the desire she fostered in him to volunteer. At their October In-Service, the volunteers will enjoy a Zoom Q&A session with the author.

Grandma Ruth did, indeed, have a fantastic 95th birthday celebration! Many YMCA staff, children from multiple classrooms, family, TCOC staff, and even Representative Brad Fritts stopped by the Dixon YMCA to offer well-wishes to Grandma Ruth. We look forward to celebrating #100 in another 5 years!

Early Head Start/Head Start Program: Rachael DeSpain

Board approval is needed for the 2022-2023 Early Head Start/Head Start Self-Assessment document, including the 2023-2024 Early Head Start/Head Start Program Improvement Initiatives. These initiatives were determined through in-depth analysis of self-assessment documentation in each component area, such as checklists, observations, parent surveys, staff surveys, interviews, program monitoring tools, Child Plus reports, tracking reports, etc. All targeted initiatives, unless expressly indicated as either the Early Head Start or the Head Start program specifically, apply to all services for children birth to five and their respective families. Ms. Randkev asked for explanation for some of the terminology used on pages 3 & 4 of the report and Ms. DeSpain explained. Ms. Randklev made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 Early Head Start/Head Start Self-Assessment document. Ms. Koehler seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Program staff are working very hard through the extensive hiring process to get employees hired. She was excited to announce that they recently hired an Oregon Teacher and Teacher Assistant. This has been a challenge for over a year. Currently, 6 applicants are in the hiring process; this number changes weekly. There are vacant positions in all counties but Carroll.

Emphasis on locating, attending, and bringing awareness to Agency services during community events remains a focus. Moving forward, Neddie Watts will begin working with Esme Gallardo-Gutierrez, Family and Community Service Manager, and Matthew Pearlman, Family Specialist. Please continue to offer any information regarding community events in September, October, and November.

The program will begin using additional social media platforms to share parenting education and program events, advertise services, and market employment opportunities. At the close of October, they will have active Instagram and Twitter (X) pages and will have revitalized their internal Facebook page.

The National Head Start Association provided updates regarding the impact of a government shutdown. While the program would feel no immediate impact, it could and most likely would interrupt services for children, families, and staff throughout the nation. Discussion regarding the current budget proposals was a highlight of the conference. The House of Representatives budget proposes a cut of 750 million dollars to Head Start funding. A cut of this magnitude would leave an estimated 110,000 children and families without Head Start services. While the Senate budget proposes a 250 million dollar increase, it falls short of noted inflation. Advocacy efforts continue in both the House and Senate offices. Ms. Watters asked about funding opportunities within State funds and about partnerships with other early childhood programs to ensure that waiting list are shared. Ms. DeSpain explained possibilities of blending funds and the current Memorandum of Understanding that is completed with early childhood partners.

In tonight's handouts, Ms. DeSpain provided a copy of the August 2023 Board Report and Policy Council minutes, September Policy Council minutes, Early Head Start and Head Start Program Information Reports, 2022-2023 Self-Assessment, the enrollment status report and a register of vacant positions throughout the program. Please encourage any interested candidates to visit the Agency website at www.tcochelps.org or call 1-800-323-5434. In conclusion, she reminded Board members to fill out the In-Kind/Volunteer sheet for any time spent reading over materials previously handed out.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): Tammy Saenz

Ms. Saenz brought a copy of the Matrix for program year 24 and will mail a copy to those not in in-person attendance tonight. She explained the matrix, shared data and noted the reduction from the previous year.

The LIHEAP department started receiving phone calls on September 18 , which was the set date for customers to request appointments. All offices in the nine-county area have been busy with phone calls, mail-ins and auto enrolls. She explained that they are able to auto-enroll elderly and disabled customers, providing they have not moved or changed the household make-up. They do have to provide their new income but this process has made it much easier on them. The PIPP re-certifications have been going strong and keeping the PIPP department busy. The furnace program will start October 2, and she is already receiving calls.

Part-year employees have returned and have had a couple of days of training. They are implementing several changes this year that will hopefully allow them to stay caught up.

Mr. Harmon explained a situation he encountered and asked about the ability of the Illinois Commerce Commission(ICC) to assist in resolving customers/utility disputes. Ms. Saenz shared that they refer customers to ICC when they are not eligible for services and have exhausted all resources and they have helped at times. The contact numbers for ICC are 1-800-524-0795 for Springfield and 1-312-814-2850 for Chicago.

Weatherization/Housing Program: Wayne Thompson

Mr. Thompson reported that the Weatherization Department has completed all the homes for the 2023 program and will soon have to complete the Reconciliation/Closeouts for the HHS and State 2023 Grants. They have also entered all new costs from the 2024 Market Analysis into the Weather-Works system for the 2024 program and held the Weatherization Program Informational Meeting on Sept 15, presenting the proposed cost to contractors. Members may have seen the meeting notices in a local newspaper or on the Agency's website. The Negotiation Meeting will be held this Thursday at the office in Rock Falls at 10:00 a.m. This meeting is designed for the contractors to negotiate or dispute any cost presented to them. They have assessments that are ready to be entered as soon as they lock down the 2024 costs, so if there are no disputes, they will immediately begin processing jobs and fully kick-off the 2024 program year.

Also, this year, the Weatherization Department will begin rolling out a much more comprehensive component of the program called Weatherization Plus and Weatherization Ready funds. These additions to the program will allow them to make repairs to homes that would otherwise be deferred or denied due to things like roof leaks, plumbing or electrical issues, etc. He stressed the fact that this is not rehabilitation, and the program does have its limits. For example, they can now replace bad wiring in the attic, allowing them to insulate or replace leaking pipes and drains in order to complete a crawlspace or install a furnace in the basement. All situations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and any repairs over \$5,000 require bids and waiver approval from DCEO.

They have six of the required ten desk audits approved by DCEO (Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity) and will submit the remaining four within the next couple of weeks.

The maintenance person has completed yet another rental unit in Sterling, and they were able to select a tenant for this property today.

President/CEO's Report: Jill Calkins

The Board remains with one vacancy, LaSalle County, Category C. Ms. Calkins has developed an informational memo that members can share with interested parties.

At the August meeting, the need to schedule a Full Board Training was discussed. Most members expressed interest in having training before an already scheduled Board Meeting or replacing an already scheduled meeting with training. Ms. Calkins considered starting with the October meeting until her recently scheduled surgery. She will be on FMLA for a couple of weeks in October, but this shouldn't interfere with the October Board Meeting. With so much Personnel Committee business in November, she will work with the Board Chair to possibly begin training in January.

The Personnel Committee will need to start meeting in October to address any necessary changes to the Human Resource Policy and Procedures Manual, complete the President/CEO appraisal, and update the Salary/Wage Classification by Position document.

Ms. Calkins informed the membership that on September 15, 2023 they closed on the sale of the property located at 507 West 3rd Street, Sterling, IL, and \$32,608 received from the sale was put into the housing funds.

Ms. Calkins informed members that a federal government shutdown at the end of September is likely. Congress has not passed funding bills for most of the government, including our programs, because of deeply divided spending priorities among the political parties. She explained that the Agency's normal operations will not change in response to a short-term government shutdown. They will continue to operate the programs and carry out our mission. Staff will continue to receive their pay and benefits and continue to assist customers.

If the shutdown extends beyond two weeks, we may see impacts such as delayed assistance payments for customers in some programs, and the Agency may take modest steps such as more closely evaluating and monitoring spending. A much longer shutdown could have more significant effects on our operations, but we expect those impacts will not happen for several weeks.

She stated that many unknown things could change as a shutdown transpires, including how various federal government departments will handle the shutdown. She is sharing what they know now and will keep members informed as they learn more. The key takeaway is that if the federal government shuts down, we will continue providing our vital services to the community until further notice.

Old Business:

There was no old business at this time.

New Business:

There was no new business at this time.

Next Meeting:

The next Board meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 26, 2023, at the Bureau County Metro Center, 837 Park Avenue West, Princeton, IL 61356., at 6:00 p.m.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.