

**Tri-County Opportunities Council
Board of Directors Meeting
August 31, 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)

Charlotte Balensiefen; Sue Britt; **Mary Cork; Al Harmon; Bob Henkelman; Marcia Heuer; John Hockstadt; BJ Holocker; Tom Howes; Betty Johnson; Lisa Johnson;** Julie Jacobs; Betsy Kinder; **Ron Kleppin; Don Koehler; Donna Koehler; Kenneth Krogulski;** Brad Lindstrom; Michael McEmery; Inga Neuner; Ronald Preston; Juanita Randklev; **Angela Shippert; David Torres; Marissa Trumper;** Laura Watters.

Members Absent:

Karla Belzer; Susan Bursztynsky; Robin Camplain; Mary Jo Credi; Bernene Dahl; Kim Dahl; David Ditzler; Ginny McPerryman; Linda Pennell; Jeanne Vargas; Derek Whited; Lorene Winfield.

Others Present:

Jill Calkins; Rachael DeSpain; Vanessa Hoffeditz; Brandi Newell; Tammy Saenz.

Minutes:

The July 25, 2023 Board minutes were previously sent to all members for review. Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Hockstadt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Financial Report:

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

Fiscal Report: Dawn Kanzler's report was given by Ms. Calkins

Board Action was sought to ratify approval given by the Executive Committee on August 18, 2023, to accept the 2022 Tri-County Opportunities Council's IRS Form 990 and Illinois Form AG990. Mr. Hockstadt made a motion to ratify the approval given by the Executive Committee. Mr. Holocker seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Board Action was also sought to ratify approval given by the Executive Committee on August 18, 2023, to accept the Agency's 2022 Form 5500 Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan. Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to ratify the approval given by the Executive Committee. Mr. Krogulski seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

The ending book balance for July was (\$363,398.10), and a balance of \$204,000 was owed on the line of credit to Sauk Valley Bank as of July 31, 2023. Ms. Kanzler stated that the Agency awaits reimbursements from the Department of Human Services (DHS), which explains why the bank account is being overdrawn. The Agency's DHS program pays invoices, vouchers, wages, and fringe monthly, then is reimbursed a few months later. The Agency received \$219,057.01 in August from DHS, so the ending balance should be in the black this month.

The cyber policy was renewed with BCS, effective September 1, 2023. The annual premium decreased by \$54 for a total of \$7,122.

Program Reports:

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG): Neddie Watts' report was given by Ms. Hoffeditz

Ms. Watts sought Board approval to apply for the 2024 CSBG grant in the amount of \$ \$794,107. These funds will provide various programs to encourage customer engagement to move individuals toward self-sufficiency. Ms. Randklev made a motion to approve the submission of an application for the 2024 CSBG grant. Mr. Kleppin seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Last month, Ms. Watts indicated that the Continuum of Care conducted a summer Point-In-Time count to count the number of homeless individuals on the morning of July 26. From this count, the numbers were as follows: Bureau (14), Carroll (5), LaSalle (29), Lee (6), Marshall (0), Ogle (16), Putnam (0), Stark (0), and Whiteside (6). The next count will be in January, and she is already developing a more robust plan to ensure all individuals are counted, especially in the rural communities.

She often talks about the partnership with BetterHelp, but the report is even better this time. Earlier this month, she discovered that all 50 donated vouchers had been used. This is great news because 50 individuals are receiving free mental health treatment for at least three months! Since the partnership has been going so great, BetterHelp will be donating another 50 vouchers for three months of free therapy! She hopes this impactful partnership continues to grow and gets bigger and better.

She stated that a form labeled "Survey Comparisons" was included in the Board packets. Throughout the year, any customer completing a CSBG intake completes a needs assessment to help Outreach Staff determine what services they can help with or refer for support. Additionally, these surveys were available on the Agency's Facebook page from June to August 1. Between these two surveys, 1,202 people completed them, and their top results for each category are listed under the "Community" column. She pointed out that many of the numbers are low, and this is from the majority of those 1,202 people not answering all of the questions or marking that they do not need help with that category. The Assessment is very long (5 pages), which also deters individuals to skip many questions to complete quicker. Discussion followed. Ms. Watters asked if there was a "not applicable" choice for each question and if so, was the compilation designed to not count these in percentages. Ms. Calkins will follow up with Ms. Watts.

In addition, Stakeholder surveys were also developed and emailed or mailed to current partners, which included those that have completed a Memorandum of Understanding, a community contact made by an Outreach Worker, or governmental entities within our service area. Out of approximately 300 surveys that were sent, only 44 completed them. These results are listed under the “Stakeholders” column.

Based on the survey results and any additional trends from the Agency’s Community Needs Assessment, Ms. Watts will adjust or create new CSBG Work Programs for the grant year beginning in 2024. Initially, she feels that the Agency has programs in place to cover the needs indicated by the surveys.

Finally, back in May, Ms. Calkins and Ms. Watts sought Board approval for the Agency to enter into a sub-recipient agreement with the Agency partner, Project NOW, to operate the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program. She wanted to report that Project NOW was recently approved for a waiver to manage its own ESG grant without being a sub-recipient of the funds. Therefore, TCOC will only operate its own ESG program, which will be less work for TCOC staff.

Foster Grandparents: Brandi Newell

Ms. Newell reported that 7 new Foster Grandparents were hosted August 7-10. The orientation curriculum was new and will continue to be refined. She believes, however, that the four-day format was successful and thoroughly serves the goals of the program. Over the next few months, you will find her collecting video footage of volunteers, staff, students & board members conveying a nice, warm “welcome” for use as a kick-off at future new volunteer orientations. The group wrapped up their week by attending the first In-Service of the school year on August 11.

The school year is starting strong with 54 volunteers on the roster. They are, however, already down by three for medical reasons. They hope those absences will be short-lived and they will have all 54 volunteers healthy and actively serving. The vast majority of volunteers are already back in the classroom, with just a few who will return after Labor Day.

On September 19, the program will celebrate Ruth Ross, who is turning 95. She has just started her 20th year as a volunteer in the Foster Grandparent Program. Ms. Newell invited all interested and able members to attend and join in the celebration. A flyer will be sent out at a later date.

Early Head Start/Head Start Program: Rachael DeSpain

Ms. DeSpain reported that program services remain unchanged. The program remains understaffed. Seven potential applicants are currently in the midst of the hiring process; this number changes weekly. Currently, there are vacant positions in all counties but Carroll. Bus Drivers, Parent Child Educators, and Site Supervisor positions remain the most difficult to fill.

Part-year staff have returned. Classes have begun, and children and families are being served. Currently, they have three Head Start classrooms unable to provide in-person learning services due to having limited to no staff hired (Oregon, Sterling FDFY, and Streator FDFY.) There is one Early Head Start Center Base classroom (Sterling EHS CB 2) that is unable to open and 5 home base locations that remain unstaffed (BPM, Mendota, LaSalle (2), and Stark Counties.)

Ms. Watts and Ms. DeSpain shared the T.C.O.C. community event procedures with CSBG and Head Start staff on August 14, 2023. Over 43 employees signed up to support agency efforts. Please continue to offer any information regarding community events in September, October, and November.

The request to reduce the total number of Head Start slots remains undecided. The program approaches recruitment and hiring efforts as if the request has been approved.

Efforts to provide copies of the 2022-2023 Self-Assessment document before the September meeting will be made.

In tonight's handouts, Ms. DeSpain provided a copy of the August 2023 Board Report, the 2023-2024 enrollment status, 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, Ms. DeSpain 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 informed members that a copy of the LIHWAP Monitoring Report was included in tonight's handouts. She was pleased to share that the program did not have any findings or areas of non-compliance.

The LIHEAP department attended an Energy Assistance Workshop in Springfield in August. Program changes and procedures for the upcoming LIHEAP program were shared and discussed. A confirmation of the priority periods was provided. October is for the elderly, disabled, and families with children under age six. November is for those households that are imminent or disconnected from a utility. December begins open enrollment for all. The department can start taking appointments for applications starting September 18, 2023. She encouraged members to advise anyone needing services to call the main office for appointments or a schedule of intake offices and times.

They have been busy getting offices and paperwork ready for the upcoming year during the summer months. Ms. Saenz is still in the process of hiring 2-3 workers for Rock Falls and one for Rochelle.

Weatherization/Housing Program: Wayne Thompson's report was given by Ms. Calkins

Mr. Thompson reported that the Weatherization Dept. has completed all homes for the 2023 program and is now concentrating on entering new costs from the Market Analysis into the Weather-Works system for the 2024 program procurement negotiation meeting. They will hold the contractor negotiation meeting within the next two weeks. They have assessments that are ready to be entered as soon as they lock down the 2024 cost.

As mentioned, this year, DCEO completed a comprehensive Market Analysis by region for the entire state, thus saving programs many hours of research. Next month, Mr. Thompson will report on negotiation outcomes.

Ms. Calkins, Ms. Newell, and Mr. Thompson attended last week's National Community Action Partnership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Thompson attended all classes in the Energy Tract. All these sessions were directly related to energy savings and/or healthy homes topics and were presented by the Department of Energy, Department of Health & Human Services, and agency staff from around the country.

Mr. Thompson also participated in a Green Jobs Interview that will be used to produce a commercial and a website related to green jobs for job seekers and contractors from around the country who are interested in careers and contracts related directly to energy savings. He will inform members when the website and/or commercial are complete.

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

The maintenance person has completed another efficiency rental unit in Sterling, and tenants are currently being screened to get that unit rented out. He has moved on to another unit and hopes to have it completed and ready soon.

President/CEO's Report: Jill Calkins

Ms. Calkins welcomed BJ Holocker and Betsy Kinder to the Board. Mr. Holocker is the new Putnam County Board representative and Ms. Kinder is the new Carroll County, Category B representative. One vacancy remains, and it is LaSalle County, Category C.

Ms. Calkins, Mr. Thompson, and Ms. Newell attended the National Community Action Partnership Conference on August 22-25 in Atlanta, Georgia. They attended lots of great workshops, received updates from program leaders, and networked with other community action agencies.

Lastly, Ms. Calkins had asked members to complete the annual self-evaluation by August 15. She thanked the 23 members who had completed the survey. She will compile the results and set up a meeting with the Planning/Evaluation Committee to review the results and propose a plan of action.

Old Business:

There was no old business at this time.

New Business:

Ms. Calkins reminded members that the organizational standards require Governing board members to be trained on their duties and responsibilities every two years. Therefore, the Board is due to have a full Board Training this fall. Members were asked if there was a preference on time or day. Discussion followed. Most members expressed interest in having training before an already scheduled Board

Meeting or replacing an already scheduled meeting with training. Ms. Calkins will follow up and report at the September meeting.

Next Meeting:

The next Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 26, 2023, at the Wesley United Methodist Church, 2200 16th Avenue, Sterling, IL., at 6:00 p.m.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.