

**Tri-County Opportunities Council  
Board of Directors Meeting  
May 28, 2024**

Chair Harmon called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. He welcomed Kristy Jones, the new Lee County Category B Board Member, and reminded those attending virtually to mute themselves when not speaking.

The membership recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Jacobs, Secretary, took roll call. A quorum was present.

**Members Present:** (In-person participants are bolded)

**Reed Akre**, Charlotte Balensiefen, Sue Britt, **Susan Bursztynsky**, Robin Camplain, **Mary Cork**, **David Ditzler**, **Al Harmon**, **Marcia Heuer**, **John Hockstadt**, **Tom Howes**, **Julie Jacobs**, Betty Johnson, Lisa Johnson, Kristy Jones, Kenneth Krogulski, **Ginny McPerryman**, Inga Neuner, Linda Pennell, Ronald Preston, Juanita Randklev, **Denise Russell**, **David Torres**, **Marissa Trumper**, Jeanne Vargas, Laura Watters, Derek Whited.

**Members Absent:**

Bernene Dahl, Kim Dahl, Lynnae Garrett, BJ Holocker, Betsy Kinder, Ron Kleppin, Brad Lindstrom, Michael McEmery, Becky Rich, and Lorene Winfield.

**Others Present:**

Jill Calkins, Rachael DeSpain, Dawn Kanzler, Brandi Newell, Wayne Thompson, Neddie Watts.

**Minutes:**

The April 25, 2024 Board minutes were previously sent to all members for review. Mr. Hockstadt made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Vargas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried.

**Financial Report:**

The March 2024 Financial Reports were provided to the membership for review prior to tonight's meeting. Ms. Randklev made a motion to accept the March 2024 Financial Reports and file them for audit. Ms. Vargas seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

**Agency-Wide Audit Presentation:**

A copy of the 2023 Agency-Wide Audit was distributed to the membership prior to this meeting. Ms. Lauran Groff, Sikich, CPA, Audit Principal, gave the membership an overview of the audit, reviewing the highlights of the audit report. She referenced the clean, unmodified opinion statement and informed the membership that there were "no findings" during the Tri-County Opportunities Council 2023 Agency-Wide Audit. Board members were given the opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Groff informed the group that she had met with the Board Audit/Finance Committee prior to the full Board meeting to

review the audit in greater detail. Ms. Kanzler thanked Ms. Groff for her presentation and excused her from the meeting.

**Special Guest: Florence Cunningham**

Ms. Newell introduced Ms. Florence, a current Foster Grandparent Volunteer, and shared the recent recognition and awards given to her for her lifetime achievements and active fight against racism. Ms. Florence recently received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award from the Illinois Association for Community Action Agencies.

Ms. Cunningham then shared her story of the injustice she experienced that ignited her fire and her life-changing encounters with Martin Luther King, Jr. during the civil rights movement. Her story included traveling from town to town and protesting peacefully, even as they encountered violent attacks, blockages, and backlash. She and civil rights warriors would load up on the bus and go where they had to go, which included the infamous march from Montgomery to Selma, Alabama. She was present the day that Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed. She reflected on the amazing man he was and his contributions to the Civil Rights movement. Through her experiences, she learned to love, always remember, and be peaceful in whatever she does.

**Fiscal Report: Dawn Kanzler**

Ms. Kanzler sought board action on the 2023 Agency-Wide Audit as per the recommendation of the Audit/Finance Committee. Mr. Hockstadt made a motion to accept the 2023 Agency-Wide Audit. Ms. McPerryman seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Next, Ms. Burszyntski, chair of the Audit/Finance Committee, recommended that the Board retain Sikich as the 2024 Agency-Wide Auditing Firm. Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to approve the retainment of Sikich. Ms. Vargas seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Lastly, Ms. Kanzler sought board action to approve the Agency's Cost Allocation Plan as per the recommendation of the Audit/Finance Committee. Ms. McPerryman made a motion to approve the Cost Allocation Plan. Ms. Jacobs seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

The ending book balance for April was (\$142,592.91), and a balance of \$308,054 was owed on the line of credit to Sauk Valley Bank as of April 30, 2024. As mentioned last month, receiving cash requests from the state is taking longer than usual.

Ms. Kanzler shared some additional highlights from the Audit:

- Assets decreased \$138,230
- Net Assets decreased \$81,245
- Revenue decreased \$1,327,318 (Cares and ARPA funds and LIHWAP ended)
- Expenses decreased \$744,401
- Current Ratio=Current Assets/Current Liabilities is 1.65, which is about the same as last year's ratio of 1.66

## **Program Reports:**

### **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG): Neddie Watts**

Ms. Watts sought Board approval to apply for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Rapid Rehousing program funded by HUD and distributed through the Continuum of Care. A funding amount will be allocated in early June, and the grant is due before the next board meeting. These funds would be used to help individuals who are literally homeless obtain permanent housing with funding towards deposit, rent, or utilities. Ms. McPerryman made a motion to approve the submission of an application for the ESG Rapid Rehousing program. Ms. Betty Johnson seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Next, Ms. Watts sought Board approval to enter into a sub-recipient agreement with the Whiteside County Healthier Communities Partnership with the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program for \$25,000 to open a daytime community resource shelter to provide services and resources to homeless individuals in partnership with local community organizations and government entities. Ms. McPerryman made a motion to approve entering into a \$25,000 sub-recipient agreement with the Whiteside County Healthier Communities Partnership. Ms. Vargas seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Lastly, Ms. Watts sought Board approval to apply for a Bureau County United Way grant. Funds will be used to purchase food for the Bureau County Food Pantry. No specific dollar allocation is included in the application, as the Bureau County United Way allocates funds based on approved applicants. Last year's allocation was \$7,000. Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to approve the submission of a grant application to the Bureau County United Way. Ms. Vargas seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Photos from the Agency's family nomination during the Family of Distinction Banquet in Springfield on May 5 were included in the Board packets. Ms. Watts could not attend the event; however, those present stated the family was honored to be there, the children were polite, and the entire household was full of smiles during the presentation and dinner.

Earlier this month, she received an email from the Grant Manager of the new DHS Rapid Rehousing Program requesting all agencies to de-obligate half of the total amount allocated from the FY'24 grant as they do not anticipate all agencies to spend the total amount by June 30 since funds were not released until October 2023. This would mean the Agency would have to de-obligate \$130,813. After working with Ms. Kanzler and sending a request to DHS, they were only required to de-obligate \$80,000. To provide the Board with an idea of the amount of money that has already been spent from this grant, she offered the following information:

- The total grant was \$365,000
- Housed 41 households since the end of October 2023
- Deposit - \$26,414.00

- Rent - \$63,294.49 (up to 6 months of rent for most of the 41 individuals that were helped)
- Supportive Services - \$17,265.59 (used to purchase basic living supplies; bed, bedding, kitchen, bathroom, etc.)
- Utilities - \$2,349.16

Lastly, Ms. Watts shared some success stories from the STEP (Skills Training and Employment Program). She informed the Board that they helped six individuals obtain a CDL license, 5 have their CDL permit, and one is still enrolled in a CDL course. All of these successes have been since January, totaling \$54,883!

**Foster Grandparents: Brandi Newell**

Ms. Newell sought Board approval for a grant application submitted to the Illinois Department on Aging for \$44,512.00. These funds will be used for the required match to the Federal Corporation for National and Community Services grant. Notice of the funding opportunity was received on 4/29/2024, and the grant application was due on 5/24/2024. Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to approve the submission of the grant application to the Illinois Department on Aging. Ms. Vargas seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Ms. Newell recently attended the Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies Conference on May 5-7 with Ms. Calkins, Ms. Watts, Mr. Thomson, and Ms. Vos. She stated it was an honor to cheer for the state's families of distinction and witness our "Grandma Flo" walk away with the Martin Luther King Jr. award. Information on policies and best practices was shared in general and breakout sessions.

Agency staff had an amazing time celebrating their volunteers on May 15. Copies of the event's program were included in tonight's Board packets. In addition to the fun facts contained in those pages, 32 volunteers with the President's Lifetime Achievement Award for volunteerism. To earn this award, volunteers must have served 4,000 or more hours in their lifetime, be a US citizen, and not be on the sex offender registry.

The Foster Grandparent Program remains in recruitment mode so that new volunteers can be onboarded in early June. Please continue to send interested parties to [tcochelps.org](http://tcochelps.org), where they may initiate contact with the FGP program.

The program was awarded a \$1,000 grant from United Way of Lee County. They also received confirmation on the CNCS grant award of \$376,039. This award allows an additional \$2,500 to be earmarked for travel to the AmeriCorps Seniors Convening in late July and early August, which Ms. Newell and Mr. Newcomer plan to attend.

**Early Head Start/Head Start Program: Rachael DeSpain**

Ms. DeSpain sought Board approval of the Impasse Policy distributed before the May 28, 2024 Board meeting. It was reviewed, discussed, and approved during the May 15, 2024 Policy Council meeting. No

changes were recommended. Mr. Preston made a motion to approve the EHS/HS Impasse Policy as written. Ms. Vargas seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

The Information Memorandum, ACF-OHS-IM-24-01, Strategies and Recommendations for Supporting Mental Health, was included in tonight's handouts. Directives from the Office of Head Start emphasize the continued importance of mental and behavioral health and the social-emotional development of those we serve. This information memorandum aligns closely with what was released earlier this year in the proposed rulemaking (NPRM) release notice.

The Program Instruction, ACF-OHS-PI-24-02, included in tonight's handouts, discusses the Cost of Living Adjustment included in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024. This resulted in an increase of 275 million dollars for FY24. This funding level provides all Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant recipients with a 2.35% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). Recipients must use COLA funds to permanently increase their Head Start pay scale, including current staff salaries and unfilled vacancies. (The raise you granted all T.C.O.C. employees in January exceeded the 2.35% requirement) The program instruction says that following the required permanent adjustment to Head Start pay scales, recipients may apply any remaining funds to fringe benefits costs or offset increased operating costs in other areas of any budget. The Office of Head Start stated that recipients who have already submitted an FY2024 non-competing new application are not required to submit a COLA supplemental request!

Two screeners are required during budget period 1 of the newly granted 5-year project period. A Health and Safety screener must be completed at all licensed locations within 45 days of the start of the project period. This screener was completed within the allotted time. The Governance, Leadership, and Oversight screener must be completed with the CEO, Program Director, and the Board and Policy Council chairs within 60 calendar days of the start of the project period. This timeline has also been met.

Ms. DeSpain provided a presentation on the Early Head Start/Head Start program. This included the poverty guidelines, a detailed review of comprehensive services and parent involvement, processes for transitioning children and families in and out of the program, etc. She also provided training on the program's eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance procedures. The training included, but was not limited to, the current ERSEA processes and procedures, selection criteria, fraud awareness, and a review of the Board's role in the ERSEA process.

Also included in tonight's handouts was a copy of the April 2024 Board Report, April and May 2024 Policy Council minutes, the 2024-2025 year-at-a-glance calendar, the current Policy Council By-Laws, the enrollment status report, and a register of vacant positions. Please encourage any interested candidates to visit the Agrnvy website at [www.tcohelps.org](http://www.tcohelps.org) or call 1-800-323-5434.

**Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): Tammy Saenz's report was provided by Ms. Calkins**

The LIHEAP program has been considerably slow these past two months. Employees have been calling customers who have not applied yet this year and are successfully setting up appointments. They have also been going to businesses to distribute flyers and increase public awareness. The program will continue to take applications until August 15 unless funding is exhausted beforehand.

**Weatherization/Housing Program: Wayne Thompson**

Mr. Thompson reported that the Weatherization Department continues to move along with the production of Weatherization Jobs. Their new contractor, CMM Construction, is now doing jobs and has completed three. They have inspected one, and since this was their first job, there were some issues, as expected. The program inspectors will help them with the techniques and procedures required by the program.

As mentioned last month, the Weatherization Department has submitted the 2025 Weatherization Plan, all three Weatherization grant applications, and budgets to DCEO, the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity. They have since received word from DCEO that the Weatherization plan has been approved. A few minor corrections were needed to the grant applications, which have also been completed, and email approval has been given. The official Notice of Grant Award should be received in the near future.

The program has completed phase III for the 70-unit multi-project, Victor Meadow Senior Living Apartments in Princeton. This allows them to proceed with the project, and they will start production on these units later this week. As mentioned last month, they will be the first project in Illinois to use the new Department of Energies Low Rise Multi-Unit Priority List Protocols. The Priority List consists of super-insulating the attics to R-60, basements to R-30, upgraded lighting, etc.

They continue to work on preparing the Agency rental units for tenants and have moved in three families since the last report.

**President/CEO's Report: Jill Calkins**

The Board currently has two vacancies: LaSalle County Category B and Bureau County Category B. Ms. Calkins is working with someone interested in the LaSalle County vacancy.

Ms. Calkins informed the membership that she had been invited to be an initial incorporator of the Illinois Poverty Action Council (IPAC). This 501c4 organization is being formed for advocacy, lobbying, research, and education to address the causes and conditions of poverty in Illinois. As an initial incorporator, she will serve as a member of the Board of Directors through the incorporation period and initial months of operation until such time that the organization is formed and elections are held.

She was also recently appointed to the Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security by State Representative Tony McCombie and elected to the Board of Directors of the Illinois Community Action Association, for which she is being nominated for Vice-Chair.

She reminded the membership that June is the annual meeting of the Board of Directors. Board service awards will be given, officers elected, and other annual Board business, such as check signers, grant signatories, etc., will be on the agenda. Nomination forms to self-nominate and/or nominate another member for any of the Officer positions were included in tonight's handouts. If you are a current officer and are interested or willing to keep your position, please note that on a nomination form. Ms. Calkins sought volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee to develop a slate of officers. Ms. McPerryman, Ms. Betty Johnson, Ms. Lisa Johnson, and Ms. Camplain volunteered to serve on the Nominating committee. The committee will meet virtually prior to the June meeting.

Also included in tonight's handouts is a list of approved Scholarship winners from the May Board meeting and the 2024-2025 Board Calendar.

**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, June 27, 2024, at the Bureau County Metro Center, 837 Park Avenue West, Princeton, IL 61356, **at 6:00 p.m.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.