

**MEETING OF THE
WINNEBAGO COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES BOARD**

Minutes

DATE: Wednesday June 16, 2021

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Larry Lautenschlager, Donna Lohry, Mike Norton, Jerry Finch, Chris Kniep, Karen Powers, Harold Singstock

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Nicole Neuhoff

STAFF PRESENT: Bill Topel, Renee Soroko, Janet Rohloff, Beth Roberts, Ann Kriegel, Annette Beattie, Heather Foust and Pam Bartelt

Larry Lautenschlager, chair of the Department of Human Services Board, opened the hearing at 6:00 p.m. by welcoming those present in the audience. Larry explained that the intent of the public hearing is to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on programs funded by the Department of Human Services for residents of Winnebago County who are affected by developmental disabilities, chemical dependency or mental illness, and on the financial and social service programs available through the Department. Larry reviewed public hearing guidelines.

Bill Topel mentioned that due to the unusual nature this year there are differences from past years. Under 46.23 state statutes, the Human Services board is tasked with developing a budget for the Human Services Department that will go to the County Executive to be incorporated into the county wide budget. Budget target by County Executive and Finance Director is to reduce the tax levy portion of the Human Services budget by \$2.6 million over this year's amount. Our initial 2022 budget represents \$1.8 million reduction in operational expenses and/or increased revenue projections. It also represents a \$1 million reduction in county tax levy compared to this year. Any requests for new services or reducing tax levy further will result in additional cuts in programs and/or staff lay off. The management team and staff have work diligently over the past year to create new ways of serving clients and families which has paid off with better service outcomes and reduced costs. This may have appeared to be easy but, in fact, it required skilled staff, greater collaboration and improved flexibility with support and funding. This budget is not so much realistic as it is a very optimistic where everything will need to go well next year to break even. For those attending this hearing, it is important to note that Human Services is primarily a contracted agent of the state departments of health services and children and families. The state and federal government provides two thirds of the funding for contracted services. The amounts have remained fairly flat for several decades. The county tax levy portion of our budget is about one third of expenses and levy is considered a match requirement to the state funds in many areas. Our first priority is to provide mandated services required by the state. The county can choose whether to offer optional services or provider grants which are levy funded.

For those testifying at this hearing, in addition to asking for additional services or funding increases or decreases, you can also send your request by email to btapel@co.winnebago.wi.us or by phone 920-236-1195.

The following information is testimony:

Elizabeth Jones – Citizen: Elizabeth introduced herself as a citizen of Neenah. She is the mother of two adult sons, one that lives independently and the other was diagnosed with significant autism and at an early age identified as profound retardation back then. The family was strongly encouraged to make plans for him to be totally dependent his entire life. He is now 25, reads at a 10th grade level, has graduated from high school with accommodations. He currently has three volunteer jobs and also has two wage earning jobs.

At a very young age he fit a profile of being 100% dependent needing full time care, 24/7. Winnebago County, as well as other programs, wrapped the entire family in services and resources to help the family determine what was best for them. It also allowed them the welcomed opportunity to help other families in similar situations. Her son earns a paycheck and pays taxes which helps support the county in providing the services. The importance of focusing on helping families function as families, allowing families to be independent and proud of what they do is appreciated. Many of the supports provided are designed to increase family empowerment. The online ADRC Resource Guide is a tremendous tool that is not available to all counties or states. Winnebago County staff had encouraged her to have her older son take part in a program called "Sib Shops" when he was six years of age and was part of this program for many years. Through the experience of helping his brother and the participation in this program, he now works with an agency that provides job coaching for people with disabilities. The services and programs have provided this family with a successful lifestyle they are very proud of. Elizabeth joined to share a bit of her families' journey and thank, as well as recognize, Human Services for the many lives they touch.

With no further testimonies offered the Public Hearing was closed at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Pam Bartelt, Human Services Department/pb