

Minutes of the Health and Human Services Board Meeting

Thursday, May 6, 2010

Board Members Present: Citizen Members Dennis Farrell (Chair), Flor Gonzalez, Mike O'Brien, Dr. Peter Geiss, Joe Vitale, County Board Supervisors Duane Paulson, Janel Brandtjen, Jim Jeskewitz, and Paul Decker. **Absent:** JoAnn Weidmann.

Others Present: County Executive Dan Vrakas, Chief of Staff Ellen Nowak, Health and Human Services Director Peter Schuler, Health and Human Services Deputy Director Don Maurer, and Senior Financial Analyst Clara Daniels.

Luncheon

County Executive Dan Vrakas and Chief of Staff Ellen Nowak joined Health and Human Services Director Peter Schuler and members of the Health and Human Services Board for lunch at 11:30 a.m.

Presentation to County Executive Vrakas Board's 2011 Budget Recommendations

Following lunch, the official meeting was called to order by Chairman Farrell at 12:05 p.m. He noted that a letter was sent to the County Executive from Chair Farrell on behalf of the board along with a copy of the 2011 Budget Recommendations of the Health and Human Services Board. All members were previously provided a copy of this letter and the finalized recommendations. Farrell explained the process and means of the various Advisory Committees, presentations by the Advisory Committees on what their unmet needs are, and the annual Health and Human Services Board public hearing, which he thanked the County Executive for attending. Mr. Farrell noted the past several years of difficult budgets and acknowledged the reality of the economy we're currently experiencing, and expressed appreciation to the County Executive for his past assistance and continuing concern for the important services provided in HHS. The most important, and overarching need is to provide sufficient funding to maintain the existing array of community based services to meet increased needs, while avoiding out of home placements, institutional, and other deep end costs. Farrell suggested that liaisons of the advisory committees speak on behalf of any needs that pertained to that Advisory Committee.

Paulson thanked the County Executive for what he was able to do for Health and Human Services last year in restoring and maintaining funding in several important areas. He stated that for those items where we prioritize the highest, it's usually a situation where that will otherwise drop us to a lower level and standard of service, but you get to the point of having difficulty determining what is going to harm us most if programs and services are not going to be funded sufficiently. The items we present today are the Board's opinion of what is most important, and will take a toll if we do not maintain services to avoid these deep end situations.

Brandtjen replied that we are very grateful for the additional funding that was given to Health and Human Services. Although a number of unfortunate actions were necessary, we would not have been able to maintain the programs that we do have, and in a sense it is sometimes less expensive than repeating or intensifying services later, because you then get that trickle down effect. For example, if you decide not to fund Clubhouse, then we would likely have more street

people affecting businesses, more people in the psychiatric unit, and then too, law enforcement has to devote additional resources. If we do not maintain the 211 response capacity, then additional time must be spent trying to get help, or it's just not found so situations become worse, so by maintaining early on funding you get a better return on your investment. Balancing what you really need to keep people out of services or to keep them in reasonable cost services is a balancing act. She indicated that the Board is not asking for any new programs, with the exception of the AODA Counselor position because of the increase in the OWI court, but again, if we can treat them early on and get them back into society it is certainly a lot less expensive than institutionalizing.

Farrell gave an example of a deep end situation, example being peer support, keeping someone in the community with our peer support function as opposed going to Mendota or Winnebago, the cost for Mendota would be \$800-900 a day, as compared to peer support at about \$20 a day.

Vitale expressed his appreciation to County Executive for help given in a difficult year to last year's Health and Human Services budget. As liaison on the Child and Family Services Advisory Committee, and as he reviews the budget set forth, some people think that Health and Human Services offers too many services, but then when you attend the public hearing and hear concerns addressed from citizens who are taxpayers who need help, or have successfully overcome difficulties, you have to ask if we are offering enough services. As an educator, Vitale has dealt with these situations and they do not necessarily go away, they compound themselves and the expenses as well, so by intervention and prevention, you can avoid those deep end situations and save money in the long run. The old adage stands true that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Jeskewitz agreed that we need to do more with getting it widely understood that prevention leads to a lot of money being saved, and from his experience as an educator, he saw kids that were definitely on a route to a bad future, and because of early intervention, the kids got involved and were able to move in a positive direction.

Geiss talked about the individuals/patients that are seen at the lake area free clinic, roughly 100+ patients a week, that have no insurance and living below the poverty level, or have lost their jobs, who have mental health or AODA issues. The lake free clinic refers many individuals to Waukesha County and other organizations and would not know what to do if these services were further cut, and are seeing a 30-40% increase in the people we serve year over year.

Farrell referred to Item B, Maintain public Health Division Level II certification via adequate funding for all public health programs and staff. In order to receive grants and federal funding, the public health division level needs to remain at a level II, and this is a huge issue for the department and to the county as well. Otherwise, we would be asking the taxpayers to make up the difference for the federal funding if status level is dropped to a Level I.

Item C is to maintain funding to the present 211 (First Call for Help) System. 211 relates back to prevention, and we have to have something like 211 on a 24 hr basis. Vrakas noted that he was very familiar with 211, and advocated for it on the United Way Board, and is happy to announce that Don Maurer has agreed to be nominated to fill his seat on the United Way Board in the

future. United Way and Waukesha County are the two major contributors/funders for 211, and Schuler noted that 211 was extremely valuable and active throughout the H1N1 event. 211 did receive some statewide preparedness money during that event, and our requirement from the State is to have a 24-hour mental health crisis hotline, and we could not do without 211, or we'd need to add several hundred thousand dollars to our budget to fulfill the mandates that it addresses for us. Schuler commended 211 for their dedication in the H1N1 event.

Vrakas talked about the Waukesha County website, our entry port for all inquiries. Nowak is working on updating our entire department wide website in the County. To get the word out, Vrakas sends out a monthly newsletter and writes a column that appears in the Waukesha Freeman. Board Members were encouraged to send any news worthy ideas to Nowak or Klimetz in the County Executive's office, to assist in getting the word out about the good services provided. Decker pointed out that from a taxpayer's standpoint, there is a lot of work that he sees being done to make sure that these services are cost-effective for the citizens of this county.

Vrakas asked Gonzalez what are some of the things that M&I is doing as far as outreaching into the community since the struggles with the banking industry. Gonzalez stated that in her community of St. Joseph, there is a huge Hispanic population that has many needs. Currently, they utilize many of the services at LaCasa, and do not then need other services in the county. She noted that some individuals are leery of government provided services. St. Joseph's now has a nurse outreach that comes on Sundays to do blood pressure screening, and help direct clients on where to go for services. Schuler stated that we constantly connect with LaCasa. They have helped Waukesha County Public Health promote the Health Fair at Whiterock School every year, and for Public Health that has helped to break down some of those fear barriers. Schuler noted that a sizeable proportion of clients who come to Public Health for immunization clinics; well baby checkups, WIC, and other services are from the Hispanic community.

Vrakas thanked everyone for their input. He thanked Paulson for his past leadership on the Health and Human Services Committee and good luck on the Personnel Committee. He also congratulated Brandtjen on her appointment as Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee.

Discuss Budget Picture and Process with County Executive

Vrakas stated that when the department puts out a budget like last year, it's a blueprint for what we think we are going to need, and departments, including Health and Human Services, then managed the budget in a way that the departments actually turned money back into the general fund, almost a \$2.1 million surplus for the county. That meant that when we asked employees to take voluntary furloughs for example, Waukesha County saved \$180,000. Last year, the big priority for us was the HHS and the state budget; everyone from the Sheriff to the Parks Department, and Public Works was rallying to help the HHS solve what initially began as a two million dollar problem, but they helped us, they rallied to manage the budget and came out in the black. Now, we begin this year with saving that can be use for one-time projects. We can use some of it to invest in helping their budgets during difficult times in the future. Vrakas noted that he tells people that have needs in the community, whether it's mental, physical, age related, disability, or economic related to come to the Health and Human Services Center, that we partner

with a great group of agencies that come together as a community. In particular, the alternate care placements that have saved money, taking kids out of abusive environments and putting them in good homes or restoring their families in a positive way, a lot of work was done on that last year. Mike DeMares has worked with the State and Medicaid dollars and that too saved money, all contributing to a team effort. There also has been huge help with Public Health, a lot of volunteering going on and we are going to keep the Level II status. Yesterday, Vrakas attended a meeting with state legislators and they are estimating that they are going to start the next state budget with a 2.5 million dollar deficit, largely created by using federal stimulus dollars to pay for ongoing commitments. When Waukesha County applied for federal stimulus money, the money was only to be used for one-time expenses, so we are using it for things like retro fitting lightning at the Expo Center, road construction, water saving appliances, etc. Prevention will save us money and Vrakas asked all to please help find new solutions, efficiencies, come with ideas, ways we can do a pilot program, and if it works, we can find a way to fund it. He said the State budget is built on sales and income tax which has suffered in this recession. Our county budget relies on the property tax, and valuation went down 2% in our property values last year, and will probably be down 1.5% this year which creates a significant challenge for the county.

Farrell thanked all members of the board for their work and the staff at Health and Human Services. The Advisory Committees do a great job in keeping the board apprised of issues and compiling their list of needs. Vitale mentioned that one of the strengths of the Committee and Board leadership is they brought us out on fieldtrips which was strong for both the committee and board members.

Farrell mentioned that transportation is a huge issue; we need to look at that countywide to make it more efficient. Farrell took the matter up this morning with the ADRC and they will take the matter and set up a task force, with a meeting sometime in June.

Next meeting of the Committee is May 20th, and the Board is June 10th.

Adjournment

MOTION: Jeskewitz made a motion seconded by Vitale to adjourn the meeting. The motion was voted on and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Linda Johnson

Approved on _____
Date