

**Tri-County Opportunities Council  
Board of Directors Meeting  
May 23, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Harmon.

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

The membership recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Charlotte Balensiefen; Sue Britt; Susan Bursztynsky; **Mary Cork; David Ditzler; Al Harmon; John Hockstadt; Tom Howes; Marcia Heuer; Betty Johnson; Lisa Johnson; Julie Jacobs; Ron Kleppin; Don Koehler; Donna Koehler; Kenneth Krogulski; Brad Lindstrom; Michael McEmery; Ginny McPerryman; Inga Neuner; Linda Pennell; Ronald Preston; Juanita Randklev; Angela Shippert; Marissa Trumper; Jeanne Vargas; Lorene Winfield.**

**Members Absent:**

Karla Belzer; Robin Camplain; Mary Jo Credi; Bernene Dahl; Kim Dahl; Jenny Lawrence; Charles Lenkaitis; Daniel Payette; David Torres; Laura Watters; Derek Whited.

**Others Present:**

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

**Minutes:**

April 27, 2023, Board minutes were previously sent to all members for review. Mr. Hockstadt made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Kleppin seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried.

**Financial Report:**

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

**Agency-Wide Audit Presentation:**

A copy of the 2022 Agency-Wide Audit was distributed to the membership prior to this meeting. Ms. Heather Wroblewski, CPA, Wipfli Manager, gave the membership an overview of the audit using a PowerPoint presentation to review the highlights of the audit report. She directed members to specific pages as she highlighted information. She referenced the clean, unmodified opinion statement and informed the membership that there were "no findings" during the Tri-County Opportunities Council 2022 Agency-Wide Audit. Board members were given the opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Wroblewski 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. Wroblewski for her presentation and excused her from the meeting.

### **Fiscal Report, Dawn Kanzler**

Ms. Kanzler sought Board action on the 2022 Agency-Wide Audit as per the recommendation of the Audit/Finance Committee. Mr. Hockstadt made a motion to accept the 2022 Agency-Wide Audit, and Mr. Kleppin seconded that motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion carried.

Ms. Kanzler shared some additional highlights from the Audit:

- Assets increased by \$473,382
- Net assets increased by \$501,672
- Revenue increased \$2,828,696
- Expenses increased \$2,633,333
- Current Ratio=Current Assets/Current Liabilities increased to 1.66 (This number should be over 1 for financial stability. Last year it was 1.49).

The Board was informed that WIPFLI has been the audit firm for the past five years, and the organizational standards require agencies to solicit bids at least every five years. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be sent to audit firms next month. Once received, the Audit/Finance Committee will review and score the bids to determine the audit firm for the calendar year 2023.

The ending book balance for April was \$13,653.81. A balance of \$2,000 was owed on the line of credit to Sauk Valley Bank as of April 30, 2023.

### **Program Reports:**

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

Ms. Watts sought Board approval to accept the CSBG grant modification for an additional \$54,529, of which \$7,006 resulted from an allocation increase and \$47,523 is from the 2022 Carryover. Ms. Nuener made a motion to accept the CSBG grant modification, and Ms. McPerryman seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Ms. Watts stated that a copy of all program's income eligibility guidelines run under the CSBG program was in tonight's Board packets; Emergency Solutions Grant (CARES and Rapid Rehousing), DHS Homeless Prevention, DHS Voucher Shelter, and CSBG. She noted that almost all programs use different income guidelines. The programs using an annual median income will be updated this summer. Once she has those new guidelines, she will update the form and send it to staff and all Board members.

Outreach Staff's new initiative is participating in at least five community events this year. Attending these events builds public relations and gives the Agency employees a presence within the community. It allows them to get to know and work more closely with other Agency program staff, specifically Head Start Family and Community Services Workers. Since this new initiative began, program staff have developed stronger relationships, increased knowledge of Agency programs, and created a more robust referral system for those we serve. Ms. Watts highlighted a handout in their packets showing pictures of community events attended over the past few years.

As CSBG and Head Start staff are the two most significant programs to do outreach, Ms. Watts and Ms. Despain will be meeting next month to develop some policies and procedures to ensure all staff represent the entire Agency and its programs, not just individual programs. For example, ensuring staff can answer questions about all Agency programs, refer appropriately, and offer brochures to provide additional information. Additionally, they want to ensure that the Agency table stands out and that participants can easily identify it as Tri-County Opportunities Council.

Last week, Ms. Watts attended the Continuum of Care Board and General Meeting, and the President presented the number of homeless individuals that were counted during January's Point-in-Time Count. Within the 15 counties that the Continuum covers (Bureau, Carroll, Henry, JoDavies, Knox, LaSalle, Lee, Marshall, Mercer, Ogle, Putnam, Rock Island, Stark, Stephenson, and Whiteside), there were 192 households and 232 individuals homeless on the morning of January 24, 2023. Out of those numbers, 24 were under the age of 18. The next Point-in-Time count will be the morning of July 26, in which those numbers will probably increase due to the warmer weather.

**Foster Grandparents, Ms. Calkins provided Brandi Newell's report in her absence.**

Ms. Newell is in Washington, DC, attending the AmeriCorps Seniors Annual Convening. This event will allow her to gain new ideas, receive current information, and network with peers.

She reports that the school year is coming to an end. On May 18, the program celebrated AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent volunteers at their end-of-year recognition banquet at White Pines. Special guests included Jill Calkins, Rebecca Miller, and board members Julie Jacobs and Lorene Winfield.

Foster Grandparent and CSBG program staff attended a Bureau County Senior Center resource fair on May 19. Ms. Newell continues her effort to recruit volunteers and increase the program's presence in smaller communities.

As they move into a summer schedule, 14 volunteers will continue serving in the year-round programs or summer school opportunities. The office will have a busy summer updating paperwork and communications to be more user-friendly for their partner sites, recruiting and training new volunteers, and ensuring everything is in place for a smooth autumn transition into the new school year.

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

Ms. DeSpain requested Board approval of the Impasse Policy distributed prior to the May 23, 2023 Board meeting. It was reviewed, discussed, and approved as written during the May 9, 2023, Policy Council meeting. Ms. McPerryman made a motion to approve the Impasse Policy, and Inga Nuener seconded the motion. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

Services go unchanged; however, the program remains understaffed. The program has ten applicants in the hiring process and has hired six new employees in the last two weeks. The program currently has vacant positions. Most challenging to find---Bus Drivers and Teacher Assistants.

Ms. DeSpain informed the membership that their program-specific COVID-19 policies and procedures would end on June 1, 2023. The program will return to pre-pandemic operations.

Emphasis on locating, attending, and bringing awareness to Agency services during community events continues to be a focus of the family service team. While attendance has improved, the program requests that any information regarding known events in June, July, and August be shared.

The request to reduce the total number of Head Start slots remains undecided. However, the Regional Office of Head Start has not requested any additional documents. The program is approaching recruitment and hiring efforts as if the request has been approved.

Sharhianna Fulce, Office of Head Start Program Specialist, visited the program on Monday, May 8, 2023 and Tuesday, May 9, 2023. On Monday, she met with leadership team members, followed by two site visits on Tuesday at the Rochelle and Wallace centers.

In tonight's handouts, Ms. DeSpain provided a copy of the April 2023 Board Report, Policy Council minutes from the May 9, 2023 meeting, a copy of the Policy Council By-Laws, the 2023-2024 year-at-a-glance, a listing of the current and upcoming years enrollment status and a list of employment opportunities. Members were asked to encourage interested candidates to visit the Agency website at [www.tcochelps.org](http://www.tcochelps.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 PY 23 program will end on May 31, 2023. They have caught up with verifying and processing applications. They have entered 9,002 applications this year. At the same time last program year, they had entered 7,870, an increase of 1,132 applications.

The LIHWAP water/sewer program has ended with the program exhausting all funding. They are in the process of sending denial letters to those customers that they could not serve due to funding.

Ms. Saenz is keeping some employees longer than usual to get the program cleaned up and start organizing for the next program year. Program year 24 will begin on October 1, 2023, at which time they will be returning to priority periods. The state is considering lowering the poverty level back to the original 150% and decreasing the matrix to allow the maximum number of customers to get served.

**Weatherization/Housing Program, Wayne Thompson**

Mr. Thompson reported that the Weatherization program is also winding down the 2023 program year. The DOE Grant is scheduled to end on June 30, and the HHS and State Grants end on September 30.

They hope to expend all of our 2023 grant funds by June 30 and not have any "carry-over" funds to move into 2024. The HHS and state grants are 15 and 16-month programs; however, at the end of June, any homes in progress and not complete must be rolled over to the next program year, and you must use any "carry-over" funds remaining prior to using any of your 2024 grant funds.

The work on the 60-unit Multi-Family housing complex in Sterling is almost complete. They have installed new energy-efficient refrigerators, furnaces, water heaters, and ASHRAE fans. The Architectural contractor has completed the exterior and interior lighting upgrades and is working on the attic insulation and air sealing. Once complete, they will thoroughly inspect all units and submit the final billing to DCEO.

They plan to move on to gathering preliminary assessment data to begin a 70-unit multi-complex located at 351 Coleita Court, Princeton, IL. They hope to start the assessment process in July and complete it by mid to late fall. They learned a lot from the first multi, and it should be a smoother process this time.

In the meantime, as mentioned before, the Weatherization Department will continue to process and complete single-family site-built and mobile homes throughout the entire grant period and will continue to do so in future years.

Agency maintenance has been busy getting some of the housing units ready. They have one new tenant moving in very soon, and another is waiting for approval for Rental Housing Support. They should be moved in over the next couple of weeks.

#### **President/CEO's Report, Jill Calkins**

Ms. Calkins was hoping to report that all seats on the Board are full at this time, but unfortunately, she received word from Mr. Liebe, the newly seated member, that his schedule has changed, and it is not going to work out at this time. Ms. Calkins requested a 90-day extension from DCEO to fill the vacancy vacated initially on February 27, 2023.

Ms. Calkins 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 were brought tonight for those attending in person to self-nominate and/or nominate another member for any of the Officer positions. A self-addressed returned envelope was provided. Forms and envelopes will be mailed out to all others by the end of the week. To be counted, forms will need to be returned by June 8. Current officers interested or willing to keep their position were asked to note that on a nomination form. Volunteers are needed to serve on the Nominating Committee to develop a slate of officers for the June annual Board meeting. The Nominating Committee will meet virtually on June 9. Sue Britt, Ginny McPerryman, John Hockstadt, and Lisa Johnson volunteered for the committee.

Ms. Calkins provided the new Board Calendar for July 2023 through June 2024. This will be mailed with the officer nomination forms to those not attending in person tonight.

Scholarship winners must submit their fall schedules by June 2, 2023. Ms. Calkins reported that she has only received one thus far.

Ms. Calkins will be scheduling a Planning/Evaluation Committee Meeting to discuss the meeting style for future Board Meetings. Originally it was decided to pilot the hybrid-style meeting for six months and then re-evaluate. The committee members are Mr. Koehler, Ms. Betty Johnson, Ms. Trumper, Ms. Randklev, and Ms. Pennell. Ms. McPerryman also joined this committee tonight.

The contract for the sale of the property located at 507 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Sterling, IL 61081, has been written and is currently being reviewed and hopefully signed by the buyer.

Ms. Calkins, Ms. Watts, Ms. Vos, Ms. Kanzler, and Mr. Thompson will attend the CSBG and Weatherization Workshops and Fiscal Training on June 6 – 8 in Springfield. Ms. Calkins will be on vacation from June 12 – 20.

#### **Old Business:**

There was no old business at this time.

#### **New Business:**

Ms. Calkins shared details about a neighboring Community Action Agency, Project NOW, that covers Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer counties. Project NOW is the Lead Agency in the Northwestern Illinois Continuum of Care which covers a region of 15 counties in Illinois, including our nine counties. They offer a variety of programs for renters and current homeowners, with ESG being one of their funding sources. Last year they provided housing assistance to 12,674 individuals and 5,930 households. They have had some unfortunate turnover in their fiscal department, which has caused them to get behind on their annual audits. Therefore, they have asked that we enter into a sub-recipient contract with them to allow them to continue to provide these services that are much needed in their communities.

Ms. Calkins sought Board approval for the Tri-County Opportunities Council to enter into a sub-recipient agreement with the Agency partner, Project NOW, to operate the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program in the amount of \$115,583. Entering into this agreement will support the following:

- Rapid Rehousing for literally homeless or fleeing domestic violence individuals.
- Housing, supportive and preventive services, and job coaching to help increase earning potential.
- Connecting unsheltered homeless individuals and families with emergency shelter, housing, or additional services to become self-sufficient.

Ms. Lisa Johnson made a motion to approve Tri-County Opportunities Council entering into a sub-recipient agreement with Project NOW. Mr. Kleppin seconded the motion. Discussion followed. A vote was called, and the motion carried.

#### **Next Meeting:**

The next Board meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, June 22, 2023, at the Bureau County Metro Center, 837 Park Avenue West, Princeton, IL 61356., at 6:00 p.m.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.