

HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING

September 13, 2013

Present: Olive Hauser, Debra Hertz, Holly Hawes, Polly Lowman, Rachel Martin, Beverly Kelsey, Joan Davey, Ali Ramsteck, Inta Adams.

Minutes: The minutes of the special meeting of July 16, 2013 were approved as presented.

Agenda Items Covered:

- **Introduction of Joan Davey:** The Commission welcomed Joan Davey who joined the Human Services team as a Program Assistant.
- **Review of the Back to School Program:** The Back to School program served 75 families and 132 children this year, an increase from 50 and 85 respectively last year. Payless shoe gift cards were given to 90 children before running out. This significant increase in clients is likely due to an increase in clients from the Heights, families moving into small apartments in town, Avalon and an increase in families living in their own homes who are struggling financially.
- **Sun Setting on the Renter's Program:** HS is not taking any more new clients (those who didn't apply for it in the past). We have 27 applicants this year to date and expect to have about 30, who will receive up to a \$700 rebate check in November.
- **Human Services Program Updates:** Based on the experience with Back to School this year, we anticipate increased demand for our Thanksgiving and Christmas programs. Rachel Martin volunteered to do a press blitz detailing our holiday needs, especially food gift cards from Shop Rite and Stop and Shop. The Home Goods Closet is being used actively; paper products, laundry detergent and personal hygiene products are always in short supply.
- **Update on "the Heights":** The Phase 1 and 2 buildings are completed and occupied: some education of clients living there has been needed with regard to financial responsibilities. Imagineers, the property management company as well as the Housing Authority are moving on site to the Heights Community building.
- **Update on the Energy Assistance Program and Operation Fuel:** Income guidelines for these State energy assistance programs were distributed. Last year we had 82 applicants for energy assistance, of which 70 were approved.

Of that number, 46 were elderly and 26 were handicapped. There is concern that funding will be impacted by State budget cuts

- **Update on State DSS:** The new on-line system for accessing DSS benefit statements has been a disaster, with huge backlogs of documents that can't be scanned into the system.
- **Designated Veterans Service Coordinator:** Olive Hauser will serve as the town's Designated Veterans Service Coordinator, a State mandated position for each community.
- **Selected Case Reviews:** Olive reported that HS is handling more cases involving elderly, frail clients who do not have family members to support them. These cases are time consuming and the clients involved need advocates, who, in the end become us.
- **Other Business:** There was no other business presented and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Beverley Kelsey