

MINUTES, HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
September 21, 2011

Present: Ethel Mantzaris (YSB), chair; Jane Blanshard (Disabilities), secretary; Sara Anderson (Advocates for Children); Dexter Eddy (Wright's Way); Kevin Grunwald (ex officio); Bev Korba (Senior Center); Victoria Nimirowski (WAIM); Joan Terry (Aging). Absent: Frank Perrotti, Vice Chair.

Ethel called the meeting to order at 2:02.

Corrections to the minutes of the August meeting: Dexter said he was absent but not listed. Victoria was not listed either. Kevin said that the requirements for the social worker's job were not reduced but increased after Barbara Lavoie was hired. She was not initially required to be licensed or have supervision; that was modified to require that she pursue licensure and be supervised by a licensed clinical social worker. Joan asked if a future person in the job would have to be licensed or pursuing licensure, and Kevin said yes. Ethel pointed out that Barbara would never be licensed while working for Mansfield at the rate of one hour a month. Bev suggested that since she wasn't required to do it in advance she be allowed to do it at her own rate, since she has so much on her plate now. Sara asked whether, if this requirement were not met by the person, she'd be in danger of losing her job. She wondered if there are any precedents for that. Kevin said there might be situations where someone might be grandfathered into a position if the requirements changed after the person was in the job, but in this case they felt it was important that Barbara comply with the new ones. His other correction was that his department did not receive the grant mentioned; the Mansfield Community Campus Partnership that received it.

The minutes were accepted as amended.

We discussed the Charge to the Committee. Kevin pointed out that it is pretty vague; he believes the committee should interpret it themselves. We should establish goals for the year.

Quarterly Report. In future he will get it to the members ahead of time. This was for the quarter April 1 through June 30, 2011. It is an attempt to list all activities of the department. It goes to the Town Manager and the Town Council.

The budget provides for \$130-\$140,00 for fee waivers. The ordinance was amended to include Senior Center programs, though most of it goes to Parks & Recreation. A lot goes for trash pick-up. Jane asked what financial assistance involves. Basic needs such as food from our pantry or from Storrs Congregational Church, or gift cards for a supermarket such as Stop & Shop, which also apply to gas. Sometimes we help with security deposits or electric bills. We usually make payments to the provider, but occasionally we give cash. Bev asked if other churches are involved. Mansfield Center Church and the Baptist Church contribute to the fund. Bev asked if we approach them or wait for offers. Some businesses donate at holiday time or adopt families. Curves used to be a big contributor, but it has gone out of business.

The 207 contacts can be individuals or families.

Kathy Anne and Kevin do case management. For example, there was a person who lost a lot of items stored in her basement, which flooded during the hurricane. They have been trying to organize the services that she needs. Does Kathy do counseling or just case management? She doesn't do clinical social work, but does do counseling or referrals as needed.

At-Risk Program. Every department has emergency response responsibility. Usually we rely on the Red Cross, but this time the Red Cross was pretty much overwhelmed, so we opened a shelter at the Community Center, but we lost power there as well, and so we opened a respite center in the Council Chambers where people could charge phones and use computers. We were going to open a 24-hour shelter at E. O. Smith, but the Community Center got its power back Monday morning, so we moved the shelter there and it was open for two days. We served sandwiches for two days and then got MREs through FEMA. There were two potable water stations. People came in for showers, over 400 a day. We have an emergency management council, run by Matt Hart and John Jackman. We have an At-Risk program and are trying to identify people who need special help. No one responded when we first put out word that the program exists, but now they probably would. There are people medically dependent on electricity, oxygen, etc. We need to help people develop emergency plans. Supervision is needed for some of them; some need it but won't admit it. Kevin has a file in his office to keep track of this.

Kevin reported that they are focusing on two candidates for the Early Childhood Services Coordinator, and are about to make an offer.

We have been contributing to McSweeney, mainly for the dental clinic, but they may be closing. Marge Roach, the director, says they are budgeting monthly for the towns' contributions and will return money if they close. We may have to pick up their share of Meals on Wheels, and we may not have the capacity to do that. The Town of Windham has not been willing to take full responsibility for McSweeney, and other towns with their own senior centers are reluctant to contribute.

There is a need for a regional center, and it could be here in Mansfield. There may not be enough space, but why duplicate so much? There is a problem of people wanting services close by, and a problem of availability of transportation. The subject is worth exploring.

Kevin: What will be the next step for this committee? Invite Marge Roach and Cindy, and ask for their suggestions. Important to let them know they are welcome. McSweeney has no participation from the Hispanic community either, and we really need to do some kind of outreach.

NEXT MEETING: October 19, 2011.