

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.
Board of Directors' Meeting
May 26, 2022, 3:30 p.m.
Neighborhood Center Card Room/Zoom Conference Call

Members present: Dannai Clayborn, Bruce Day, Mike Delger, Andy Hunthausen, Trever Kirkland, Jerry Loendorf, Bob Mullen, Daniel Pocha, Eric Schindler, Lois Steinbeck, Paula Wright, Mark Young

Members absent: Kate Anderson, Kelly Kirkham, Mary Pat Penley

Others present: Gale Anderson, Joan Anderson, Rod Applegate, Mindy Diehl, Diane Edgar, Sam Hall, Debbie Hansen, Jaymie Hazel, Taya Hovan, Nancy Jones, Lori Ladas, Jean Leischner, Samara Lynde, Jim Marks, Kathy Marks, Kelley Moody, Angela Nelmark, Kara Nelson, Ashley Peña-Larsen, Connie Winner

Call to Order/Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 3:27 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Jerry Loendorf made the motion to approve the April 28, 2022 Board of Directors' Minutes and the March 31, 2022 Finance Committee Minutes. Andy Hunthausen seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Director's Report – Lori Ladas

Lori reported on recent issues with the Neighborhood Center boiler. The current boiler was installed in 1985. Recent issues have included a pump motor going out, leaky valves in the hot water boiler, and malfunctions with a relay to a compressor. Per Rocky's current Neighborhood Center lease with the City of Helena, Rocky is responsible for boiler maintenance. The City would be responsible for boiler replacement, if needed. Representatives from FICO predict the current boiler might make it through one more winter. Discussion will continue. The roof at the Warehouse Avenue location needs to be replaced, due to wind damage. The cost beyond the deductible will be covered by insurance. Lori also talked about a planning grant opportunity in collaboration with the City of Helena. This will include an architectural review and consideration of options for the Neighborhood Center. Designs from the City's Cruise Ave. Revisioning project, which could affect the Neighborhood Center, should be available for review later this summer.

Finance Report Update – Joan Anderson

Cash balance is \$1,818,129, which is slightly higher than last month. Accounts payable balance is \$82,654.21, and the balance is current. Joan reported that the fiscal team is monitoring the FY22 budget, as the budget year ends June 30, 2022. Budgets for FY23 are getting started. The budgets will be brought to the June Board meeting for approval.

Head Start Update

a. Policy Council Update

Ashley provided a brief update of today's Policy Council meeting. A quorum was present, and many of the attendees plan to remain part of the Policy Council during next school year. The group discussed their funding and recruitment efforts, along with the reduction amendment that will also be discussed by the Board.

b. Director's Program and Budget Report – Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley referenced the written report and budgets included in Board packets. She noted that the budget for Fund 160 was “zeroed out”, as the Head Start grant year ended in April. The other budgets are COVID-related funding. These funds will need to be spent by May 2023, and no more carryover will be allowed for the COVID funding. More instruction regarding these funds is expected in the fall. Head Start will host its first in-person social event in two years, the Spring Picnic, on June 1 at 5:00 p.m. at the Lewis & Clark County Fairgrounds. Approximately 200 people have already RSVP'd for the event, and the Board is invited to attend. Due to staffing, the Boulder Head Start location closed for classes on May 20. Family conferences and remote learning opportunities continue. Mental health awareness was recognized with a spirit week this week, with theme days planned. Ashley spoke about a new initiative planned for Head Start next year called Culture of Hope, an effort to look to the future with positivity.

Eric Schindler made the motion to approve the Head Start Director's Program and Budget Report. Jerry Loendorf seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

c. 2022-2023 Reduction Amendment – Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley presented information supporting Head Start's recommendation to amend its current grant to reduce the total number of enrolled children from 208 to 192. This reduction of 16 children would close the Boulder Head Start location. The Boulder School District is prepared to launch its own preschool project, called KinderFirst. This preschool option would have less restrictive enrollment criteria than Head Start and thus be able to support more children and families in the community. A teacher is already hired and recruitment efforts have begun. Since the enrollment reduction is less than a 10% change, Head Start would not need to worry about losing funding as a result of this change. The current Boulder Head Start teacher is the one staff position directly impacted by this change, and she will be offered a different position within Head Start if interested. Head Start will meet with the school district regarding the classroom space and what materials they might be interested in using. Anything not used by the school district will be reincorporated into other Head Start classrooms. Ashley shared a budget comparison of the original approved budget and the changes incurred by closing the Boulder location. She noted that a Permanent Substitute position will be added into the budget. This position is currently funded through COVID funds and has been invaluable throughout the school year. Also, the budget changes will reduce Head Start's need for CSBG funding by \$31,309, which means those funds are available for other Rocky programs.

Lois Steinbeck made the motion to approve the 2022-2023 Reduction Amendment. Bruce Day seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Utility Services and Weatherization Program Presentation – Sam Hall and Connie Winner

Sam Hall began by explaining the split of the former Energy Services department into two sections, Utility Services and Weatherization. The separation was enabled through the addition of the water assistance program along with increased funding revenue. Utility Services encompasses the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Low Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), and Energy Share.

Sam continued with an overview of the Weatherization program. He spoke about the challenges of operating the program in a post-pandemic world, specifically, supply shortages and labor shortages.

Cost volatility for some needed products has created budgeting challenges as well. Still, the program has been able to complete 44 ½ projects to date this fiscal year. Qualifying for LIHEAP automatically adds an individual to the Weatherization priority list, where households are typically addressed in sequential order. Currently, around 1300 households are on the priority list. Weatherization is meant to work in coordination with the LIHEAP program. LIHEAP provides a heating cost offset, and Weatherization reduces future energy costs by improving efficiency. Weatherization tends to be a high priority program in terms of federal funding, as it carries positive social implications. Sam referenced the social equity piece of the program as well, disrupting the cycle of poverty for low income households by improving energy conservation. Sam provided project totals for each year between the 2014/2015 season and today. They ranged from 16 projects completed at the height of the COVID pandemic to a high of 60 homes completed in a year.

Connie Winner provided information regarding Rocky's LIHEAP and LIHWAP programs. She spoke about a one-year case comparison, where Rocky showed a 10% increase in cases assisted overall compared to the prior year. Only two other regions in the state showed a greater increase. Overall, the state assisted 22 less LIHEAP cases in 2021-2022 compared to the prior year. Connie shared the upper income limits for program eligibility, based on household size. After sharing some graphics reflecting households assisted and payment totals from 2014 through 2020, Connie spoke about the water assistance program. From August of 2021 through the present, 18,482 water assistance cases have been opened. Only 3,562 cases have been approved. Connie shared that the discrepancy between those numbers is due to the fact that every LIHEAP case has an accompanying water assistance case opened, regardless of whether water assistance is requested. Connie concluded her presentation speaking about program outreach and plans to get information to those needing assistance in Rocky's service area.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

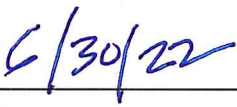
Respectfully Submitted,



Diane Edgar
Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board of Directors:



Eric Schindler, Secretary/Treasurer

Date

