

## **Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging Governing Board**

### **Minutes**

**January 24, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Governing Board of Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, 103 Eastside Blvd., Beatrice, NE and also available via Zoom was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

Board members present: Schoenrock, Gakle, Haxby, Ferguson, Haskell, Krueger, Seitz and Swenson

Absent: Crownover, Douglass and Hall.

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging staff present: Carla Frase, Executive Director; Beth Williams, Fiscal Officer; Kathy Erickson, Home and Community Options Manager; Carmen McKeever, Nutrition Manager; Clifton Lindell, Transit Manager; Tracie Fossler, Administrative Assistant and Amy Mason, Fiscal & Data Clerk Assistant.

Schoenrock chair, presided over the meeting and Fossler recorded the minutes.

**MOTION** to accept the agenda and consent agenda by Gakle; second by Haxby; roll call vote; eight yeas and zero nays; motion carried.

#### **TRANSIT REPORT – CLIFTON LINDELL, TRANSIT MANAGER**

Lindell reported that for the second quarter of the Fiscal Year, passenger numbers continue to rise slowly. We are seeing a slow rise also in the MTM contract passengers across the area. Maintenance is still a very big part of the budget for the vehicles due to the average age of the vehicles that we use. The latest info that Lindell has found is that the NDOT are thinking now that the new buses will be showing up this fall. Note that the quarterly numbers are somewhat less, but appears to be related to the season, pandemic effects on people and the various responses to it within our area by local Health Departments. Fuel costs also have become higher and this resulted in raising one of the rates for small town to small town travel from \$5 to \$6 one-way. The other types of trips were not affected at this time. These rates are also under review by us in case there develops a need to let us recover some of the costs of transit. All sites have new two-way radios for the dispatcher and the drivers to make changes in their schedules or other business purposes. This change was made due to the 5G cellular service changeovers. Zonar will be sending new units to replace the current units, as that frequency will be phased out by the cellular companies later in 2022.

#### **NUTRITION REPORT – CARMEN MCKEEVER, NUTRITION MANAGER**

McKeever reported that she attended a Sertoma meeting in Beatrice. She provided meal information and volunteers to help with the meal delivery. McKeever and Frase attended a group meeting hosted by the Gage County Extension service in hopes of creating an area food coalition in Southeast Nebraska. Participants were from over 10 different entities in our area that all were essential in helping those in our area with food needs. The goals were to help all the different entities represented to network services and goods and reach populations that needed food/nutrition services. The group developed a vision and mission statements as well as an action plan to move forward. McKeever has talked with the plumber in Hebron and he will be working on the gas line. Meals continue to increase in the Hebron area creating challenges for the one delivery person delivering 31 meals. The center needs to be up and

going and will possibly look at making it a satellite center with meals only until we can get the kitchen moved. In Beatrice our congregante and home delivered meal numbers are still increasing and on January 3, they began to prepare meals for Wymore and Odell areas, increasing daily meals to 175. We have hired a delivery van driver to take the new meal van with the meals to Wymore and Odell on a daily basis. Other sub and part-time staff have been hired to handle the meal volume as well. With the increased meal numbers, we are looking to purchase another freezer and refrigerator with expansion dollars, as food storage has become an issue. We are in need of a sub cook in Syracuse or a full time cook. Currently our site manager is doing both site manager duties and full time cook duties. The meal van from Fairbury was moved to the Otoe Meal route, as it was newer, less miles and the Otoe County van moved to Fairbury for the Fairbury-Diller meal route. The Deshler site manager last day is January 29. She is needing more pay and more hours than we can provide. Frase, Williams and McKeever met with the Fairbury City Administrator and Mayor in regards to rent/contract negotiations. The Fairbury City Administration understands our program better now. McKeever has received lots of meal complaints in regards to the quality of food from this center. After many mediation attempts, the cook was relieved from her duties on December 27, 2021. Sandra Busing has taken on the role of cook at the center and we have two assistants that help and would like to look for one more as a substitute. Dale Duis our van driver for the Wymore, Odell and Diller route resigned his duties as of December 31, 2021. Harley is taking this route along with a volunteer for now, hoping to hire a replacement. Eliminating the extra meals for Wymore and Odell has taken the extra strain off of the kitchen staff as well and this center seems to be working very well with its team of volunteers. Fairbury and Beatrice Congregante meals was closed Thursday and Friday due to staffing issues due to Covid, providing only home delivered meals and to-go meals. Nebraska City closed Congregante, but had home delivered. In Syracuse our site manager/cook has also been applying for jobs because she needs more pay. Falls City and Table Rock are doing well. McKeever will be exploring the menu service through Sysco, for cost and food ordering controls. This would cost us; however, McKeever feels the savings in food costs would help offset the cost. Currently we are using Cashwa and the menus they are providing us seem higher in price. During our last statewide Nutrition Managers meeting it was mentioned that many centers are utilizing reusable carryout containers. McKeever will be researching the cost of these and possibly do a trial in one of our smaller sites. We have started delivering a meal to Pickrell. We also may consider reopening the Diller center. Schoenrock asked if Fairbury brought the rent down. Williams stated that they lowered the rent to \$30 a day, and we are subtracting the weekends and Holidays, which is a small savings.

#### **HOME & COMMUNITY OPTIONS REPORT – KATHY ERICKSON, MANAGER**

A copy of the Home and Community Options 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter FY 21-22 report was distributed to the board before the meeting. Erickson reported that she had been on a meeting this morning with the state about Level of Care Assessment being done by the Eligibility and Enrollment Unit through DHHS for the Medicaid Waiver. There has been a concern at this point because there has been a lag time from receiving a referral and completing an assessment, which is then looked over by a manger in Lincoln. Then it's another week or two for that to get sent out to the appropriate AAA or League of Human Dignity office. This morning we were assured that the State E & E teams are to be held to the 14-day between referral and screening just the way the AAA's had been. Erickson said that the last two to three weeks have seen improvement in time of referral to assessment. Today State said they think they are caught up on their backlog. The question to them was, what about the new ones that don't meet the criteria that were sent to us. Everyone on the call said that they have gotten them. The wouldn't give an answer. The last one we got, Erickson did a lot of documentation about different people we had

spoken to about this person and why they weren't appropriate to be a Medicaid Waiver client and said at this time we couldn't set up a safe plan of services and supports for that person and closed the case. APS has been trying to work with the doctor and city attorney to get this person admitted into a nursing home, but she refuses to go. So we couldn't set up a plan for her. There are other agencies who are having similar screens sent to them. Or screens like we have gotten where the person is completely independent, and we have no idea why we got the referral. Options counseling is when the ADRC counselors spend a longer time working with someone two or three times a month or two. In most of our offices, if someone is going to be needing more support than a phone call one or two times a week, we turn it over to our Care Managers. Our chore services have been going up and down. We were expecting that we would probably get a lot of snow shoveling this winter, but so far so good. Our homemaker hours were down a little from last quarter. Erickson thinks that is because people are a little hesitant to have people come into their home. It kind of goes in spurts. During the pandemic we used some Cares Act funds for special projects such as installing handrails, porch repair, minor roof repairs and grab bars.

#### **FISCAL REPORT – BETH WILLIAMS, FISCAL OFFICER**

The financial report was distributed to all members to review. Williams reported that at this time we are at 50% of our year. When looking at the program expenses, the numbers are skewed in CASA. That is because CASA is the shortest term funding and needs to be spent first. Other programs we are on target with. We will be making a budget revision. Right now we are higher in CII which is the Home Delivered Meals and we will be moving some of that over to congregate as we start having more meals being eaten in the centers. Our contributions are coming in fairly well, but not as good as before. Right now we believe they are down a little because people are thinking we have received a lot of Covid money. That has effected all of our contributions such as housekeeping and chore. Right now Care Management is a little bit high. Right now they are trying to get their service units up which would make it more even across. That is a situation where they need to talk and meet with more people. Otherwise we will be looking at moving some over to ADRC. Schoenrock added that he wanted the new board members to know that staff are available for training to familiarize them with what we do. A copy of the area plan was given to Holtzman, and Schoenrock will take one to Pohlman.

**MOTION** to accept the Transit, Nutrition, Home & Community Options and Financial Reports by Haxby; second by Haskell; roll call vote; 10 yeas and 0 nays; motion carried.

**MOTION** to approve the November & December 2021 bills by Pohlman; second by Haxby; voice vote; motion carried.

#### **DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION – EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL – BETH WILLIAMS**

Williams had had many discussions with Amber at Northwestern. We are going to stay with the same plan that we have had for the past year with United Health. The PPO plan has increase by 3.6% and the HAS plan is at 8.9%. Talking with Amber, it would seem that most premiums have increased by at least 1%. This equates to about \$30 a month and about \$77 a month premium. Williams had sent all members an email breaking down the figures for the premiums. We talked to NACO last year and last year's rates were \$1000 more per month per plan. This year they have 3.28% increase and their plan is not comparable to the plan we have now in regards to deductibles. So with that increase, that knocked them out of the running for this year as well. Amber has continued to talk with Aetna and Blue Cross

Blue Shield. She just got back with Williams a little bit ago about Aetna. They came in with a savings but not as much coverage as we have now. She is still working with them to see if they come up with something comparable. Williams stated that as an employee using the insurance plan, she thinks United is a better plan. Aetna caused problems with several employees as far as not wanting to cover some stuff. Amber is still working with it and the numbers are \$856.20 and \$935.20 and are guaranteed. So our suggestion is to approve that rate and basically hope that Amber can continue to talk with these people which would then cause United to reduce those rates to keep our policy.

**MOTION** to approve the Employee Health Insurance Renewal as presented by Krueger; second by Haskell; roll call vote; 10 yeas and 0 nays; motion carried.

**DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION; HBE AUDIT AND RENEWAL OF LINE OF CREDIT – BETH WILLIAMS**

Renewing our line of credit is all reliant on the audit. We need to have the audit complete so they can renew our line of credit. We are looking at February 14, 2022 in the morning as a time to set up an Executive Committee meeting to hear the results of the audit. They could not get it complete for today's meeting. Schoenrock, Haxby and Gakle stated that the date would work for them. The meeting will be set up from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. There was a delay in the audit when HBE had a security breach in which they had to put everything on hold to get that resolved and get everything secured. We have also received so much new Federal funding with the in the Transit program, which involved an additional audit of that program, and more expense. It has been on-going. They were in house for three days and then we did everything else through their server link, emails and phone calls. A zoom meeting will be set up for the Executive Committee to be presented with the information on Monday February 14, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

**DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION: RETENTION BONUS'S THROUGH THE ARPA FUNDS – CARLA FRASE**

**MOTION** to go into closed session by Krueger; second by Haxby; voice vote; motion carried.

**MOVED INTO CLOSED SESSION AT 1:55 P.M.**

**MOTION** to move out of closed session by Haxby; second by Seitz; voice vote; motion carried.

**MOVED INTO OPEN SESSION AT 2:19 P.M.**

Schoenrock asked the board if there was any action they wanted to take after their discussion in closed session regarding the Retention Bonus's through the ARPA Funds.

**MOTION** to allow that in the event of emergent situations and special funding awards that the upper management of Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, and in collaboration with the Executive Committee has the discretion to award one-time incentives to all eligible staff that have worked at least six months and are not currently on probation by Krueger; second by Gakle; roll call vote; 10 yeas and 0 nays; motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT – CARLA FRASE**

- November 16 2-3pm – Recognizing/addressing Employee Burnout: Recognize that staff can get burned out, advise them to understand their limits; Utilize VACATION, offer a paid Wellness Day, Staff who are off on vacation; instruct to not check work emails, etc., totally disengage, advise staff to utilize EAP if needed; give feedback on jobs well done; utilize coping mechanisms, check in/see how staff are doing, adhere to CALM Fridays; NO ZOOM MEETINGS
- November 18 10am – Met with Jacqueline Argarin with Modivare a new non-emergency transit provider. Discussed partnering with the company for United Health Care client trips.
- November 18 2-3pm – Nutrition Coordinators Meeting
- November 19 12-1pm – Addressing Social Isolation in Rural America; Determined this to be a large scale public health threat, due in part on failure to make distinction between physical distance and social distancing. Need to address fear, food security, and loss of social connection: reassure, engage, serve and maintain connectivity with: cheer bags, games, snacks, informational brochures, zoom Facebook and emails. Ask participants what they want to see in a packet of activities. Focus on commitment to connect.
- November 29 – Check in call with Cynthia Brammeier
- November 30 8-9:30 am – Brain Injury Training with BIA
- December 1 11am – 12 pm – ADRC Leadership Team meeting
- December 1 – 2pm – AA/LHD Leader meeting with dDD/HCBS, included talking points
- December 2 2-5 pm – Local Food Coalition, Beatrice Public Schools Admin with McKeever.
- December 6-10 – one hour each day through American Society on Aging, Ageism to Age Inclusion.
- December 13 2-3pm – IFF Workgroup
- December 14 9am-12pm – AAA Director's Meeting
- December 14 2-3pm – Nutrition Coordinators meeting
- December 15 9:30-11:30am – Met with Fairbury Mayor and City Administrator to discuss new contract with city for center, attended with McKeever, Haskell & Schoenrock
- December 17 – Staff Christmas Party
- December 28 11am – signed paperwork on three new agency vehicles, 2018 Ford Edge, IIIB program, 2019 Ford Flex, IIIC program and 2016 Dodge Town & Country, Gage County meal delivery program.
- January 4 9-11:30am – Discuss IFF, questions to HCBS/SUA
- January 6 8:30am Frase and Erickson completed the SPR report for SUA, via SharePoint
- January 6 1pm – Disability Education Series, Supported Decision Making: Self-Determination people are healthier, more independent, well – adjusted and able to recognize abuse when denied. Guardianships ok when appropriate, but can take away too many rights, whereas 90% take away ALL rights from a person. People have a better quality of life when making their own decisions: paid job, live independently, have friends, date, socialize and practice religion – very important.
- January 10 9-10 am – LOC discussion
- January 10 2-4pm – IFF follow up
- January 11 9:45-11:45am – Don VanEperen Funeral

- January 11 1:30 – 3:30 pm – Ne4a Discussion on LOC
- January 12 – January 19 – out with covid
- January 20 10-11am – Advisory Board Meeting

Frase stated that she sent out two emails with her report information and included her calendars of what she has been doing. The two biggest issues involve the ARPA funding and the IFF – Interstate Funding Formula. We have had multiple meetings with the vendor and the State Unit on Aging to have a new determination of how funds are distributed for all eight area agencies in Nebraska. The current formulas would be detrimental to two rural areas which are the panhandle and Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging. There is a 30% basis for all of the funds to be distributed equitably and then it's based on a lot of other factors, such as age clusters: 60-74, 75-85 and 85+, the land area, the number of senior centers in your area, minority, lives alone, disabled folks. Trying to have a formula where no one agency loses more than 5% of their funding or gains more than 5%. There was some that gained like Lincoln and Omaha. The new vehicles that the board approved the purchase of were a much needed addition. The Ford Transconnect Van has been approved by the state to use in transportation. We are using it for special trips. During our Advisory Council meeting, Danny DeLong our state advisor talked about the need for Broadband Expansion in Nebraska. The State has \$6 billion to expand broadband. Frase pointed out the supplies of toilet paper, masks, hand sanitizer and disinfectant that was donated by Westlake Ace Hardware in Lincoln for our centers.

**MOTION** to accept the Executive Directors report by Krueger; second by Schoenrock; voice vote; motion carried.

**DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION: ACTIONS TO ADDRESS COVID- 19 – MARK SCHOENROCK**

Williams stated that we are wanting to extend the two week Covid leave pay which expires March 31, 2022. We currently have a board approved two week covid leave pay for any employee who have tested positive for covid, so they don't have to use up their sick leave. We are asking to have that considered to be extended beyond March. Haxby suggested we wait and revisit it later and see if the covid rate goes down.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST ANNUAL STATEMENT**

Schoenrock advised members to sign the Conflict of Interest Annual Statement and give it to Fossler. Fossler told the board that members who are not present at this meeting will receive it in the mail to sign and return.

**NEXT GOVERNING BOARD MEETING** will be on Monday March 21, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. at Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging, 103 Eastside Blvd., Beatrice and via zoom.

**MEETING ADJOURNED** at 2:40 pm by Schoenrock.

RECORDING SECRETARY

*Tracie Fossler*