

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging Governing Board

Minutes

April 7, 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 10 a.m.

Board members present: Schoenrock, Gakle, Haxby, Crownover, Haskell, Hill, Krueger, Pohlman, Seitz and Swenson

Absent: Douglass, Ferguson and Holtzman

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; Tracie Fossler, Administrative Assistant; Amy Mason; Deanna Rentschler; Dylan Dell-Haro; Verjean Noojin; Michelle Bernadt, Karen Klover and Jeanette Vitosh.

Public Guests: None

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

DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION: WAGE PROPOSALS – FRASE AND WILLIAMS

Wage Proposal information was distributed to the board members showing a \$4 and \$5 hourly wage increase for all staff, including a 5% annual increase for all staff July 1, 2022. Frase stated our current starting wages are \$10 for our cooks, aides and drivers. The proposals included the increased budget costs effect on all programs. Frase thinks now is the time to bite the bullet and be proactive, as fast food companies and others are hiring at \$14-\$15 per hour. Frase feels that what our employees do is just as important. Our basis for the \$4/\$5 was due to the fact that the board asked for a \$14 to \$15 starting wage at our March meeting. In fairness to our current staff who have worked here for numerous years and are not making \$14 an hour yet, we felt that everybody from the top to the bottom had to be given the same \$4 wage increase. The figures are based upon the current 83 staff we employ. We also identified a \$5 an hour proposal, as one of the board members stated that we need to start \$15 an hour. We gave both proposals showing the impact to our Transit, Ad waiver, ADRC, Care Management, Title IIIC/IIIB and the Executive Directors salary. We have had only one application for our Service Coordinator position and have site managers and cooks that we need to hire in three areas. We have driver positions open in three areas. We cannot get anyone to apply. It is imperative that we do something about it.

We have discussed many options to pay for this increase. We can ask for additional Federal/State Funds in our Transit program, and would need to look at our 25% match only. We can utilize our MAC funds for ADRC and Care Management Programs. AD Waiver cost is determined by a budget narrative, showing actual costs and we have always received what we ask for. We know that our meal costs are high and are looking to increase our suggested contribution from \$4 to \$5 due to inflation. We are the lowest in the state of Nebraska in comparison with the other Area Agencies on Aging. Staff has been looking at all areas to determine how to fund this increase going forward. We continue with our model of volunteerism and partnerships with communities that want our services. Schoenrock stated that after Frase sent out the wage proposal in an email, he heard from a couple of the board members. They

are wanting to know where the money will come from to do this. We obviously have a budget that gets approved every year.

Frase stated that right now our budget goes through June. It looks really good thanks to our additional Care Act Covid money that we have received. Right now everything is under budget. We have federal money from last year that we have not tapped into yet. The Covid funds are available through Sept. 2024, and we would have Federal funds from each two-year cycle available for the next two years from that. We are in the first year of our two-year budget for transit and we can ask for additional funds with an addendum that we still have to match 25%. We do have some match money left over from last year. We still have our MAC funds of \$80,000 and expect an additional \$125,000 each year going forward. We sold two Beatrice buses for just under \$10,000 to keep in reserve for match funds. The Nutrition program has the federal funds. The challenge will be in three-years. We have been successful in Palmyra, Unadilla, Cortland, Plymouth and Wymore with asking for reductions in rent and assistance with Beatrice for utilities in our main office. We are saving \$750 a month in Wymore by moving to the Fire Hall and approximately \$400 a month in Palmyra. We will be moving the kitchen in Davenport to Hebron, which will be a cost savings. We have made a lot of changes for cost savings in the last two years since February 2020 when we were told to make budget cuts by the SUA. We have looked at our staff and where we could cut the fluff out down to bones and we still are able to provide the service. We are looking continually at how we can maintain services at the current levels.

William's stated that she wanted the board to note that our services are not at 100% right now because we do not have staff in every location. We are short staff and our services are going to suffer in either scenario. If we don't get staff, there won't be services. If we pay more to staff we might not have as many services. So either way we will have to get creative in ways to do this. We have lobbyists at the Legislature asking for increases to AAA's. McKeever is researching the use of a single vendor/menu for every site, incurring a food savings Agency wide. We just signed on with a new level of transit trips for non-emergency medical trip called Modivcare, which is good revenue.

The board discussed the proposals and then asked for more information on wages of similar positions in the State. The board decided to recess so we could prepare more information comparing wages with other organizations and AAA's.

MEETING WAS RECESSED at 11:27 a.m. and will reconvene on Monday April 11, 2022 at 1 p.m.

MEETING WAS RECONVIENED FROM RECESS on April 11, 2022 at 1:05 p.m.

Board Members present: Schoenrock, Crownover, Gakle, Swenson, Haskell, Haxby, Pohlman, Hill and Krueger

Absent: Ferguson, Seitz, Holtzman and Douglass

Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging staff: Frase, Williams, Erickson, McKeever, Lindell, Fossler, Mason and Rentschler

Public Guests: None

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

Frase and Williams presented a wage comparison spreadsheet providing information from other agencies, Recruitment sites, the State of Nebraska, Nebraska Dept. of Labor, local ads and AAA's. The increases that other agencies are proposing for retention and recruitment were also presented. Much discussion followed regarding all the \$4 vs \$5 increase to all staff and the Annual cost of living of 5% that was presented on April 7th.

MOTION to approve a \$4 an hour raise for all employees to start immediately with no cost of living raise in July by Haxby; second by Krueger; roll call vote; motion carried.

It was also noted by Mark Schoenrock that if circumstances change, that the Board can review and adjust further wages if necessary for retaining and recruiting staff.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 2:05 p.m. by Schoenrock.

RECORDING SECRETARY

Tracie Foster