

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2009

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)
DODGE COUNTY)**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
MANTORVILLE, MN**

2009-16 C.O.W.

The Dodge County Commissioners met in Committee of the Whole August 25, 2009, in the Commissioner's Room at the Dodge County Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 9:00 a.m. CDT. David Hanson, Chair opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. CDT.

Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present:

Those Present

Members present: Klaus Alberts District #1
Lyle Tjosaas District #2
David Erickson District #3
Don Gray District #4
David Hanson District #5

Members absent: None

Also present: David McKnight County Administrator
Becky Lubahn Deputy County Clerk

Human Services Director Jane Hardwick and Financial Assistance Supervisor Cathy Skogen provided the Board with a Financial Assistance Program briefing. The following information was discussed:

Financial Assistance
Programs Briefing

- Financial Assistance Programs
- Program Eligibility Requirements
- Enrollment Procedures
- Number of Dodge County Residents Served
- Funding
- Staffing Levels

Commissioner Erickson had questions on the amount of paperwork that needs to be filled out by the applicants and who determines eligibility. Mr. Erickson also wanted to know if there are checks and balances in place to make sure that applicants have access to all of the programs that they are eligible to receive.

Ms. Skogen discussed which forms need to be filled out for the various programs offered and how the Human Services staff determines who is eligible for the programs. Eligibility criteria varies by program and by subprograms, including what categorical criteria must be met, how income and assets are counted, how much people can have and still be eligible, how they count household size, etc. Over the past decade, the number of programs and complexity of eligibility for those programs has increased significantly. The Financial Assistance Supervisor informed the Board that she personally reviews all of her new employee's case files until she is confident that they know their job and can determine which programs their clients are eligible for. Ms. Skogen commented that if an employee has questions on a case they will either go to her or another co-worker to find answers to their questions.

Ms. Skogen elaborated on how people enroll in the programs. In most cases, a resident must fill out a lengthy and very detailed application. Applications for most programs are submitted to the county agency and processed here. A small number of applications are processed at the state level.

The Financial Assistance Supervisor reported that state quality control checks are conducted in Dodge County.

Ms. Hardwick informed the Board that fraud investigations are conducted when her office suspects they have a fraudulent case or when they have been tipped off regarding suspected fraud.

Commissioner Erickson wanted to know how long they keep their paperwork.

Ms. Skogen stated that closed files are kept for four years. Once a file becomes inactive it can be imaged.

Commissioner Hanson wanted to know if there were migrant workers in the county and if those numbers were reflected in the figures provided.

The Financial Assistance Supervisor reported that there are not as many migrant workers this year since they are not having much luck finding jobs around here.

The Human Services Director discussed with the Board July's Financial Assistance caseloads. In July 2009, the Dodge County Financial Assistance staff had 1,310 cases. Many people seeking assistance qualify for more than one program (typically both economic or cash assistance and health care), and most cases have more than one person. In addition, each month some people become ineligible (requiring a termination action in most cases), while other people become eligible. Over the course of a year, Human Services serves more than 1,310 people.

Ms. Hardwick informed the Board that Dodge County's caseload has grown over 20% in the past year and over 28% in the past two years. As can be expected, Human Services caseloads and expenditures tend to increase during economic downturns. Many of the people served by Human Services are the first to lose their jobs as the economy suffers and the last to get a job as the economy recovers.

The Human Services Director reported that over \$20 million in state and federal revenue flows into our area economy as a result of eligibility that is administered by Dodge County Human Services. Most of these payments are made directly by the state based on eligibility determinations made by Human Services staff. It comes in the form of cash assistance (via an electronic benefits card or direct deposit) or payment to providers for services such as health care, child care, housing, etc.

Ms. Hardwick shared with the Board information on financial assistance expenditures for Dodge County enrollees/participants for calendar year 2008. The bulk of expenditures for Financial Assistance Programs are funded with federal and state grants and match. Most of the expenditures are for health care, with the bulk of health care expenditures being for long-term care for older residents and people with disabilities.

Financial Assistance
Programs Briefing –
Continued

The Human Services Director discussed with the Board staffing levels in the financial worker area. Dodge County currently has one supervisor and five financial workers handling over 1,300 cases per month, for an average of 266 cases per financial worker. This is greater than the caseloads per worker for eight of the counties in Region 10 that they have been able to get data for.

Human Services was recently informed that the band and grade for the vacant Financial Assistance Specialist position has been adjusted based on changes made to the job description. This will increase the likelihood that they will be successful in hiring an experienced worker. Human Services will work with the Employee Relations Director to post again for applicants for this position and hope to fill this vacancy as soon as possible.

In the interim, their caseload continues to grow. They will be examining whether to request an additional increase in the staffing in this area to assure that caseloads are manageable. Having average caseloads closer to 180 per financial worker enables staff to provide customer service at a level that helps to assure that eligible residents enroll and stay in programs for which they are eligible.

Commissioner Alberts wanted to know if they encourage people to get off the program.

Ms. Hardwick and Ms. Skogen both commented that some programs do have a timeframe associated with them and that they felt the grant that some individuals receive is not a big incentive to stay on the program. It was also noted was that there are some incentives for the clients to go to work.

The Board thanked Ms. Hardwick and Ms. Skogen for the update.

Zoning Administrator Melissa DeVetter met with the Board to discuss Derek Finstuen CUP #08-23.

Derek Finstuen CUP
#08-23 Discussion

Ms. DeVetter informed the Board that Mr. Finstuen originally proposed a 51' X 380' curtain sided barn to be oriented in a west-east direction. The Feedlot Advisory Committee reviewed the site and recommended trees on the north side of the building which was part of the recommendations to the Planning Committee.

The Planning Commission approved Mr. Finstuen's project and planning staff recommendations as proposed at the August 6, 2008 meeting.

The Zoning Administrator reported that at the County Board meeting held on August 12, 2008, the County Board required that Mr. Finstuen construct a tunnel-ventilated rather than a curtain-sided barn as condition #13 to CUP #08-23. In addition, condition #14 states that the building cannot be built any closer than 1,320 feet from the nearest non-farm dwelling, which is the Glarner's property located southwest of the site. In order for the air from the tunnel ventilated barn to exit to the north, away from the closest residences, the barn was oriented in a north-south direction. Placement of the barn in a north-south direction while maintaining the quarter mile setback placed the barn in such a position so that planting trees on the north side of the barn to SWCD/NRCS specifications as required by condition #4 of the CUP is not feasible.

Derek Finstuen CUP
#08-23 Discussion -
Continued

Ms. DeVetter shared with the Board a letter from Tom Johnston of the Dodge County Soil and Water Conservation District office. The letter stated that on August 4, 2009 Mr. Johnston met with Derek Finstuen concerning condition #4 of his CUP. After viewing the site, Mr. Johnston recommended that the tree planting to the north side of the building is not feasible for windbreak/screening purposes because of the rapid drop in elevation starting 30' north of the building. The building is bordered by trees on the east and west sides. The area one quarter mile to the northeast and one half mile to the northwest is heavily wooded with no residents.

The Zoning Administrator reported that in complying with the additional conditions #13 and #14 that were added on, Mr. Finstuen is unable to comply with condition #4.

Ms. DeVetter spoke with County Attorney Paul Kiltinen on how she should proceed. Mr. Kiltinen recommended a letter of understanding to be mailed to Mr. Finstuen and kept in his file in which they state that the county will not be enforcing that condition of the permit and the reasons why.

The Board stated that they concurred with the County Attorney recommendation that a letter of understanding be mailed to Derek Finstuen stating that condition #4 of CUP #08-23 will not be enforced because it is not feasible to plant trees on the north side of the building since it will have a north-south orientation.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:12 a.m. CDT.

Meeting Adjourned

ATTEST:

DAVID HANSON
CHAIR, COUNTY BOARD

BECKY LUBAHN
DEPUTY CLERK

DATED: