



Kent County Community Action
Advisory Governing Board

Thursday, September 21, 2023, 12:00 pm

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to order – Daniel VanderMolen, Chairperson
 - a. Chairperson VanderMolen called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm
2. Welcome and Roll Call for Quorum
 - a. Present: Daniel VanderMolen, Wende Randall, Kendrick Heinlein, Tricia Vanderhaar, Jessica White-Hatinger, James Geisen, Jean Ramos, Samarhia Giffel, Kim Moore, Chris Smith
 - b. Absent: Catherine Aldridge, Krashawn Martin, Christina Swiney, Reyna Quintino
 - c. Staff Present: Ashley Huey, Sherrie Gillespie, Rachel Kunnath, Brenna Kotchka, Bobby O'Connor, Cathy LaPorte, Chad Coffman, Gustavo Perez
3. Review and Approval of Minutes, July 20, 2023 --- ***Action Item***
 - a. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Wende Randall, support from Samarhia Giffel. The motion carries unanimously.
4. A Public Hearing to accept any public comments for the KCCA Community Services Block Grant FY 2024 Community Action Plan
Sherrie Gillespie, Program Manager --- ***Information Item***
5. Director's Report --- ***Information Item***
 - a. **Staff & Program Updates** – Gustavo shared with the Board that we are still working on filling some open positions. Leadership is also reviewing internal positions to make sure job descriptions match with the responsibilities and assigned duties. KCCA has implemented a robust orientation and onboarding process. New staff have orientation with Human Resources, then they also have a department-specific orientation as well. New staff get to learn what we are about as a department and receive information on each of the program areas. Staff will have a 1-1 meeting with Gustavo within the first couple weeks of starting and have a touch-base with their Supervisor and the Senior Admin. to ensure they have everything they need and can ask any questions they have at that time. This month the new Contract & Compliance Administrator and Weatherization Specialist have both started. There are a couple other positions that are still open, but we haven't received as many applications as needed.

Gustavo and Human Resources are looking at how we are promoting the positions, possibly changing it to Energy Auditor in hopes that we will get individuals with auditing experience that could fit into these roles. The department is also looking at intensive case management services for emergency services clients. KCCA could offer these wrap-around services by changing some positions from Community Services Assistant to Community Resource Specialist. These positions already exist in the HCV program and could help improve service delivery for emergency services clients.

- b. **Assistance Activities and Potential Conflicts of Interest** – Gustavo informed the Board that there was one conflict of interest case and it was reviewed. If the Board would like more information they can reach out for further details.
 - c. **Monitoring Updates** – There is one monitoring that is currently happening, and staff is gathering the files for a desk review. We do not anticipate any problems. KCCA also recently completed the Organizational Standards review and we did meet all standards. The Leadership team is retooling our process for how we capture the information needed for future Organizational Standards audits and is confident that we will be in the best possible position for future audits.
 - d. **Upcoming Events** – Energy Awareness month is coming up in October. We will be sharing the need that is present throughout the community and that there are programs available for residents. There will be press releases, social media posts, and the communications team is working on scheduling interviews. As Gustavo receives dates, he will share them with the Board. Weatherization Day is 10/30, we will be sharing the benefits of this program and highlighting the need for contractors to partner with us to do this work. There is an event that the Purchasing department is putting on 11/1 that will focus on networking and contractor recruitment. Chad was able to figure out that we have about \$16 million in funding over the next 5 years for projects and we need contractors to do that work.
 - e. **Board Appointment Applications** – Applications for open Board positions are due by 9/30. Gustavo reminded Board members to fill out the applications by that date and asked if they are not intending to come back, please reach out to him. He asked if they know of anyone who may be a good fit for a position to encourage them to apply.
6. Fiscal Report: *Org. Standard 8.7* –
Brenna Kotchka, Financial Analyst --- **Information Item**
- a. Brenna noted that the grants on page seven end 12/31, but the ones noted with an asterisk* have changed to 9/30 end date. There is a plan in place to spend out the KCS, SRMM, SRWTHR, and SROUT grants. KCCA has also ordered the bus to fulfill the MDOTEM grant. For the FSS grant we did hire a second caseworker. However, we won't be able to spend out the grant this year but will next year. Page eights shows a comparison of grants from previous years.

Page nine includes grants ending 6/30 so they started recently. We are a quarter of the way into that grant year and projects usually pick up in the spring. Brenna noted that there shouldn't be any issues spending those out. Page eleven shows 9/30 ending grants. CSBG goes for another year, we will be close to spending out MEAP, but probably not all. KCCA will not be able to spend out LIHEAPWAP or LIWACA. BIL goes for a few more years, so we still have time to work on spending down. Wende asked regarding the MEAP funds, if we are just not getting clients requesting assistance, or is it dollars that are designated for other things. Sherrie responded that we are holding back some funds for APP payments for the last two months of the year. Bobby noted that there will be under \$1,000 after that, but Sherrie has plans to spend out the remainder. Wende also asked about the Weatherization Deferral program and if the funding is not being spent because of the lack of contractors? Gustavo responded yes, that is part of the problem. We must go through a bidding process. There are sometimes small jobs where we need to get three bids and that makes the process harder. We had a few where no contractors showed up to the bid. Kendrick asked if there is a contingency plan for a federal government shutdown. Gustavo said that we have reached out to the relevant agencies, nothing has come out that we need to act on now, Fiscal has been monitoring the situation and reviewing any relevant information. As of now we don't have enough information.

7. Programmatic Report: *Org. Standard 5.9* -

Chad Coffman, Rachel Kunnath, Sherrie Gillespie --- **Information Item**

- a. Community Development- Chad asked the Board to turn to page 14 of the packet to view the financials and funding status for Community Development. He noted that the program recently spent out the last of the ESG-COVID dollars. The grant will close on time, they just have to wrap up the reporting. The new Contract and Compliance Administrator, Cathy, is working on monitoring finding for the Community Development area to ensure they are in compliance. Previously, the County had no process in place to record sub-recipient awards, but we are working to resolve that issue. Chad also shared that our partnership with LINC UP and ICCF resulted in the completion of several new affordable housing projects and two home rehabilitation projects. One of the homes just sold, and the rest are expect to be sold before the end of the year. Community Development put out an RFP for the \$3.3 million in HOME ARP funding. We did receive six applications from area nonprofits seeking to operate supportive service programs for individuals experiencing homelessness. We will be reviewing applications to determine which we will go forward with.

- b. Senior Services- Rachel informed the Board that KCCA filled the Cook position this summer. They are through the most difficult part of learning the job and are settling into the position. She also renewed an old agreement with AARP for their senior service employment program. This allowed KCCA to bring on an older adult to assist in the kitchen at no cost to us. The person in this position serves as a host so new visitors to the Congregate site can have assistance checking in and make sure they are comfortable. Rachel also shared with the Board that we received a donation from a local family in memory of their father who passed away. With those funds we were able to purchase an animatronic cat. It has sensors built in, it purrs, licks its paws, and rolls over. Staff introduced the cat to the Congregate participants, and they loved the cat and it has brought them a lot of joy and happiness. Senior Services is also working on fostering more partnerships with our programs. One such partnership is the exercise program that is offered here two days a week. They are also hosting an art and canvas tutorial for seniors next week, and plan to have one special activity every month. The Congregate program has been growing and continuing to rebound after the pandemic. There is a need for transportation to get people here, but that has been a challenge. Transportation must also run the Ride Link program to take seniors to medical and other appointments, while being short a number of staff. Currently, we are down three drivers and have had trouble recruiting for the positions. Rachel has been working with Human Resources to rebrand how we are marketing the positions and changed the on-call contract jobs to permanent part-time. The OAA and KCSM programs end 9/30. We were able to get some additional funding for the programs and are projected to be over what we were contracted to provide. Staff has been very busy keeping seniors stable in the community.
- c. Emergency & Specialized Services- Sherrie said that staff is continuing to assist meeting the needs of the community. This Friday we are having our CSFP distribution, and the next TEFAP distribution is on 10/5 and we would love for Board members to come volunteer. Sam asked if we could send out a sign-up form and Wende inquired if we have had trouble with procuring commodities. Sherrie said that we are still getting about the same amount and have not had trouble with inventory or supply issues. We have had staff from various companies come volunteer, and that has been a great help. Gustavo notified the Board that in the near future he is looking at forming a committee to do volunteer coordinating.



8. Other Business

a. Walk for Warmth

Daniel VanderMolen --- *Information Item*

- Daniel shared that the Board will be prioritizing the Walk for Warmth event. It will be held on Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 8:30 am. Gustavo and Daniel worked to create a sponsorship packet that is on our website. We will accept donations of any amount, but individual sponsorships start at \$50 and corporate sponsors are listed up to \$10,000. Consumers has verbally committed to being a sponsor and DTE was also interested. There are plenty of other organizations within the community that may be interested, but we need help from the Advisory Board to get sponsors. Walk for Warmth is our flagship fundraising opportunity. These are flexible dollars that can help families who don't qualify for other programs and would otherwise fall through the cracks. Chris asked that if Board members have a connection to a possible sponsor how should we go about sharing that information. Daniel reminded the Board that we do have a Google Doc where sponsors can be tracked, and we should also send them our sponsorship packet. We are working with our IT department to get a donation button on the website. Gustavo reminded the Board that this is their event and that we need their assistance to raise funds and spread awareness.

- ### b.
- Gustavo noted that there were a few items that he did not get to discuss in his report, but that he wanted to share. One goal in our Strategic Plan was to improve our data. We received notice that the U of M graduating seniors in the IT program were seeking applications from organizations to work with them on projects. KCCA's application was accepted and we will be working with a group of students to build a dashboard and visualize our data from the four different software platforms that we have. This new dashboard will help us tell our story and share our impact in the community better than ever before. On Monday, were going to have a visit from OCS. Staff had a great presentation put together that included testimonials from clients and partners. However, OCS contacted us and let us know they would not be able to visit after all. Gustavo and Sherrie are going to a conference next week where they will still be able to speak with some of these people who would have attended. Sam noted that she is very happy Gustavo is here, and that the team has been doing good work. Gustavo thanked her and said we have been working on culture and moral in our department. Leadership has been asking how we can make things better in our workplace to make sure our team is happy here. We did an employee survey and then looked at the data. Common trends included a lower level of trust and communication along with high levels of stress. We did follow up survey to get ideas and potential solutions from staff to resolve these issues. We found that we could address some things. To improve communication, we



will be putting together an inter-departmental newsletter where we will share program updates and other vital information. Next year we also hope to have a team building retreat for staff. We have come a long way in improving morale, the Fun Committee is doing great things, and we have continued to recognize outstanding work with our Employee of the Month award.

- c. Wende asked Sam if she would share information about a conference she had recently attended. Sam said she had gone to the American Water Works Association annual conference and exhibit. She had asked the Garfield Park Neighborhood Association and other community stakeholders to attend. Speakers at the conference talked about community collaboration and Sam shared information about ENTF and KCCA. Sam said with utilities we struggle with community advocates and entities. She advocated for us to get more staff, because we need to be able to administer these programs. She also spoke about participatory budgeting process in the City of Grand Rapids and how residents can advocate for clean drinking water and sanitary sewer services. In addition to the conference, Sam is also changing the way the bills are designed, taking out jargon and making it more accessible. Sam designed door hangers for meter maintenance team that they can leave to let know people know how they can get assistance from KCCA. She is also working with Senator Chang on a bill that will limit the amount that people must pay for utility bills.
- d. Wende shared information on data that shows only about 20% of people who need utility assistance access it. ENTF created a social media toolkit that helps to reduce the stigma around needing assistance. Wende said she will share the toolkit with the group.

9. Public Comment

10. Adjournment

- a. Motion to adjourn from Jessica White-Hatinger, support from Christopher Smith. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Next Scheduled Advisory Governing Board Meeting

Thursday, November 16, 2023

12:00 PM