

Richland County

HHS & Veterans Standing Committee

September 29, 2022

The Richland County Health and Human Services & Veterans Committee convened on Thursday, September 29, 2022, in the County Board room at 181 W. Seminary Street, in person, via videoconference and teleconference.

Committee members present included Kerry Severson, Ken Rynes, Francis Braithwaite, Lee Van Landuyt, Ingrid Glasbrenner, Tim Gottschall, and Dr. Jerel Berres. Donald Seep and Danielle Rudersdorf, attended by Web Ex.

Department heads, staff, and public present were Marty Brewer, Karen Knock, Trisha Clements, Angie Rizner, Meghan Rohn, Jaymie Bruckner, Stephanie Ronnfeldt, Rose Kohout, Clint Langreck, Larry Sebranek, Dominic Anderson, Bill Lobeck, Leonard Frye, Alvin Christianson, Larry Marshall, Troy Rinehart, Larry Winger, Bud Decot, Mary Decot, Bill Butteris, Ronda Rott, David Lundgren, Donna Durst, David Durst, and Marge Freeman. Roxanne Klubertanz-Gerber, Sharon Pasold, Briana Turk, Jessica Tisdale, Tammy Wheelock, Cheryl Dull, Shaun Murphy Lopez, Sue Triggs and Barbara Scott logged in by WebEx. Gabriel Schmitt was present from MIS running the teleconferencing.

Not Present: Cindy Chicker

Agenda:

1. **Call to order:** Committee Chair Ingrid Glasbrenner called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.
2. **Proof of notification:** Chair Ingrid Glasbrenner verified that the meeting had been properly posted.
3. **Approve Agenda:** Motion by Lee Van Landuyt, seconded by Ken Rynes to approve the agenda and proper posting. Motion Carried.
4. **Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:** Motion by Tim Gottschall, seconded by Dr. Jerel Berres to approve the August 11, 2022 Health & Human Services & Veterans Standing Committee minutes. Motion carried.
5. **Review & Discuss Committee Meeting Procedures & Meeting Time:** Discussion was held regarding moving the time of the monthly Health & Human Services and Veterans Standing Committee to 9:30 am., and beginning each meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. It was agreed by the board that going forward the monthly meeting of the Health & Human Services and Veterans Standing Committee should convene at 9:30am, and will begin with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Ken Rynes then lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
6. **Review & Discuss 2023 VSO Budget:** Karen Knock reviewed the details of the 2023 Veterans Services Office budget, including expenditure comparisons, and the Veteran Services salary worksheet. It was noted that the old salary worksheet was included in the folder and as a result, did not include the change from a 4.5% increase to a 5% increase. Questions and clarifications were provided regarding conference registration costs and where grant funds could be applied. Tim Gottschall questioned why the salary request pertaining to the grant decreased from 2022 to 2023. Karen Knock was not able to give a full explanation of the difference and noted this was worked on by the Accounting Supervisor in the Administrator's Office.

Ken Rynes questioned the amount allocated for advertising and asked what types of advertisements are utilized. Karen Knock explained that items such as business cards, signage, and brochures are all taken from the advertising allocation. Ingrid Glasbrenner asked about the cost of mileage and the difference in cost to attend the State Conference vs. the National Conference. Karen Knock explained that she does not charge the County for mileage and that while the cost of registration for the state conference is half the cost of the national conference, it would require two weeks of staff time opposed to the national conference which only requires one week. Ken Rynes questioned if there is any possibility for future grants to assist with operations. Karen Knock explained she has requested that the elimination of the part-time Benefit Specialist be postponed

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until 2027 to allow more time to monitor the Veteran population and the passage of the CVSO ACT. Information was given regarding the CVSO Act, which would provide federal funding to the Veterans Services Office.

- 7. Review & Discuss 2023 HHS Budget:** Trisha Clements reviewed the details of the 2023 Health and Human Services Budget. Changes from what was presented in August included the cost of health insurance, salary increases were changed to 5% instead of 4.5%, removal of the request to reclassify the Youth Aide Worker position, and the reduction of the placement fund allocations as directed by the County Administrator.

Trisha Clements explained that the increase in the cost for salaries for the Child & Youth Services Unit was due to the 5% wage increase and the reclassification of Child & Youth Services Social Workers. Ken Rynes noted that Health and Human Services has been working short staffed and questioned whether the agency will be able to better retain the level of staff purposed in the 2023 budget. Trisha Clements explained that the largest staffing decreases has been seen in the Behavioral Health Unit and staff will need to be added. Changes to the unit are being proposed, including the elimination of the Adult Protective Services/Crisis Worker. The Child & Youth Services unit has historically been understaffed and it has been found when understaffed placements costs increase. Going forward any open position will be evaluated to determine if it needs to be filled or if duties can be absorbed elsewhere.

- 8. Review & Discuss Mandated versus Non-Mandated Programs/Services in Richland County:** Discussed in conjunction with agenda item #9.
- 9. Review & Discuss 2024-2027 Budget Levy Reductions per Resolution 22-96 Directives:** The list of mandated and non-mandated services was reviewed, as well as what progress has been made to identify areas where reductions can be made to obtain the directive outlined in Resolution 22-96. Ingrid Glasbrenner reviewed Resolution 22-96 and the direction given to the Health & Human Services and Veteran's standing committee to recommend a list of proposed projected levy reductions in the amount of \$320,000 in 2024, \$634,000 in 2025, \$783,000 in 2026, and \$1,004,000 in 2027.

Trisha Clements reviewed the Health & Human Services Resolution Response Summary and highlighted changes that were made to the summary since the last time it was presented. One of the biggest changes included restructuring the Behavioral Health Services Unit, including converting three Mental Health Therapist positions to Mental Health Case Managers, contracting out two Mental Health Therapist positions, and the elimination of the Adult Protective Services/Crisis Worker. Stephanie Ronnfeldt and Trisha Clements explained how the base allocation for the agency works and many positions are not 100% tax levy. This must be considered for looking at any savings that could be made by the reduction of positions.

Other possible areas where budget levy reductions could be made included the reduction of Public Health Tax Levy due to utilization of the State Opioid Response Grant, removal of the request to purchase a new Electronic Health Records System, additional reductions of the two placement funds, postponing filling positions due to attrition, and implementing operational changes in the Child & Youth Services Unit that would result in a reduction in on-call premium pay. It was noted discussions will be had with the state over the next few years in an effort to obtain more funding for the Economic Support Unit and a review was given of the unit including staffing levels.

Tim Gottschall expressed concerns with the reduction of placement funds due to the potential fluctuation of these expenses, and the risk of needing to go back to the public to fund placements in the future. Discussion was held and it was explained it would be impossible for Health and Human Services to reduce tax levy by the \$1,004,000 being requested without reducing allocations to the placement funds since it is more than the total allocation of \$956,089 that is provided for the core services of the agency. Approximately \$600,000 in reductions have been proposed without impacting placement funds, reducing the tax levy left for core services and required max obligations to approximately \$350,000. Shaun Murphy-Lopez discussed the need to advocate to the state for assistance with these placement costs and the need to consider what the proposed reductions look like in terms of staff and services. Administrator Clinton Langreck and Marty Brewer also acknowledged that without change at the state level the issue of funding placements will not go away. Kerry Severson stressed the historic trend of placement costs increasing when services are decreased. Administrator

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Clinton Langreck explained there is an option for the county to borrow funds to comply with court orderd placements if expenses were to exceed what is budgeted.

Proposed reductions that Health & Human Services would like to see considered as possible referendum items included maintaining two full-time county Mental Health Therapists, the elimination of the Adult Protective Services/Crisis Worker, the elimination of the Children's Long Term Support match, elimination of Treatment Court, elimination of the Coordinated Services Team, postpone or eliminate technology updates, elimination or reduction of Aging programs and transportation, and a reduction of the allocation to the two placement funds.

Discussion was held regarding staffing levels at Richland County Health & Human Services compared to several other counties with similar populations. Trisha Clements reviewed a document comparing the staffing levels at Richland County Health & Human Services with other counties, taking into consideration the need to also compare the services and organizational structure of these counties. It was determined this would require further review and research.

Tim Gottschall left the meeting at 12:03.

Options for tax levy reduction in the Veteran Services Office for 2024 through 2027 were discussed. Options included elimination of the provision of cemetery flag holders to next of kin, decreasing commission on per diems, mileage reduction, canceling the ETK computer program contract, and elimination of a part time Benefits Specialist. Karen Knock emphasized the impacts each of these reductions would have on services provided by the Veteran Services Office.

Karen Knock would like the elimination of the Benefit Specialist position to be considered for the referendum. She also requested that if it is decided to move forward with the elimination of this position, the change be postponed until 2027 in order to take time to monitor the Veteran population. Discussion was held regarding the differences between a Benefit Specialist and clerical support, the number of claims and forms that were completed in 2022, and how the ability for individuals to file online is affecting workload. Discussion was also held regarding the frequency in which these types of statistics are reported.

The new Veteran Population Projection Model was reviewed and discussed. It was noted the actual population and projected population was not included in the packet, however, Karen Knock was able to verbally provide data from the document. According to the document the veteran population for Richland County for 2022 is projected to be 1,124 1,036 by 2025, and 920 by 2030. It was also explained that when a Veteran passes away their immediate family members become the claimant.

A document outlining the total cost savings from the proposed reductions was reviewed. Karen Knock also reviewed costs that could potentially increase with the elimination of the Benefit Specialist position, including the cost for clerical staff, phone operation, mileage, and the need for the Veteran Services Officer to be issued a cell phone. Ingrid Glasbrenner clarified that the cost for clerical staff and phone operation would be absorbed by Health and Human Services if the Veteran Services Office were relocated. Donald Seep discussed the potential benefits of maintaining the ETK computer program contract. Marty Brewer expressed that he is not able to support a referendum unless every effort has been made to reduce cost wherever possible.

Karen Knock reviewed the special training received by the Veteran Benefit specialist, the effects of losing a Benefit Specialist, and other county departments and outside offices that work closely with the Veteran Services Office. Other documents reviewed and discussed included: demographics and special challenges facing rural veterans; a comparison of staffing levels of the Veteran Services Office with other counties of similar populations and if these offices are located within Health and Human Services; the County Veterans Service Grant – Federal Benefits Services Delivery Report; a list of commonly utilized forms; and The Green Book.

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10. Public Comments: Bill Lopeck, Marge Freeman, David Lundgren, Larry Sebranek, Dominic Anderson, and Ronda Rott, all provided public comments regarding the Veteran Services Office operations and the impacts of proposed reductions. It was also noted by Karen Knock that she has received requests to hold the next committee meeting at 5:00 pm to accommodate work schedules.

Closing:

11. Future Agenda Items: Review of Health and Human Services HIPAA policies, comparison of the credentialing of Staff at Health and Human Services and the VA, and a brief profile of the current veterans serving on the Health & Human Services and Veterans Standing Committee.

12. Adjournment: The next meeting is scheduled for October 13, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. in the Richland County Board room and via WebEx. Motion by Ken Rynes, seconded by Lee Van Landuyt to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Meghan Rohn
Confidential Administrative Secretary

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