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Monroe County Commission on Aging

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Paul Simonton

John Sledge

Gerald Stone

Monroe County Commission on Aging
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2009

Loyd Sype

Monroe County Commission on Aging Conference Room

Chairman Martin Kaufman called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

Members present: Noel Dentner, Nancy Hamman, Aleta Jackson, Martin Kaufman, Paul Simonton, John Sledge Jr., Gerald Stone, and Loyd Sype.

Members excused: Bruce Freimark

Chairman Martin Kaufman led the Pledge of Allegiance and silent prayer.

Approval of the Agenda:

Noel Dentner made a motion to approve the March 11, 2009 agenda as presented. Supported by Aleta Jackson. **Motion carried.**

Guests Present: Jerry Oley, Monroe County Commissioner and Monroe County Senior Legal Services Board Member; Sara Waldecker, Resident Services Coordinator, Monroe Housing Commission; Betty and John Baer, County Residents; Debbie Wahl, Secretary, and Terry Wahl, Senior Legal Services; Gregory Sullivan, Staff Attorney, Monroe County Senior Legal Services; Patti Albert, Director of Community Relations, Medilodge; Larry VanWasshenova, Director, Gregory Jones, Board Chairman, Jim Petrangelo, Board Member, Tina Mullins, Board Member, Michael Brandt, Staff Attorney, Monroe County Senior Legal Services; Anne Wisda, Services Coordinator, Luther Home Society; Floreine Mentel, County Commissioner Area Agency on Aging 1-B Board of Directors; Diane Tackett, Director of Senior Services, Monroe County Opportunity Program; Gerilyn Selmek, Regional Supervisor, and Margaret Hoffman, Area Agency on Aging 1-B; Michael Nelson, Owner, Home Instead Senior Care; Ann Rothman, Concerned Citizen; Kathleen Powel, Guest; and Frankie Foidl and Cheri Boron, Living Independence for Everyone.

Public Time:

Margaret Hoffman commented that she recently lost her job and used senior legal services several times and would have not been able to get the assistance she had received without them.

Kathleen Powell commented that she and several of her family members have used senior legal services in the past and with the economy as it is, senior legal services needs to continue to be obtainable to those in need.

John Baer commented that his parents have used senior legal services a number of times.



Ann Rothman commented that senior legal services came to Brookdale Assisted Living facility to see her mother-in-law, and they were pleased with the promptness and excellent service they provided her.

Ann Wisda commented that Luther Home Society uses senior legal services especially for the homestead and heating tax credits and one time per month for POA's for their low-income residents. They are very grateful for those services.

Gregory Sullivan commented that he is proud to be a part of the senior legal services organization as well as all the other senior services that the county offers. Legal services record of good service is being placed in jeopardy by way of the means testing that the commission imposed on them in December 2008. They have developed and implemented the means test and continue to improve on the way they administer it to the seniors.

Instead of being rewarded for what they have done, it appears that they are being punished. He opposes the RFP that would replace them, and which would cost seven jobs in the county. He does not know why the RFP is on the agenda today. Give them the reason for the RFP, and tell them what they are doing wrong. This is unwise to pursue and could jeopardize the Millage, which would not only end their existence but also all the other valuable senior services.

Commissioner Mentel commented that there are seventy-five hundred hours of service, and if the RFP goes through there will only be twenty-four hundred hours of service with half the funds. When there were only two attorneys on staff, there was a long waiting list for service at senior legal services. The commission is not trusting senior legal services after they have complied with what was asked of them in writing. If everything the commission wanted from them would have been proposed two or three years ago perhaps in writing, they would not be sitting here today. Is the commission going to outsource the service or use Monroe firms? The attorneys at senior legal services make twenty-five thousand dollars annually and care about the local seniors. If not, they would not be there making as little as they do.

Debbie Wahl commented that every employee at senior legal services has very specific job duties to do and cannot realize how their services could be duplicated on a daily basis and provide the quality of care they currently provide. There would be seven jobs lost and the seniors will lose the benefit of fifty years of collective experience.

Sara Waldecker commented that one thing that is most important to the seniors at River Park Plaza is that senior legal services come one time per month to the complex to assist them with their legal concerns. There is always a waiting list for their services, and most of the residents cannot afford to pay for the service.

Approval of the Commission on Aging Regular Meeting Minutes of February 11, 2009.

Gerald Stone made a motion to approve the Commission on Aging Regular Minutes of February 11, 2009 as corrected. Supported by Paul Simonton. **Motion carried.**

Approval of the Final Financial Statements of February 2009:

Ms. Hamad presented the February 2009 Financial Reports. John Sledge made a motion to accept and place on file the February 2009 Financial Reports. Supported by Loyd Sype. **Motion carried.**

Commission Members' Report:

Loyd Sype commented that it is good be back.

Gerald Stone commented that he was not aware of the United Way 2-1-1 until it was brought to his attention at the Bedford Business Trade Fair. The United Way 2-1-1 provides callers with information about and referrals to human services for everyday needs and in times of crisis. They operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



Correspondence:

The Commission reviewed the list of correspondence.

Director's Report:

Ms. Hamad reported that she had no formal report to give at this time.

Unfinished Business:

A. Strategic Planning Committee Reports of March 5, 2008:

Noel Dentner reported that both Martin Kaufman and Paul Simonton entered comments that they had as a statement into the minutes regarding their position with senior legal services and the current challenges the commission is having there. The committee discussed both comments as well as the RFP that is on today's agenda for review and discussion.

Martin Kaufman commented that if the commission is going to seek or investigate another source to provide senior legal services in the county other than the current agency, there are certain things that must be adhered to as follows;

- There must be no diminishment in services, real or perceived
- A practical application of funding rules
- A sensible approach for Fee-For-Service and its implementation
- Everyone is entitled to some service at no cost

B. Monroe County Senior Legal Services Update/Request for Funding Reinstatement:

Jim Petrangelo expressed that the Monroe County Senior Legal Services board knows that the Commission on Aging members are dedicated to seniors and their needs, and is trying to assure good service. They have clients and employees worried about the services and emotions are high.

Things senior legal services would like the commission to consider when they make a decision regarding an RFP:

- Should the commission choose to pursue another provider, they cannot go back
- Suggest that in the best interests of all that the commission wait and see how these various changes play out during the course of this year.
- Senior legal services has responded to the commission's request. They have expressed their apologies to the extent that they did not respond at an earlier date, but their board is committed to working with the commission in anyway they can to provide the service that the commission believes appropriate in the community.
- It might be premature for the commission to involve itself in RFP's before the commission knows exactly what it is that needs to be filled.
- It would be in the best interests of the seniors to complete their funding for the balance of this year. This would give the commission time to make the decision as the year goes on.
- They expect the commission to continue to monitor what senior legal services is doing.
- The commission may decide for senior legal services to make additional changes to meet the concerns of the citizens in each of the commission member's districts.
- The commission should work through senior legal services before trying to weigh proposals to provide a totally different method of service while still sorting out exactly how the service is going to work.

Chairman Kaufman told Mr. Petrangelo that he wrote the following words down during his presentation to the commission during the special meeting of December 18, 2008. That he is earnest, direct, constructive, and cooperative. However, the letter from the Monroe County Senior Legal Services board chair, Gregory Jones, dated February 20, 2009, is just the opposite.

Mr. Petrangelo commented that in difficult times, emotions and opinions from many sources come up. Their clients, employees, and board members have very strong opinions, and all of them need to be put together to move forward. However, the essence of what he thinks has been communicated to the commission is that the things the commission has asked them to do they



are trying to do in a constructive manner. Their board is fully committed to working closely with the commission, and appreciates and understands what is needed to offer outstanding legal services to the seniors of Monroe County. Everybody has a different delivery, but he hopes that what the commission takes from the letter is the part that does represent their boards intent-- which is to listen to the commission, and adapt to the requirements the commission believes are appropriate. If through the year those requirements change, they will change with the commission's directives. This is the commission's opportunity to experiment with how the current directives are going to work with senior legal services working out some of the kinks. Therefore, if in the future the commission chooses to do the RFP, they can compare apples to apples in a much greater degree than putting an RFP out that might not exactly match up with services in the past.

Commissioner Oley commented that he read the letter from the Monroe County Senior Legal Services board chair, Gregory Jones, dated February 20, 2009 before it went out to the commission, and there was nothing in that letter that was not true or misleading. The senior legal services board has put their best foot forward at this time and has listened to all the input from the commission and tried to make the best product out of that. Certainly, it is a work in progress and there is always room for improvement, but the commission needs to give them the opportunity for that to happen. In looking at the big picture, the real issue here is to provide services to the seniors. He personally feels even though he is member of the senior legal services board, and he supported it, that the means test put in place is going to take a lot of services away from seniors who need it.

Tina Mullins commented that senior legal services is recognized as one of the premier programs in legal circles. She is at a loss to know what it is the commission wants. Tell them what it is the commission needs because the senior legal services board wants to be cooperative with the commission if they would just tell them what it is they need to do and what they should be doing.

John Sledge commented that senior legal services has come along way with what the commission requested in a short period of time.

John Sledge made a motion to fund the Monroe County Senior Legal Services \$270,554.00 less the \$64,230.00 allocated the first quarter of 2009, leaving a balance of \$206,324.00 for the remainder of fiscal year 2009 subject to monthly monitoring of the program with the stipulation that the funds be used only for the specific line items proposed. Transfers from the approved line items are prohibited without the advance written permission of the Commission. Any funds not used in accordance with the Directive of the Commission shall be returned forthwith. Supported by Gerald Stone.

Terri Hamad commented that prior to last months meeting she and Chairman Kaufman met with Jim Petrangelo and Larry VanWasshenova in preparation of the commission's February meeting. Her recommendation to Mr. Petrangelo and Mr. VanWasshenova was to come to the meeting with a level of confidence and understanding to the commission about what it was that the agency has implemented, how it was going, what were the positives and negatives, what types of things they had seen since, and give the commission feedback. The commission said that they would like to see some of these things drafted and brought to them for discussion. The senior legal services board took it to heart, went ahead, drafted these things, and put them into place. Prior to the last meeting, she, and Chairman Kaufman told Mr. Petrangelo that since they have already done these things, they should come back to the meeting in February and tell the commission how these things have affected the agency. At last months meeting, the commission did not hear that, and she felt then that the commission was being stepped on to make a decision, and it is happening again today. Ms. Hamad feels the commission is being asked to make a funding decision without full consideration. Ms. Hamad encouraged the board to take a step back and look at this before they make any decisions to do any long term funding. The commission has asked for information from them since they have implemented these items. The commission has never said yea or nay on the cost share scale or the eighty-dollar per hour unit rate. The



commission never heard anything negative or positive regarding the impact with clients and the cost share scale. One of the things the RFP outlines clearly is what the commission is asking for.

Nancy Hamman commented that the one thing that bothers her with senior legal services is the phone calls she received from seniors saying that they said there would be no more legal services if the commission did not fund them. She told the seniors that this is not true. Legal services will continue with this agency or another agency. The commission is doing a request for proposal and it may or may not be a different agency, but there will be legal services.

Secondly, she worked with non-profits during her career in the medical field and it is standard to put out RFP's every so often to be sure that monies are being used wisely. The purpose of RFP's are to monitor the funding source its self and its accountability.

Noel Dentner commented that issuing an RFP does not mean that the commission is going to necessarily change service providers. It means that they are going to come in line with the requirements that the Commission on Aging is requiring.

Aleta Jackson commented that it goes with out saying that the commission has had many issues, and have gone over them many times. She is personally done with this issue. Ms. Jackson commented that she would like the following on record. First of all, she read the letter from the Monroe County Senior Legal Services board chair, Gregory Jones, dated February 20, 2009, at home once and did not feel anything weird, and read it three times in here today and does not feel anything weird. Secondly, the notes from the Monroe County Commission on Aging Strategic Planning that Mr. Simonton said, "Lack of compliance is only one of the symptoms of the problem. The most serious issue before the Commission on Aging board is one of trust. The failure of the Monroe County Senior Legal Services' board to govern responsibly and poor management by the agency director is the cause. The trust level with Monroe County Senior Legal Services has plummeted over the past two years. Countless meetings, correspondence, phone calls, e-mails and presentations have shown a pattern of deception, misinformation, inaccurate and inconsistent reporting by Monroe County Senior Legal Services, all of which has been at great expense of time and resources".

Ms. Jackson commented that she does not feel a lack of trust-- he goofed, and he fixed it. She feels Mr. VanWasshenova was not telling his board what was going on; shame on him that he did not-- his board knows that. She is assured in her mind, that he has had his reprimand more than he could have ever wanted. In her opinion, it is done, and she has no problem with an RFP as a guideline. She believes that the commission should fund them and keep watching every step they make, and if there still is a problem the commission will discuss it then. She does not have a problem that someone from senior legal services called the seniors for help to save their job. She does not feel that is fighting unfair because they are fighting for their life. Last time she received forty-one calls and this time she received nineteen. Furthermore, she took down every phone number and when she got home from the last meeting, she called every one of them back and told them where the commission stands. She will do the same after the meeting today.

Ms. Hamad commented that in observation, at the commission's regular December meeting, Mr. VanWasshenova questioned what is it the commission wanted him to do, when obviously after that meeting his board became aware that there was an issue. The commission had a meeting in December of 2008, January and February 2009, but today we still have a member of their board asking what it is that needs to be done. She does not know how many times it has to be written and spoken. The letter she wrote to the agency in December of 2008 outlined the concerns the commission had, but there was much dialog about what it is that needs to be done. For one of the board members to come today in March after the commission has had a number of meetings and make the statement "that whatever needs to be done we will do it". The commission has heard that already.

John Sledge made a motion to call the question. Supported by Gerald Stone.



Roll call:

Paul Simonton – Yes
Noel Dentner – Yes
Aleta Jackson – Yes

Gerald Stone – Yes
Martin Kaufman – Yes
Loyd Sype – Yes

Nancy Hamman – Yes
John Sledge – Yes
Motion carried.

Roll call on motion to fund:

Gerald Stone – Yes
Martin Kaufman – No
Loyd Sype – Yes

Nancy Hamman – Yes
John Sledge – Yes
Paul Simonton – No

Noel Dentner – No
Aleta Jackson – Yes
Motion carried.

C. Legal Services Draft RFP Review and Discussion:

Nancy Hamman made a motion that with the continued funding of Monroe County Senior Legal Services to table the RFP until the next meeting.

Discussion took place on the motion and Ms. Hamman withdrew her motion.

Terri Hamad commented that the motion the commission passed to fund Monroe County Senior Legal Services had no strings attached as far as using the guidelines or the RFP as a method for them going forward for the balance of the year. Ms. Hamad commented that the best thing to do is to shelve the RFP until the commission does the 2010 budget around August or September then put it out for bid to get letters of interest at that point.

John Sledge made a motion to table the Legal Services Draft RFP Review and Discussion until August to issue in September. Supported by Gerald Stone. **Motion carried.**

Gerald Stone made a motion to amend the previous funding motion to include that Monroe County Senior Legal Services report monthly, referencing the provisions of the draft RFP of March 12, 2009. Supported by John Sledge. **Motion carried.**

New Business:

A. 2009 Emergency Fuel and Prescription Assistance Guidelines:

The 2009 Emergency Fuel and Prescription Assistance eligibility guidelines were presented for the commission’s approval.

Noel Dentner made a motion to approve the 2009 Emergency Fuel Prescription and Assistance eligibility guidelines as presented and to forward them on to the County Board of Commissioners for final approval. Supported by Nancy Hamman. **Motion carried.**

Public Time:

Larry VanWasshenova thanked the commission for their continued support.

Adjournment:

Paul Simonton made a motion to adjourn, supported by Loyd Sype. **Motion carried.** Meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

The next regular board meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 08, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. at the Dundee Senior Center, 284 Monroe Street, Monroe, MI 48131.

Vicky L. Terrasi

Vicky L. Terrasi, Recording Secretary

