



# Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency

## BOARD MEETING MINUTES



**Wednesday, April 20, 2022 at 6:00pm**

Cass County Administration Building: 120 N. Broadway, Cassopolis, MI 49031

**PRESENT:** C. Christopher, M. Franks, G. Patterson-Gladney, M. Underwood, M. Warren, J. Wuerfel

**ABSENT:** R. Benjamin, K. Lyons

**GUESTS:** G. Moore

**STAFF:** D. Oleneack, A. Slack, K. Smith Oldham

The meeting attendees stood and recited the SMCAA mission statement.

**QUORUM:** A quorum was established and the meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

**AGENDA ACTION:** Motion made by **M. Franks** to accept the April 20, 2022 Agenda, seconded by **M. Underwood**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**MINUTES ACTION:** Motion to approve the March 16, 2022 Board Minutes was made by **C. Christopher**, seconded by **M. Underwood**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**OFFICERS' REPORT:** **Berrien Private Sector Board Representative Nominee – Gerrod Moore. M. Warren** welcomed **G. Moore** to the Board meeting and asked him to introduce himself to the other Board members. **G. Moore** is the Product Marketing Launch Manager at Whirlpool Corporation in Benton Harbor. He started the Feel Good Fridge Program in January 2020 which provides scratch-and-dent appliances to low-income households in Berrien County. He also has experience working with Habitat for Humanity and was a committee member of the CRA South Dallas Coalition.

**G. Moore** heard of the Board's vacancy from his colleague and past SMCAA Board member, **J. Johnson**. He is very excited to be considered as the Berrien County Private Sector Board Representative and believes he has areas of expertise and leadership qualities in a number of areas including management, fundraising, marketing and public relations, strategic planning, and understanding of community needs.

Each Board member then took a moment to introduce themselves to **G. Moore. M. Warren** acknowledged that **G. Moore** has visited with her, **C.**



**Christopher, K. Smith Oldham, and A. Slack** and discussed the oversight capacity Board members need for the SMCAA Board of Directors, as well as other important qualities sought for the vacant seat. The SMCAA team members were pleased with **G. Moore's** background and understanding of the Agency's mission.

**ACTION:** A motion to approve G. Moore as the Berrien Private Sector Board Representative was made by **C. Christopher**, seconded by **G. Patterson-Gladney**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**C. Christopher** had nothing to report.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**a. Fiscal Summary. D. Oleneack** presented the fiscal summary. This summary is 50% into the fiscal year. March 2022 included three (3) payrolls, which accounted for a slight expense overage. She noted that all audit expenses have been paid for the year. The remaining budget for the Audit line item was unneeded, as Kruggel Lawton did not have to audit two (2) programs as previously anticipated.

Under Contract Services, **D. Oleneack** noted that March's expenses included expenditures to Southshore Development for logistics of the Benton Harbor Water Distribution (WADIS), as well as contract labor costs to assist the Fiscal Department while regular staff was out of the office due to medical reasons. She stated this expense would discontinue as the regular staff member has returned full-time. **K. Smith Oldham** recommended that Fiscal continue to contract a part-time staff member as the department continues to see more invoices and increased workload.

**A. ACTION:** A motion to accept and place on file the Fiscal Summary was made by **J. Wuerfel** and was seconded by **C. Christopher**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**b. Programmatic Report. K. Smith Oldham** presented the programmatic report. There were (204) households serviced with utility assistance, (4) households received internet stipends, and (97) households with rent assistance. There were no mortgage payments, but this was expected with the rollout of the new Michigan Homeowner Assistance (MIHAF) Program. (1,668) households received food commodities from CSFP, (221) through a specially-scheduled TEFAP distribution, and (349) households received assistance through SMCAA food pantries. (6) families of (15) individuals stayed in the shelter for a total of (153) bed nights, and (1) family of (2) individuals boarded in a local hotel for a total of (12) bed nights.

The FSS Program serviced (24) individuals in March. There were (4) individuals served through DHHS's Rapid Rehousing Consolidated and (8) through

Supportive Housing. Water Distribution at the SMCAA Self-Serve Station provided (69) households of (280) individuals received (408) cases of water from SMCAA's self-serve station. Home deliveries continue to increase, but we have the issues from February under control at this time. **K. Smith Oldham** stated a new program for the City of Benton Harbor will be offered in April or May. This program will provide food boxes and hygiene kits to city residents and will be facilitated in partnership with the City through its Community Develop Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

As far as the lead service line replacements (LSLR), over 800 lead lines have been replaced out of the suspected 4,360 lines. This accounts for about 18.5% of the full project completed. There have been 1,770 Right of Access forms have been completed, which is a necessary step to allow contractors access to private properties to perform work.

Weatherization completed (10) work orders in March. There are an additional (25) work orders in-progress. There were no Whole Housing Rehab projects completed, but (1) household received home repairs through Minor Home Repairs and (3) households received minor home repairs in CARES funding.

A total of \$474,255.85 in funding assistance was expended throughout the month. **A. Slack** noted that the Agency has surpassed total clients assisted in FY21. FY22, which is now 50% into the fiscal year, amounts to (5,301) unduplicated individuals and (2,751) unduplicated households. At the end of FY21, SMCAA had served (4,629) unduplicated individuals and (2,212) unduplicated households. **J. Wuerfel** asked how these numbers compare to pre-COVID. **A. Slack** did not have a definite answer, but would provide a 5-year lookback at the May meeting.

**G. Patterson-Gladney** asked if **K. Smith Oldham** and the Agency needed additional staff due to the overwhelming workload and consistently added new programming. **K. Smith Oldham** stated there are currently job openings at the Agency, but the hiring process has been difficult. **C. Christopher** agreed with this sentiment. There was a discussion on best practices to recruit new employees, such as increasing wages to remain competitive and providing fringe benefits. **K. Smith Oldham** said that wages have been increased and the Agency offers a great employee benefit package. **A. Slack** commented that there has been a lack of qualified applicants even applying for the positions, and that the job postings have been circulated among several mediums. Another difficulty stems from the job opportunities themselves – the current openings are for Weatherization and are very technical. A qualified candidate fits a very specific mold, and many individuals with construction backgrounds are able to find better paying jobs at the moment.

**M. Warren** stated the mentality of the workforce has shifted, and the Board agreed.

**B. ACTION:**

A motion to accept and place on file the Programmatic Report was made by **G. Patterson-Gladney** and was seconded by **C. Christopher**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**c. Director's Report.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the Director's Report. Some of the highlights over the past month included:

Possible New Funding: **K. Smith Oldham** received correspondence that SMCAA could possibly receive the following additional grants:

- Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Deliverable Fuel funding. This funding has not been available since FY2016.
- Additional Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) funding in the areas of Water and Plumbing Repair, Migrant Assistance, and Energy Assistance. If received, the dates for these grants would most likely run May 1, 2022 to September 30, 2022.
- MSHDA has also said there could be more CERA funding coming down.

FY21 Single Audit Update: During the Single Audit presented to the Board at the February meeting, **K. Smith Oldham** noticed a Mortgage Non-Receivable. (This was located on Page 3, Noncurrent Assets, for an amount of \$16,000.00.) She inquired with **D. Oleneack** concerning this, who stated she did not know anything about it. However, it has been on the books since she started as Finance Director and previous accounting firms have questioned **D. Oleneack** on this line item. **K. Smith Oldham** called Kruggel Lawton and found that the previous accounting firm had done some research on this line item, and paperwork was forwarded to **K. Smith Oldham** on this property.

**K. Smith Oldham** researched archived files and found an old program regarding the property. She discovered the property was acquired by Van-Cass CAP in 1993 (this was prior to the incorporation of SMCAA.) The property was rehabbed through MSHDA funding and sold to a low-income household in 1998 by SMCAA. When the house resold in 2000, the lien on the house should have been released. However, no one followed up on the lien release until the previous accounting firm did some research in 2014. **K. Smith Oldham** requested **D. Oleneack** to work with Kruggel Lawton to remove this Noncurrent Asset off the Agency's books.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): Michigan Community Action Association (MCA) is part of a coalition of anti-poverty organization pushing for an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit, which has been a standing legislative priority of the CAA network. **K. Smith Oldham** provided an EITC Fact Sheet from Michigan Future Inc. to the Board to help inform you and our elected officials on what the EITC means to our clients.

Agency Monitoring News: SMCAA received word that the Agency will be monitored on the following programs:

- Fiscal and Programmatic: The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and Commodity Senior Food Program (CSFP)
- Fiscal and Programmatic: Emergency Shelter and Food Program (ESFP)
- Fiscal: Coronaviruses Relief Fund (CRF) Migrant

**K. Smith Oldham** will let the Board know more information on program monitoring as it takes place.

Upcoming Conferences: As COVID numbers decrease, the State and National partners are beginning to schedule in-person conferences for Summer 2022: the CAPLAW Conference in June and the MCA Conference in July. **K. Smith Oldham** invited the Board to consider joining staff at either of these conferences because there will be Governance trainings at both. With CAPLAW's registration due date approaching, **A. Slack** said she would send the CAPLAW Conference agenda and conference information to the Board to review, and asked anyone interested in joining to let her know. SMCAA has (2) slots available for Board members at this conference. Information on the MCA Conference will be provided in late-May as well.

C. ACTION: A motion to accept and place on file the Director's Report was made by **G. Patterson-Gladney** and was seconded **C. Christopher**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**d. FY22 CAP Plan Update.** **A. Slack** presented the FY22 CAP Plan Update, per Organizational Standard 4.4. Updated areas included:

Needs of the Community: According to the 2021 Community Needs Assessment and the 2022 CAP Plan, the community's top three (3) needs were as follows:

1. Affordable housing
2. Home Improvements
3. Emergency Assistance and Services

These needs were different from the previous CNA findings. The 2018 CNA identified Access to Nutritious Food as Top Need #3. SMCAA utilized this knowledge to redirect current and new funding to help the community we service based on these new needs.

Though SMCAA addresses Emergency Assistance and Services via rent and mortgage payments, housing repairs, and utility bill assistance, there were some emergency services directly identified in the 2021 CNA that the Agency does not provide. These emergency services include healthcare access, which SMCAA does not have the capacity to address. However, SMCAA staff do encourage clients to apply for healthcare assistance services with their local DHHS office.

Service Delivery System: Several FY21 client satisfaction surveys provided feedback to the Agency that some clients faced accessibility to the Agency's programs and services to our lack of in-person capability though. Following lowering COVID-19 transmission numbers and guidance from MDHHS, CDC, and the local Health Departments, SMCAA reopened its main office to the public on March 21, 2022. The Agency now allows for in-person, by-phone, and online applications from clients. The hope is that Community Action is accessible to everyone in need of its services across Southwest Michigan.

Accountability and Reporting Requirements: SMCAA serviced less clients in 2021 than in 2020. However, many of the individual line items saw increases from the previous year. This may be due to a number of factors, including:

- More clients received wraparound services, which resulted in increased service numbers but decreased unduplicated individuals
- Staff members were trained more adequately on how to track more information per program in our database and why this tracking is important for continued funding of SMCAA programs
- The CERA Program influenced many housing programs in FY21 including Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing.
- The Supreme Court decided to end the CDC's eviction ban on August 26, 2021. Prior to this, housing programs also saw less traffic due to eviction bans and other tenant protections.

Linkages: SMCAA has created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy and publicly stated the need for changes to systemic racism ensuring better outcomes for people of color in Southwest Michigan. There are plans in motion to further integrate the Agency into larger discussions locally, in the state, and nationally on this topic. Staff are actively being trained on topics of social and racial injustice.

**e. FY22 Strategic Plan Update. A. Slack** presented the FY22 Strategic Plan Update, per Organizational Standard 6.5. This Strategic Plan runs 2020 to 2024. Some Objectives and Strategies have been fully completed, and many Goals have been met for the FY22.

Some Goals that are partially complete:

- Develop succession plans across Executive, Fiscal, Community Services, and Weatherization departments. Only the Executive Director Succession Plan is complete.
- Hold monthly management meetings and quarterly all-staff meetings. Management meetings have been held monthly since December 2021, and a quarterly all-staff meeting is anticipated to be held in May or June 2022.
- Increase advocacy efforts in local communities by inviting community advocates to attend (2) Board meetings. SMCAA Administration will attend the Day at the Capitol in May.

There have been (2) Objective postponed due to unforeseen situations:

- Conduct a talent gaps assessment and identify top talent management goals. Due to the lack of capacity and inability to fully develop the Human Resources department to-date, this item has not been completed.
- Explore at least (2) potential facilities to co-locate main office and warehouse annually. Due to the increased workload of the COVID-19 pandemic followed by the additional warehousing space needed for WADIS product, this item has yet to be explored.

**f. FY21 Organizational Standards Monitoring Report. K. Smith Oldham** presented the FY21 Organizational Standard Monitoring Report. The Monitor noted that “SMCAA staff were extremely helpful in responding promptly to requests for information.” All (58) of Organizational Standards were met with (0) findings. The Monitor provided (6) recommendations moving forward, which **A. Slack** has already implemented for FY22.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Redirecting to the earlier conversation, **C. Christopher** suggested SMCAA consider extending job postings to local churches who may be able to link job seekers with the Agency. **A. Slack** thanked **C. Christopher** for the idea, saying this would be a great option for positions moving forward. **K. Smith Oldham** also noted that staff have recruited individuals who came into the office for service and expressed a desire to work, especially in a field that helps others. One such recruit was interviewed earlier this week and has been offered a position.

Speaking of new hires, one great new hire for SMCAA is bilingual and translated the online Emergency Services application into Spanish. **A. Slack** has posted this application on the Agency website and encouraged the Board to check it out. This project has been on Management’s mind for some time and SMCAA is excited to increase its service accessibility to the community.

**OTHER:** **M. Warren** noted that she will not be at the May 2022 meeting as she will be having hip replacement surgery. She asked **C. Christopher** to facilitate the meeting in her stead.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Hearing no other business, a motion to adjourn was made **J. Wuerfel** and was seconded by **G. Patterson-Gladney**. The meeting was adjourned at 7:06pm.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next scheduled SMCAA Board meeting will be held at the **Berrien County Administration Building:** 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085 on **Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at 6:00pm.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Ashley Slack  
SMCAA Operations Manager

Reviewed and approved,  
Gail Patterson-Gladney  
SMCAA Board Secretary

