



# Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency

## BOARD MEETING MINUTES



**Wednesday – January 19, 2022 at 6:00pm**  
Cass County Administration Building  
120 N Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Cassopolis, MI 49031

**PRESENT:** R. Benjamin, C. Christopher, J. Johnson, K. Lyons, G. Patterson-Gladney, M. Underwood, M. Warren, J. Wuerfel

**ABSENT:** M. Franks

**GUESTS:** None

**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 **R. Benjamin** to accept the January 19, 2022 Agenda, seconded by **K. Lyons**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**MINUTES ACTION:** Motion to approve the December 17, 2021 Board Minutes was made by **R. Benjamin**, seconded by **M. Underwood**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**OFFICERS' REPORT:** **M. Warren** requested that the Executive Director Evaluation be completed by the Executive Committee before the February 2022 Board meeting. **K. Lyons** volunteered to act as point-person for the evaluation, and all completed evaluations by the Executive Committee should be forwarded to her. She will compile a summary of the evaluations and present the results to the full Board at the Annual Meeting on February 16, 2022. **A. Slack** said she would contact **K. Lyons** following this meeting to provide her with the evaluation forms.

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

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

a. **Fiscal Summary for December 2021.** **D. Oleneack** presented the fiscal summary. This summary is a quarter into the fiscal year. It reflects a positive year-to-date balance. Notes to the fiscal summary were reviewed, including supply purchases for the Benton Harbor Water Distribution program and of the annual memberships paid year-to-date. **D. Oleneack** noted Contract Services are high due to water distribution payments to the logistics provider.



Weatherization expenses will continue to be low until there is more activity with completing units. Client Services continues to be high primarily due to CERA in Berrien and Van Buren Counties.

A. ACTION:

A motion to accept and place on file the Fiscal Summary was made by **K. Lyons** and was seconded by **M. Underwood**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

b. **Programmatic Report for November and December 2021.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the programmatic report.

There were 679 households serviced with utility assistance, 10 households were provided deliverable fuel, and 134 households with rent or mortgage assistance. 3,499 households received food commodities from CSFP, 3,130 from TEFAP, 387 during the Holiday Food Share, and 256 households received assistance through SMCAA food pantries. Five families of 10 individuals stayed in the shelter for a total of 141 bed nights, and 4 families of 9 individuals boarded in a local hotel for a total of 222 bed nights.

The FSS Program serviced 67 individuals even though there are only 28 slots. There were 3 individuals served through DHHS's Rapid Rehousing Consolidated and 9 through Supportive Housing. In November, 10,828 City of Benton Harbor individuals and 3,144 households received 31,089 cases of water from SMCAA and/or its distribution sites. In December, there were 3,721 individuals and 942 households received 9,547 cases, so numbers have been dramatically decreasing.

Two houses were weatherized in December, and there were 22 project work orders created. There were no Whole Housing Rehab projects completed, but 9 households received repairs or replacements through CARES funding.

A total of \$798,308.55 in funding was expended throughout November and December.

B. ACTION:

A motion to accept and place on file the Programmatic Report was made by **R. Benjamin** and was seconded by **C. Christopher**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

c. **Director's Report for December 2021.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the Director's Report. Some of the highlights over the past month included:

- **Holiday Food Giveaways:** On December 11, 2021, (350) food baskets were distributed through a collaborative effort with the Migrant Resource Council, Van Buren DHHS, and Van Buren ISD. Staff also handed out (70) turkeys and other food products in Lawrence and (30) in Niles. The annual Holiday Food Share Program in partnership with Whirlpool, KitchenAid Senior PGA, and the City of Benton Harbor was

on December 20, 2021, and about (300) turkeys, a food box, and a dairy box were distributed.

- **City of Benton Harbor:** SMCAA continues to hand out bottled water through self-service at the warehouse, as well as housing and loading water for home deliveries. The City of Benton Harbor has contracted SMCAA to facilitate CDBG-CARES funding for a food program. This program will be a one-time event where SMCAA will provide food products to City of Benton Harbor residents that are SNAP and TANF eligible. Participants will also receive a 5-gallon bucket of cleaning supplies, a personal hygiene kit, masks, dairy box, and meat product(s). The City stated there might be additional funding coming down for a couple more distributions as well.
- **COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) in Van Buren County:** The CERA-2 funding has arrived and it overlaps with CERA-1. CERA-2 is available from January to March 31, 2022 whereas CERA-1 runs until September 30, 2022. The new focus is CERA-2, and once those funds are expended, then we will move back to CERA-1. Most of CERA-2's guidelines are the same as CERA-1; the only differences is that CERA-2 does not allow credits paid towards rent and utilities if the client does not have rent arrearages.
- **Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP):** **K. Smith Oldham** sent out MOU agreements to over (30) municipalities across the tri-county area during the first week of December to begin the LIHWAP program. They are beginning to return. So far, returned agreements from the City of Benton Harbor, City of Dowagiac, Village of Cassopolis, Cassopolis Water System, Chikaming Township, and New Buffalo. We are only able to assist clients with water arrearages if their municipality has "opted into" the program and signed an agreement with SMCAA and BCAEO.
- **Weatherization:** Talk at both State and Federal levels are stating a lot of funding is coming down for WX, and the BCAEO has asked agencies to begin "gearing up." This is difficult to do when there is no idea of what allocations will be. Even more difficult, restrictions on Weatherization have not been lifted, mechanical contractors are hard to find, and materials are extremely expensive and increase project costs. At SMCAA, we have no more room to house additional employees needed to operate this type of program. **K. Smith Oldham** and **A. Slack** will begin looking at additional office space in the Vincent Place, and if there is not any availability, we will look elsewhere.

**K. Smith Oldham** also shared a letter from a Weatherization client thanking SMCAA for all of its assistance.

Additionally, **K. Smith Oldham** mentioned that the fiscal department is managing overwhelming amounts of work. **G. Chadwick** was diagnosed with breast cancer a few months ago, and the department brought **J. Ferrari** back part-time to assist with accounts payable and payroll. However, with the

funding coming down and being expended, the entire Agency is working at capacity. **D. Oleneack** is researching a local accounting staffing firm that assists with A/P and other financial responsibilities to help with the current fiscal burdens.

c. ACTION: A motion to accept and place on file the Director's Report was made by **K. Lyons** and was seconded **J. Wuerfel**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

d. **Approval of CERA2 Grant FY22.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the CERA2 Grant as it is a requirement for the Board to be informed of this application and approve of it.

There were no concerns or questions regarding this grant.

D. ACTION: A motion to accept and place on file the CERA2 Grant was made by **R. Benjamin** and was seconded **K. Lyons**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

e. **2021 Community Impact Report.** **A. Slack** presented the 2021 Community Impact Report. This annual report is provided to the Board and SMCAA staff to share with other key community stakeholders and show the impact the Agency has made over the past year. **J. Johnson** complimented how well the information is the report is presented, and **R. Benjamin** agreed saying the provided data is meaningful while also being pleasing to read through. **A. Slack** will provide the Board with digital versions of the report to share.

f. **Board Acknowledgement of Conflict of Interest.** Per Organizational Standards, every Board member must execute a Conflict of Interest form every two (2) years. **K. Smith Oldham** asked each Board member present to acknowledge any and all conflicts of interest they may have while seated on the SMCAA Board of Directors, and to give the completed forms to **A. Slack** to be kept in each member's file at the Agency.

PUBLIC COMMENT: **K. Lyons** shared with the Board that she has been diagnosed with breast cancer and will begin treatments soon. These treatments may impact her attendance over the next few months, as well as her ability to meet with SMCAA staff to sign checks in the future.

OTHER: **A. Slack** reminded the Board that the February meeting is the Board's Annual Meeting. This means elections will occur for Executive Committee positions. The fiscal auditor will also be in attendance to present the 2021 Single Audit.

ADJOURNMENT ACTION: Hearing no other business, a motion to adjourn was made by **R. Benjamin** and was seconded by **G. Patterson-Gladney**. The meeting was adjourned at 6:46pm.

NEXT MEETING: The next scheduled SMCAA Board meeting is the **SMCAA Board Annual Meeting** and will be held at the **Van Buren Conference Center: 490 S. Paw Paw St., Lawrence, MI 49064** on **Wednesday, February 16, 2022** at **6:00pm**.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ashley Slack  
SMCAA Operations Manager

Reviewed and approved,  
Gail Patterson-Gladney  
SMCAA Board Secretary