

# SMCAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES

Wednesday – September 15, 2021 at 6:00pm

Berrien County Administration Building  
701 Main Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085

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

ABSENT: None

GUESTS: None

STAFF: G. Chadwick, 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.

ACTION: Motion made by **R. Benjamin** to accept the September 15, 2021 Agenda, seconded by **J. Wuerfel**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

ACTION: Motion to approve the August 18, 2021 Board Minutes was made by **R. Benjamin**, seconded by **K. Lyons**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

OFFICERS' REPORT: The officers had nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: a. **Fiscal Summary for August 2021.** **D. Oleneack** presented the fiscal summary. She noted that Supplies appear high, but this is because this line item includes commodities purchased for food giveaways, which was over \$5,000 in August. Regular supply spending is higher due to the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program requiring more office supplies due to high service numbers (paper, case files, folders, etc.) as well as personal protective equipment (PPE) continuing to be purchased throughout the year due to the pandemic.

In response to **K. Lyons'** inquiry last month, **D. Oleneack** supplied a list of SMCAA's annual membership dues. These include membership dues to Michigan Community Action (MCA), Community Action Partnership

(CAP), National Community Action Foundation (NCAF), CAPLAW, and the Southwest Michigan Chamber. The MCA dues were mistakenly charged to line item Licenses & Fees in October 2020 and this is why Membership Dues has appeared underspent.

**K. Lyons** asked about the difference between Membership Dues and Licenses & Fees as line items. **D. Oleneack** explained Licenses & Fees includes training fees and certification/recertification costs. It is also a “catch-all” for additional fees throughout the year.

**D. Oleneack** commented that Client Services expenses are higher than originally expected due to the addition of the CERA program in Van Buren and Berrien Counties, as well as the CARES and Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) programs. The FY2021 budget had not been amended to include these programs.

**R. Benjamin** asked what the process for an individual and/or company to donate to the agency would be. **D. Oleneack** responded that, at the moment, we accept donations by mail. She noted that **A. Slack** plans to set up a PayPal donation button on the website once **D. Oleneack** finalizes an agency account. **K. Smith Oldham** also said that she would share the 2020 Community Impact Report with **R. Benjamin** because a donation slip is included on the last page of this report.

There were no additional questions.

**ACTION:**

A motion to accept and place on file the August 2021 Fiscal Summary was made by **J. Wuerfel** and was seconded by **M. Franks**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**b. Proposed Budget for FY2022.** **D. Oleneack** presented the proposed budget for fiscal year 2022. She stated the budget numbers come from a series of spreadsheets she uses for each line item. Due to a number of COVID-19 emergency grants (such as CSBG-CARES, ESG-CARES, and CERA), the Grant Income is anticipated to be considerably higher.

**D. Oleneack** shared notes on each line item as follows:

- Salaries & Wages and Fringe Benefits have slight increases due to current staff evaluations, but there is no anticipation to drastically hire or reduce staffing.
- Occupancy Costs will be relatively stable as our current contracts for our office space at the Vincent Place and two warehouses do not include increased rent.

**K. Lyons** questioned if the proposed budget of \$145,000 was sufficient as we have a projected expense of \$147,463 by the end of this fiscal year (which ends September 30, 2021). **D. Oleneack** responded that projection is the calculation of a formula in the spreadsheet and is not accurate for our current occupancy expenses. Rents are paid quarterly for the main office space, so there will be minimal additional occupancy costs for FY2021. Thus, \$145,000 is sufficient.

- Communication, Postage & Delivery, and Printing/Copying remained the same with no drastic expense change expected.
- Supplies increased as more PPE is expected to be needed for the foreseeable future, and there will be an increased need for office supplies and client services due to increased programming.

**K. Lyons** asked the difference between Warehouse Handling & Supplies, Supplies, and Commodities Expense, which **D. Oleneack** had mentioned some commodity products were listed under Supplies instead. **K. Smith Oldham** explained warehouse handling and supplies are boxes and packing supplies. Commodities Expense is in regards to the agency's regular CSFP and TEFAP commodities which are an in-and-out type of expense (we receive and disburse the food products in a short timeframe.) The commodities under Supplies is when **Y. Vidt** purchases product from local farmers or dairy boxes from local vendors in addition to regular commodity products. **D. Oleneack** said she could create a new line item should local product continue to be purchased, but this strategy is what has been used in the past.

**K. Lyons** commented that these line item titles are confusing as she thinks of office and/or cleaning supplies when reading "Supplies." **J. Wuerfel** agreed with **K. Lyons**. **J. Wuerfel** added that further explanation following each line item might be nice to have for future reference. She suggested having "Supplies" with a description stating what is included in this line item, such as "Office, cleaning, PPE, etc." **K. Lyons** thought having a breakdown of different subcategories would also be beneficial for tracking purposes in the future. Both **J. Wuerfel** and **M. Warren** agreed this individual information would be helpful.

**D. Oleneack** stated she would make these modifications upon acceptance of the proposed budget.

- Equipment Rental & Maintenance includes all of the office copiers and similar equipment. There was no change for this line item.

- Travel shows a projected decrease in its budget as agency travel was restricted in FY2021, and it is expected to be restricted coming into FY2022.
- T/TA has a large increase from \$32,000 to \$80,000. This is due to increased allocation from Weatherization in the new fiscal year. The State is pushing for increased training of Weatherization staff. Our current energy auditor is in the midst of his training, and there may be potential to hire another auditor within the year. Training for the Weatherization program is extensive and costly, and **S. Klank** has a plan in motion to fully expend this projected amount

**K. Lyons** asked, in reference to Salary and Wages as well, how many open positions the agency may be looking to fill within the year. **A. Slack** responded there are two open positions currently posted – a Community Services Assistant and a Warehouse Assistant. We also eliminated the Housing Counselor position from FY2021.

- Vehicle Expense saw a small increase with basic maintenance expected to occur throughout the year.
- Contract Services increased by \$15,000. **D. Oleneack** said this area includes the agency IT company, tcaSynertech, which has a small increase due to more computers on our network for the CERA program. This also includes maintenance contracts for database (DBA FACSPRO) and accounting software (Abila).

**K. Lyons** questioned if a projected \$15,000 increase was sufficient as FY2021's budget was set at \$60,000 and we will spend over \$64,000 this year for Contract Services. **K. Smith Oldham** believed \$15,000 is sufficient as FY2021 saw the addition of the Van Buren CERA office which was a large, unanticipated expense to have the office wired to our network by tcaSynertech. The additional administration suite at the main office also required unexpected costs to hook up in FY2021. **K. Lyons** thanked **K. Smith Oldham** for this explanation.

- Audit expenses increased following the two Single Audits done in FY2021. With even more funds coming in FY2022, **D. Oleneack** anticipates multiple Single Audits again.

**J. Wuerfel** asked if the \$2,500 increase was sufficient with the increased funding, and questioned if an additional \$2,500 should be added because we may receive even more than two Single Audits in FY2022. **D. Oleneack** said she expects two Single Audits again, but if the budget does go over we can submit an explanation just as we did this past year.

**C. Christopher** said that sounded acceptable and suggested not to amend the proposed budget.

- Legal Expense and Board Expense remained the same with no drastic expense change expected.
- Insurance increased due to the agency premiums increasing, but **D. Oleneack** commented these items are required and she was not alarmed by any of the increases.

**K. Lyons** asked for verification of what this line item included. **D. Oleneack** responded that it includes all agency insurance except for employees' health insurance. Health insurance is listed under Fringe Benefits. The Insurance line item includes liability, vehicle, property, cybersecurity, worker's comp, etc. **J. Wuerfel** suggested having an explanation on this line item would be helpful also.

- Advertising, Membership Dues, Licenses & Fees, and Subscriptions & Publications remained the same with no drastic expense change expected.

**D. Oleneack** commented that Licenses & Fees includes training fees and conference costs. **K. Lyons** asked why these expenses are under this line item and not Travel or T/TA. **D. Oleneack** said travel is mileage and accommodations. **A. Slack** explained that T/TA is directly Weatherization training, and this could be shown further explained for less confusion. **K. Lyons** said she would like this explanation included moving forward.

- Bank Fees increased slightly due to our experience in FY2022.
- WX/LIHEAP Labor, Material, Health and Safety, and Support and Housing Construction & Rehabilitation both saw an increase due to new allocated funding.
- Client Services has a large increase due to additional grant funding.
- Commodities Expense increased due to FY2022 allocated commodity funding.

Looking at the final deficit, **D. Oleneack** stated there is a large remaining excess, but this amount can roll over into the next fiscal year. There were no additional questions.

**ACTION:**

There was a motion to accept FY2022's proposed budget with suggested modifications. These modifications are to rephrase some of the Expense titles and add explanations as to what items may be included in each

category so the Board may understand the line items better. This modification is to the proposal budget and financial summaries moving forward. There were no modifications to the proposed budget line item amounts.

Motion was made by **K. Lyons** and seconded by **G. Patterson-Gladney**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**c. Programmatic Report for August 2021.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the programmatic report. There were 174 households serviced with utility assistance and 36 households with rent or mortgage assistance. 1,720 households received food commodities from CSFP and 478 households received assistance through SMCAA food pantries. Two families with nine individuals stayed in the shelter for a total of 91 bed nights.

Eleven individuals were serviced through the FSS Program with 2 graduating in August. Sadly, one client passed away as well. **A. Slack** anticipates participation to increase because MSHDA informed her they had sent out their mailers the previous week to an overwhelming response. There were 4 individuals served through DHHS's Rapid Rehousing Consolidated and 9 through Supportive Housing.

Weatherization's new fiscal year began July 1<sup>st</sup>, and one household has been serviced so far.

**ACTION:**

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

**d. Director's Report for August 2021.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the Director's Report. Some of the highlights over the past month include:

- SMCAA's food commodities were highlighted by United Way of Southwest Michigan IN THE KNOW newsletter. One of our volunteers shared the impact of volunteering at our commodity program.
- The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) turned 40 years old on August 13, 2021.
- **J. Johnson, G. Patterson-Gladney, and K. Smith Oldham** attended various Board training opportunities offered by MCA at the end of August. One of the trainings that was informative on the Organizational Standards and CSBG Act validated that SMCAA and our Board are doing many things accurately. Some

things discussed were Board meeting structure, policies and bylaws, responsibility, accountability, and Board member's participation in the ROMA process.

- Staff continues to work hard on the CERA program. We fell short of our target goal in August, but this is again due to the MSHDA CERA portal and what applications are available in the portal. Staff have completed the applications that have come through, but we are awaiting more in order to meet our goal. With the eviction moratorium being lifted, it is anticipated the volume of clients needing assistance with increase.

The City of Benton Harbor has American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding available and would like to use it to assist City residents with utilities and rental assistance. **Y. Vidt, A. Slack, and K. Smith Oldham** met with the City's fiscal accountant and utility assistant to talk about a potential partnership. During the meeting, it became apparent that the City has no guidelines for such a program, so **Y. Vidt** provided them with our CARES program guidelines and what is requested during the application process.

**K. Smith Oldham** also encouraged the City to look at funding for home repairs for homeowners due to the fact that their Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program can only assist a small number of clients. With many older stock homes in need of repairs to bring them up to code and make them healthier and safer for families, home repairs are a crucial need in this community.

At the end of the meeting, **K. Smith Oldham** informed the City that SMCAA must utilize CERA funding first as a mandate of the State. This ARPA funding runs through 2026 though, and SMCAA would be happy to assist the City upon this understanding. Our agency will not begin a program until program guidelines are set by the City, agreed upon, and a contract is signed.

**J. Wuerfel** asked if this ARPA funding would only be for City residents, then could CERA funds be directed towards other Berrien County clients outside the City. **K. Smith Oldham** replied that with SMCAA being the third-party administrator of only utility assistance through the Berrien CERA, we are obligated to assist with any application that comes through the CERA portal, whether that individual be located within the City of Benton Harbor or otherwise in Berrien County. As we are overseen by the State and have been mandated to expend CERA funds for utility assistance (and rental assistance in Van Buren County as well) before any other program, the CERA program is our main focus at this time.

On a lighter note, SMCAA will be celebrating 40 years of serving Southwest Michigan in 2022. We do not know the exact date of our agency's incorporation, but we plan to begin celebrating this anniversary at the beginning of the new fiscal year – on October 1<sup>st</sup>. We are ordering agency gear sporting a "40 year logo" created by **A. Slack**, will be sending out press releases to make the community aware of our legacy, and will attempt to get on the local radio stations to talk about Community Action. **K. Smith Oldham** asked the Board to share additional ideas on how to spread the word of our anniversary and increase SMCAA branding in the community by emailing **A. Slack**.

**K. Smith Oldham** noted that she would be representing SMCAA at a COVID-19 vaccination clinic taking place at the Hartford Speedway on September 16<sup>th</sup>. She was asked to join Van Buren DHHS's Migrant Department for this event.

There has also been communication between the MDHHS's Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity (BCAEO), the Berrien County Health Department, and SMCAA on the recent positive tests of lead in the City of Benton Harbor's public plumbing. Though we do not have a lot of information yet, **K. Smith Oldham** will keep the Board informed of upcoming news and how Community Action will be assisting City residents with fresh water supplies and possible water filtration systems.

**ACTION:**

A motion to accept and place on file the Director's Report was made by **K. Lyons** and was seconded **M. Underwood**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**e. Employee Handbook.** **K. Smith Oldham** began by thanking **A. Slack** for her work in researching this new version of the Employee Handbook and updating the policies and procedures within it to meet current laws and practices.

Per Organization Standards, this handbook and the Personnel Policies Handbook were both reviewed by a lawyer. The lawyer responded with a letter stating, "The proposed revisions that you have incorporated into the proposed documents are well thought out and meet my approval. It is in my opinion that the Board should approve the documents with the current edits."

**A. Slack** presented the Employee Handbook and asked if anyone had comments regarding the completed document.



Page 2: **K. Lyons** commented that under Recruitment, Selection, and Promotion that the first sentence should read, “at least three (3) days prior to external application postings.” **A. Slack** thanked her for this catch and made a note to correct the wording.

Page 3: **K. Lyons** questioned the legality of the hours for full-time and part-time regular employees. **K. Smith Oldham** stated that the lawyer had approved of the criteria mentioned in the handbook and that our agency has set these hour guidelines for our employees. As always, non-exempt employees’ hours are set at the discretion of their Program Manager.

Page 3: **M. Underwood** commented that under Employee Classification, Non-Exempt Employees, Part-time Regular Employees does not read easily. She suggested adding “are those working less than or up to thirty-five (35) hours per week.” **A. Slack** thanked her for this catch and made a note to correct the wording.

There were no additional concerns or questions regarding the Employee Handbook.

**ACTION:**

There was a motion to accept the Employee Handbook with suggested modifications. As previously mentioned, these modifications are to change the verbiage on Page 2 (deadlines to postings) and add “or up to” on Page 3.

A motion to approve the Employee Handbook with these modifications was made by **J. Wuerfel** and was seconded by **J. Johnson**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**f. Personnel Policies Handbook.** **R. Benjamin** presented the Personnel Policies Handbook and asked if anyone had comments regarding the completed document.

There were no concerns or questions regarding the Personnel Policies Handbook.

**ACTION:**

A motion to approve the Personnel Policies Handbook was made by **R. Benjamin** and was seconded by **C. Christopher**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**g. Client Satisfaction Survey Update.** **A. Slack** presented updates to the FY2022 client satisfaction survey. Key updates were:

- Relocation of what county the client lives in as this area was commonly missed in previous surveys
- Addition of asking what service/program the client received
- Addition of asking how the client heard about SMCAA
- Capability of completing the survey online through the use of a QR code

The Board complimented the changes and approved of its use in the future. **R. Benjamin** also stated he would like to see the QR code format used for other projects in the future by the agency.

h. **Balance of State –FY2021-22.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the Balance of State for fiscal year 2022. The amount of grant assistance through the Balance of State is \$12,065 and is available during the term of August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022. The Balance of State is funding allocated to county Housing Assessment and Resource Agencies (HARAs) for coordinated entry, and SMCAA is the Van Buren County HARA.

There were no additional questions, and **K. Smith Oldham** will schedule to meet with the Executive Committee for their signatures on this grant.

**ACTION:** A motion to approve the Van Buren FY2021-22 Balance of State was made by **R. Benjamin** and was seconded by **K. Lyons**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** **G. Patterson-Gladney** shared that the final Van Buren County ARPA request for proposal is live on the county’s website. This is funding SMCAA plans to apply for in the coming month.

Also, **G. Patterson-Gladney** informed the Board that every 10 years the State’s counties look at redistricting. In Van Buren County, there are 7 districts, but there is a proposal for there to only be 5 in the future. She encouraged each Board member to look at their individual counties and research if there is redistricting efforts taking place.

**OTHER:** **M. Warren** praised the SMCAA staff on their continued dedication to Southwest Michigan. She said that during all her years of sitting on the Board, this current team is doing a fantastic job. **K. Lyons** shared this opinion and added that the agency’s leadership is doing a wonderful job to support its staff. **M. Warren** also said she is appreciative of leadership’s provision of information and updates to the Board.

ACTION: Hearing no other business, a motion to adjourn was made by **R. Benjamin** and was seconded by **M. Franks**. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28pm.

NOTE: The next scheduled SMCAA Board meeting will be held at the **Van Buren Conference Center**: 490 S. Paw Paw St., Lawrence, MI 49064 on **Wednesday, October 20, 2021** at **6:00pm**.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ashley Slack, SMCAA Operations Manager

Reviewed and approved,

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Gail Patterson-Gladney, SMCAA Board of Directors' Secretary