

# SMCAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES

Wednesday – July 21, 2021

6:00pm

Van Buren Conference Center  
490 S. Paw Paw St., Lawrence, MI 49064

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

ABSENT: J. Johnson

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 6:07pm.

ACTION: Motion made by **K. Lyons** to accept the July 21, 2021 Agenda, seconded by **G. Patterson-Gladney**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

ACTION: Motion to approve the June 21, 2021 Board Minutes was made by **J. Wuerfel**, seconded by **K. Lyons**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

OFFICERS' REPORT: **M. Warren** announced some sad news: she had received a letter of resignation from the SMCAA Board from **D. Fernandez**. Tonight's meeting was **D. Fernandez's** last as a SMCAA Board Director.

In his letter, **D. Fernandez** thanked his fellow directors for the privilege to serve beside them during his 11 years on the Board. He noted that though he is preparing to transition into a new phase, he remains an ambassador for Community Action. He enjoyed the opportunities and challenges being a Board member brought over the past several years, and is thankful to have worked beside such energetic and open-hearted colleagues to serve the vulnerable and needy people in the tri-county area.

He also recommended a replacement for his open seat. **M. Warren, C. Christopher, K. Smith Oldham**, and **A. Slack** will be meeting with this

recommended candidate prior to the August 2021 meeting in order to introduce her to the agency, answer any questions she may have, and inquire if she is interested in moving forward with meeting the whole Board.

**C. Christopher** thanked **D. Fernandez** for his years of service, stating the Board will miss his valuable contributions to our monthly meetings. **K. Lyons** agreed, adding that **D. Fernandez** always “dug in” to the Board’s conversations to ensure each Board member understood the topics being discussed. She said that his information and knowledge from DHHS were invaluable and will be sorely missed moving forward. **G. Patterson-Gladney** thanked him for his service as well and said she had appreciated his wealth of knowledge brought to the table each month. **M. Warren** thanked **D. Fernandez** for his contributions to SMCAA as well.

**K. Smith Oldham** thanked **D. Fernandez** for his consistent, strong support of SMCAA over the years. She was grateful for his balance to the Board’s discussions in the past, and his willingness to research issues as they arose – even in situations outside meetings. **D. Fernandez** has always been only a phone-call away to answer questions or bounce ideas that impact the low income population in Southwest Michigan.

**D. Fernandez** thanked the Board one last time, saying he would remain available via the telephone for anyone who may wish to chat.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: a. **Fiscal Summary for June 2021.** **D. Oleneack** presented the fiscal summary. She stated there are no immediate concerns and that the Agency is on-target with the set budget. There were no additional questions from the Board.

ACTION: A motion to accept and place on file the June 2021 Fiscal Summary was made by **G. Patterson-Gladney** and was seconded by **C. Christopher**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

b. **Programmatic Report for June 2021.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the programmatic report. There were 269 households serviced with utility assistance and 48 households with rent or mortgage assistance. 1,777 households received food commodities from CSFP, and there were 5,378 households given TEFAP food boxes throughout the months of April, May, and June. Our numbers remain down in both of these programs. One family with six individuals stayed in the shelter for a total

of 37 bed nights. There were also 2 auto repairs assisted in Berrien County.

Fourteen individuals were serviced through the FSS Program, three through DHHS's Rapid Rehousing Consolidated, and nine through Supportive Housing.

Weatherization officially ended its fiscal year on June 30<sup>th</sup>, and **S. Klank** recorded 41 homes being weatherized in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

**ACTION:**

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

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

- **New Database:** The State is currently looking to replace FACSPRO with a new database. **A. Slack** is a member of the Data Solutions Workgroup that is in the process of demoing potential options. We will share information as we learn more.
- **Emergency Shelter and Food Program (ESFP):** SMCAA received an extra pot of funding for the shelter that was a little over \$10,000. With a lot of old furniture in the shelter, **Y. Vidt** decided to purchase a new desk, computer, bed frames, mattresses, towels, mattress covers, sheets, blankets, refrigerator, dining table, and a couch. We also replaced the porch on the resident's side with our ESG funding as it was starting to fall apart.
- **City of Benton Harbor:** **S. Klank** and **K. Smith Oldham** have been working with the City of Benton Harbor on the CDBG housing rehab program. Just as we have done in the past, SMCAA will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> party administrator for this program and we hope to start this program sometime in the next couple of weeks. In addition, we also had a meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup> with the CDBG Director from the City and he asked us to administer some CARES emergency housing rehab funding that they received as well. **Y. Vidt** is already working with the City on a CARES program for food and hygiene products for Benton Harbor residents which will target low income housing complexes.
- **New CCAP:** **K. Smith Oldham** announced that **D. Oleneack** passed her Certified Community Action Professional Certification. This is a training criteria, along with the Leadership Development Institute, that SMCAA requires from all new Management, Leadership, and Administration team members. **A. Slack** will start working on her CCAP in the Fall of 2022.

- **Flood Update:** ServPro removed all air dryers and dehumidifiers from the building during the last week of June, and the carpeting in the Admin office and in the main hallway has been removed. The building is currently having carpenters and painters repair damaged walls and replace wet ceiling tiles. Once these repairs are done, SMCAA still has to wait for new carpet to be installed and the Admin office furniture to be cleaned. We've been told this should be done by the first week in August. Thankfully, none of the office's computers, equipment, files, or furniture were damaged during the flood.
- **Reminder: K. Smith Oldham** reminded everyone that we will have a Staff Appreciation Luncheon on Friday, July 30<sup>th</sup> beginning at 1:00. This will be hosted at the Van Buren Conference Center which is located at 490 S. Paw Paw, Lawrence, MI 49064. We will be catering Acapulco and presenting awards to the staff at the event.

**K. Smith Oldham** spoke on the Weatherization program. The agency received a letter from BCAEO on the Weatherization program regarding its closeout date of June 30, 2021. The Bureau stated they understand this program year has been unusual and many agencies will not meet production or expenditure goals, our agency included. We were informed that the average cost per unit is \$7,769 or lower, and currently we spend an average of \$9,131.47 per unit. We were warned if we do not get our unit cost down, then we could be at risk for disallowed cost in the future.

We have a lot of older stock homes in our service area and this makes it difficult to weatherize auditable homes, especially when energy measures are high. Older homes have a high volume of work with health and safety measures needed to bring it up to standard for it to be declared "more energy efficient." This statewide standard is a national problem. With building material costs also increasing, the MCA Director, Chong-Anna Canfora, has met with David Bradley to discuss all these weatherization programming issues. He then met with the U.S. Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program on the federal level to see if the language in LIHEAP funding laws could address some of these issues. Here are some notes from David's meeting with the Senate Budget Committee on the nature of an expanded Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP):

"These proposals stem from the many conversations and feedback sessions, formal and informal, that we have had with the network over the past seven months. The consensus,

summarized very generally, is that WAP is too restrictive to have a major impact on reducing the risks that low-income families face due to climate change. The current WAP is too focused on the usage of conventional fuels to provide low-income households access to new technology. It is also too restrictive to meet the needs of the families who live in the most unhealthy, inefficient homes or the needs of communities that have been the most disproportionately burdened with the causes and conditions of climate change. Moreover, the current program faces obstacles in meeting its statutory mission in today's labor and materials market conditions. In order to grow WAP's mission to include climate action, climate readiness and workforce goals, more flexibility and more spending per home is required."

In addition, **S. Klank** has been working hard to bring the weatherization costs down by looking for other funding. She has looked at using DOE funds, retailer rebates for refrigerators, and partnering with vendors like I&M, Michigan Gas, and SEMCO on specific programming. Unfortunately, the majority of these funds are now dry. As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, our average cost per unit was at \$7,684.19.

Also, our report from the Bureau arrived which audited 12 of our Weatherization homes. Out of these 12 homes, the agency received 1 finding and 2 recommendations. The finding was due to one of the home's attic access dam not being properly secured and coming apart when opened. There was no recapture of funds, however, and this issue has since been corrected.

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

**d. ESG Van Buren 2022.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the ESG Van Buren FY 2021-22 Application to the Board. MSHDA will be awarding \$100,808 in ESG funding. Last year, we received \$97,000, so there was an increase. The Board had no additional questions.

**ACTION:** **R. Benjamin** motioned to accept the ESG FY2021-22 Application (10-1-21 to 9-30-22) due July 31, 2021. **G. Patterson-Gladney** seconded the motion. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

**e. Governing Board of Directors By-Laws (v. 2021).** **K. Smith Oldham** noted that the drafted by-laws came from a base foundation document, but that **A. Slack** had gone above and beyond to research CAPLAW,

National requirements, and other federal, state, and local guidelines for tri-partite Board of Director by-laws. **K. Lyons** commented that the final draft was very eye-catching and seemed easy to navigate. **A. Slack** thanked them for the compliments on the draft's design.

**A. Slack** then invited **D. Fernandez** to present the drafted Board By-Laws as a member of the Governance Ad Hoc Committee. **D. Fernandez** noted that **J. Wuerfel, A. Slack, D. Oleneack,** and **K. Smith Oldham** volunteered for this committee. The by-laws, once fully drafted, were sent to the agency lawyer, per Organizational Standards. **D. Fernandez** read a comment from the lawyer's review:

"I have reviewed the By-Laws twice now. I just want to say you should commend your team and yourself. The proposed revisions that you have incorporated into the proposed by-laws are well thought out and actually you have an easy to read document which is hard to accomplish when it comes to "by-laws" documentation. I do not have any additional input or corrections that need to be made at this time."

**D. Fernandez** walked the Board through the draft's table of contents, and then pointed out key changes from the previous version. He thanked **A. Slack** for her diligence in researching updates for the by-laws and for re-constructing the document to make it more user-friendly and easy to navigate. He also thanked his fellow committee members who helped with the draft's development. He stated that, per his review, the document seemed very thorough. He then asked for any questions or comments.

**R. Benjamin** had questions over two areas within the draft:

1. Section 4.05 Vacancies seemed to conflict with Section 4.02 A on Public Official vacancies in the Board. He commented that there should be some sort of verbiage stating that Public Official vacancies are handled differently in 4.05, and not only in 4.02 A.
2. Section 5.06 Public Participation's first bullet of "no firearms are allowed at any facility" may need to be researched. **R. Benjamin** commented that some locations that Board meetings may be held in the future may allow firearms, thus conflicting with this bylaw.

**A. Slack** thanked **R. Benjamin** for catching these two areas and said she would like to review them with the lawyer. With this in mind, **M. Warren** asked that approval of the bylaws be tabled until the August 2021 Board

Meeting so these conflicts may be addressed. This agenda item will be added to next month's Old Business.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** **K. Smith Oldham** reminded the Board that the Michigan Community Action Summer Conference will be August 10-12. It is being held virtually this year. If a Board member is interested in attending, then he or she should let **A. Slack** or her know so that they can be registered.

**OTHER:** **G. Patterson-Gladney** made the Board aware that Van Buren County would be receiving American Rescue Plan funding soon that would be available to local organizations. She does not have any information on the guidelines or RFP process yet, but she will share it with **K. Smith Oldham** when received.

**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 7:14pm.

**NOTE:** The next scheduled SMCAA Board meeting will be held at the **Cass County Building:** 120 N. Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Cassopolis, MI 49031 on **Wednesday, August 18, 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