

SMCAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES

Wednesday – August 18, 2021 at 6:00pm

Cass County Building – 2nd Floor Conference Room
120 N. Broadway, Cassopolis, MI 49031

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

ABSENT: M. Franks

GUESTS: M. Underwood

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 August 18, 2021 Agenda, seconded by **J. Wuerfel**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

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

OFFICERS' REPORT: **M. Warren** introduced **M. Underwood** as an applicant for the vacant Consumer Sector seat. **M. Underwood** gave a brief summary on her qualifications which include over 13 years of program management at the Van Buren County Department of Health and Human Services. She was recommended by D. Fernandez, who is her supervisor. She expressed her excitement for joining the SMCAA Board.

C. Christopher commented that **K. Smith Oldham**, **A. Slack**, and he visited with **M. Underwood** and were pleased with her extensive background, passion to assist vulnerable populations in Southwest Michigan, and understanding of SMCAA's mission.

ACTION: Motion made by **R. Benjamin** to approve **M. Underwood** filling the vacant position and seconded by **G. Patterson-Gladney**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS: **Governing Board of Directors By-Laws. A. Slack** presented the changes to the drafted by-laws that were brought up during the July 2021 meeting. She inquired if there were additional changes, comments, and/or questions. There were no additional comments from the Board.

ACTION: A motion to adopt the Governing Board of Directors By-Laws was made by **J. Wuerfel** and was seconded by **K. Lyons**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS: a. **Fiscal Summary for July 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.

K. Lyons questioned why the Membership Dues line item has a low percent of budget used and if that may be due to COVID-19. **D. Oleneack** stated the agency typically pays membership dues at the beginning of the fiscal year and she was unsure why the line item was lower than expected. She said she would need to look further into it and get back with the Board on her findings. **K. Lyons** asked if there was a list of memberships that the agency maintains. **D. Oleneack** responded memberships include the state and national associations, CAPLAW, and a few other smaller entities. **K. Lyons** requested a complete list to have on file. **D. Oleneack** said she would work on that list and bring it for the Board at the next meeting.

R. Benjamin had a question on line items that have gone over budget. He wondered why those line items, such as Client Services which is at 114% of budget used, were not brought to the Board for approval before going above 100% spent. **D. Oleneack** responded that certain line items are allocated by the state. **K. Smith Oldham** added that the Board-approved budget, which will be voted on in September, is a “guess-timate” and line items may change throughout the year as new issues arise. **D. Oleneack** said she would be bringing budget changes nearly every month for the Board to approve if approval for each line item was necessary.

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

b. **Programmatic Report for July 2021. K. Smith Oldham** presented the programmatic report. There were 225 households serviced with utility assistance and 29 households with rent or mortgage assistance. 1,797 households received food commodities from CSFP and 745 households

received assistance through SMCAA food pantries. Two families with nine individuals stayed in the shelter for a total of 96 bed nights.

K. Smith Oldham shared with the Board some of the CERA expenditures the agency paid to vendors in July. The SMCAA staff have been busy helping clients -- \$163,736 was paid during the month in both Berrien and Van Buren Counties that assisted with rent and utility assistance. Over \$696,000 has been spent in Van Buren County since the start of the CERA program in April 2021. The Berrien HARA, Emergency Shelter Services (ESS), is facilitating CERA in the county, but has partnered with SMCAA to be an administrator of utility payment assistance. The agency had spent all its utility funds, but ESS will be releasing more funds within the month so we can assist even more households.

Fourteen individuals were serviced through the FSS Program, 4 through DHHS's Rapid Rehousing Consolidated, and 9 through Supportive Housing.

Weatherization officially ended its fiscal year on June 30th and no additional jobs were completed during the month of July.

K. Smith Oldham made the Board aware of a new homeowner assistance program that is supposedly beginning in December 2021. There is not a lot of information available on this program yet, but we do know SMCAA will not be facilitating the program. MSHDA Housing Education Agencies will be the facilitators. In the tri-county area, this would be Telamon Corporation. She will share more information as it becomes available.

ACTION:

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

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

- **New Whirlpool Pilot Program:** **Y. Vidt** and **K. Smith Oldham** had a meeting with Whirlpool Corporation and SMCAA is going to be part of a new program called the United Way Sale. This will be a pilot program where 10-to-25 income-eligible homeowners within a twenty-mile radius from the Whirlpool warehouse will receive a discontinued or dent-and-scratch appliance. She thanked **J. Johnson** for her assistance in gathering the foundational information for this program so **K. Smith Oldham** could bring ideas to the table with United Way of SWMI.

- **Technology: A. Slack** is looking into a donate button for our website, which will most likely be through Paypal, and researching donation collection options for future fundraisers like Stuff-a-Truck.
- **Van Buren County Housing Rehab:** We received word from the Van Buren County Administrator that there is some more emergency repair funding for homeowners. We have agreed to be the third party administrator for this program. There is about \$35,000 available with \$8,000 maximum set per home, so funds will not go far. The hope is this program will work in tandem with Weatherization. The agency is also planning to apply for ARPA funding through Van Buren County to be used towards housing rehabilitation.
- **CSFP Update:** The Niles Senior Center will no longer handout our TEFAP product, though they will continue to disburse monthly CSFP commodities. **Y. Vidt** is actively working with our caseworker located at the First Presbyterian Church in Niles to move the TEFAP program to another location in the City of Niles.

K. Smith Oldham shared news from D. Bradley of the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) in Washington D.C. on the House Appropriations subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services included the following provisions in their FY2022 spending bill:

- \$800 million for the CSBG, an increase of \$56 million above the FY2021. Enacted level. The Biden Administration proposed the same funding as last year at \$754 million. \$800 was NCAF's goal for the CSBG funding.
- The bill included language mandating eligibility at 200% of poverty level, rather than the current 125%. The eligibility level is not something states can decide arbitrarily, so this would be the new income guideline set into federal law.
- NCAF's goal is to make the Community Action network, and specifically CSBG, the go-to source for a wide variety of issues impacting low-income families and communities.

D. Bradley requested the entire CA network send out thank you letters to the Congressional leaders behind the provision of the CSBG FY2022 spending bill. Our local representative, Rep. Fred Upton and Sen. Debbie Stabenow, were not on the list of CSBG supporters. **K. Smith Oldham** commented on how unsettling this news was to her. She had previously reached out to the reps' offices and received no response. **M. Warren** and she also sent the reps requests to support the Dear Colleague Letter for CSBG support. No response was received following their letters either. Apart from our local reps, **K. Smith Oldham** sent additional

letters as gratitude to the 23 national representatives who have given their support for CSBG FY2022.

K. Smith Oldham announced that **A. Slack** was appointed by Governor Whitmer to sit on the Michigan Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity (MCCAEO) as a representative of community action agencies. Through this appointment, **A. Slack** will bring a voice from Southwest Michigan to a statewide forum that addresses the needs and concerns of low income people by advising the governor, legislature, state congressional delegation, and other federal officials on the extent of poverty in the state. This Commission also guides the policies within the CSBG program. This is a three-year term and meets, at minimum, once each quarter at the State Capitol.

K. Lyons asked how **A. Slack** was selected for the Commission. **K. Smith Oldham** said she had received an email about the Commission, and she had never heard of it. With further research, she saw there was an opportunity for CAAs to be represented and she asked **A. Slack** if she was interested in applying. The application process goes through the governor's, state senates', and state house of representatives' offices, and **A. Slack** initially applied in April 2021. We only received word of her appointment on July 30th. The Board expressed their excitement for this opportunity for the agency, and **A. Slack** said she would share more information as she serves her term.

On another exciting note, **K. Smith Oldham** shared that **A. Slack** and her have successfully returned to their office suite following the building's flood. There are still some repairs to be done with wall painting and ceiling tiles being hung, but overall it feels great to be back to a stable environment.

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

d. **CAP Plan FY2022.** **K. Smith Oldham** presented the CSBG 2022 CAP Plan. The Board must approve the Plan to be submitted to the State. There were no questions.

ACTION: A motion to approve the CSBG 2022 CAP Plan was made by **R. Benjamin** and was seconded by **K. Lyons**. Unanimous approval; motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

OTHER: **M. Warren** thanked **K. Smith Oldham** and her staff for their continued hard work. **K. Smith Oldham** thanked the Board for their continued support. She said the staff enjoyed the appreciation luncheon, and she was grateful for those Board members able to attend to have helped distribute certificates of appreciation to staff members. She pointed out a table near the door to the meeting room that had some pictures from the luncheon for the Board to see.

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 6:50pm.

NOTE: The next scheduled SMCAA Board meeting will be held at the **Berrien County Administration Building**: 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085 on **Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at 6:00pm**.

The exact room location is being finalized and will be shared with the Board through electronic mail prior to the date of the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Ashley Slack, SMCAA Operations Manager

Reviewed and approved,

Gail Patterson-Gladney, SMCAA Board of Directors' Secretary