

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.
Board of Directors' Meeting
May 27, 2021, 3:30 p.m.
via Zoom Conference Call

Members present: Dannai Clayborn, Bruce Day, Andy Hunthausen, Trever Kirkland, Jerry Loendorf, Bob Mullen, Mary Pat Penley, Eric Schindler, Lois Steinbeck, Paula Wright, Mark Young

Members absent: Kate Anderson, Mike Delger, Daniel Pocha

Others present: Carla Adair, Gale Anderson, Joan Anderson, Rod Applegate, Mindy Diehl, Shawna Donaldson, Diane Edgar, Sam Hall, Joanna Halland, Taya Hovan, Chrisy Ireby, Lori Ladas, Jean Leischner, Samara Lynde, Jim Marks, Kathy Marks, Liz Mogstad, Ashley Peña-Larsen

The meeting was called to order at 3:34 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Bruce Day made the motion to approve the April 29, 2021 Board of Directors' minutes and the March 25, 2021 Finance Committee minutes. Jerry Loendorf seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Director's Report – Lori Ladas

Lori asked for any questions regarding her written report or the reports written by Program Directors this month. She noted that the intent of the Program Directors reports are to help Board members become more comfortable with what Rocky programs do on a daily basis. Returning to in-person meetings at the Neighborhood Center was discussed. The Board decided to meet in person for the June Board of Directors meeting, as well as offering a Zoom option for anyone who would prefer to meet virtually.

Finance Report Update – Chrisy Ireby

a. Finance Committee Update

Cash balance is \$1,104,627, and accounts payable is \$22,090. These amounts are comparable to previous months. Chrisy reported that the Finance Committee met prior to the Board meeting and discussed the FY2022 budget, FY2021 projection, and possible scenarios and future affordability of the pay plan.

b. Rocky Fiscal Year 2022 Budget

Chrisy began by explaining the layout of the crystal ball spreadsheet, and she spoke about how Program Directors and Budget Analysts work together to determine the budget projections. At the end of FY2022, program cash is estimated at \$103,162. The two major program deficits in General Fund and Preschool could be absorbed by developer fee at the end of the fiscal year. Chrisy reported that the Paycheck Protection Program loans for Rocky Mountain Preschool Center kept the Preschool from needing to raise rates this year. For FY2022, \$560,075 in county mill funding will be spent by Rocky programs, leaving \$326,806 to carry over for the following year. Chrisy spoke about how Area IV funding for congregate and home delivered meals can impact the county mill projections, but that extra funding from Area IV is not guaranteed. At this time, Rocky will be out of county mill funding by FY2025. Chrisy mentioned a few assumptions noted in the budget narrative. The budget includes a 1.22% COLA, to align with the increase to be received

by Head Start. Also included is a \$25 per employee per month health insurance premium increase. The IDC rate is set at 13.3%, which is currently the highest rate which can be used; Rocky hopes to renegotiate the IDC rate in the next couple months. The structure for network fees has also changed for FY2022, to reflect the change to contracting with Entre for IT services. Chrisy reported that the Finance Committee made the recommendation to the Board to approve the FY2022 budget as presented, with an amendment allowing for the allocation of Red Alder developer fee to the General Fund and Preschool deficits.

Lois Steinbeck made the motion to approve the recommendation of the Finance Committee to approve the FY2022 budget as presented with an amendment allowing for the allocation of Red Alder developer fee to the General Fund and Preschool deficits. Eric Schindler seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Head Start Update

a. Policy Council Update – Mark Young

Mark reported that the Policy Council met today. Head Start classes are done for the year and Mark expressed his appreciation for the Head Start staff, noting especially the work of distance learning teacher Brittany Marion. Mark also expressed gratitude for the Policy Council members who participated throughout the entire school year.

b. Director’s Program and Budget Report – Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley reported that grant year ended on April 30 and Head Start funds were spent out completely. In June, Ashley plans to present a carryover request for COVID dollars not yet spent. Head Start has received approval for a third round of COVID funds, but has not received approval yet for the COLA grant, which is still working through federal processes. Ashley recommended the Board check out the Head Start Facebook page for pictures of year-end activities at various sites. Ashley then spoke about the property on Airport Road which has been identified as a potential Head Start space. An Environmental Needs Assessment is in progress, which is the first step in determining if the property is an option for the program. Ashley’s outlook for the space is a complete Head Start campus, where all current Neighborhood Center classrooms and offices would re-locate, along with the potential for additional meeting space and possible partnerships in the future. The possibility of transitional housing at the site has also been discussed. The location is 10 acres of land, with three buildings at the present time. One building is currently leased. Ashley reported that the Head Start regional office likes the idea of a one-stop location for Head Start resources, and that at the federal level the program would help support the maintenance of the property. Lori confirmed that there are many pieces to a purchase process, which is just getting started with the Environmental Needs Assessment. Today’s information was shared as a start of transparent communication about the potential for property acquisition. Additional details will follow throughout the process.

Mark Young made the motion to approve the Head Start Directors’ Program and Budget Report. Mary Pat Penley seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

c. 2021-2022 Grant Amendment – Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley referred to her written program report, where she outlined the details of the proposed grant amendment. A recent change to Montana child care licensing requires the minimum size of a child care class to be 16. Head Start regulations limit class size to a maximum of 16

children when three year olds are in the classroom, which is the case in every Rocky Head Start classroom. In addition, the COVID programming flexibilities of the past year, such as remote services, are no longer allowable. As a result, Rocky Head Start needs to reduce its total enrollment from 215 children to 208 children. Nine of the slots currently located in Lewis & Clark County will be transferred to Broadwater and Jefferson counties. The program will still operate five days per week, with part time classrooms operating 4 hours per day and full time classrooms operating 6 hours per day.

Mark Young made the motion to approve the 2021-2022 grant amendment as presented. Jerry Loendorf seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Energy Services Program Presentation – Sam Hall

Sam began with a brief overview of the four programs operated through Energy Services: LIEAP, Weatherization, Energy Share, and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. He explained that LIEAP is meant to offset heating costs, freeing up limited financial resources for clients. An approved LIEAP application also adds clients to a priority list for Weatherization services. The Weatherization Program provides upgrades to clients' homes, reducing energy costs over time. Energy Share is a private non-profit with additional leeway to assist with issues outside of LIEAP eligibility. Energy Share is meant to assist in emergency situations, such as disconnects or providing security deposits. Those applying for Energy Share must have previously applied for LIEAP in order to be receive assistance. Energy Share provides a maximum \$900 benefit over 10 years. While there is no mandate to re-pay, clients can choose to re-pay, and that money is rolled into a revolving fund. The Emergency Rental Assistance Program is a new program to assist renters who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sam then provided more detail on each individual program. He noted that to qualify for LIEAP, a household may earn up to 60% of the area median income and 150% of federal poverty levels. As an example, a household of one can earn up to \$26,600; a household of four, \$51,000. Determining LIEAP eligibility triggers discounts on utility bills for clients who qualify. In the 2018/2019 season, the program received 2,000 applications and provided just over \$1 million in benefits. In 2019/2020, around 1,900 applications were received and \$1.3 million was awarded. For 2020/2021, 1,600 applications were received and \$880,000 in benefits were provided. Most LIEAP clients served by Rocky reside in Lewis & Clark County.

The Weatherization Program provides benefits in the areas of equity, environment, and economics. The program impacts social equity by disrupting generations of poverty, working to improve homes and providing resources that people can carry forward and build upon. Energy conservation updates in low-income homes reduce the environmental impact on the planet. The program impacts economics by reducing heating costs for clients. Weatherization has cost effectiveness at its core, meaning that the cost of the repair should lead to a financial return over time. In 2018/2019, 43 homes were weatherized by Rocky's program. In 2019/2020, the total was 36 homes, and 28 homes have been completed so far in 2020/2021. By the end of the fiscal year, Sam expects the total to be close to 36 again.

Sam reported a recent fluctuation in Energy Share payouts, due to the severity of the winter weather and the moratorium on disconnects due to the COVID pandemic. In 2018/2019, 386 cases were reviewed and \$130,000 was awarded. In 2019/2020, 206 cases were reviewed and \$65,000 was awarded. In 2020/2021, 230 cases have been reviewed and \$113,000 awarded.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program is new to Rocky as of April. The Department of Commerce rolled out the program on a tight timeline to assist renters who have been financially impacted by COVID-19. Thus far, 30 people have been assisted by Rocky, though most of those applications are still pending review by state staff. One application has been approved and funded at this time.

Other Business


Lori congratulated Rocky board member Mary Pat Penley, who was named the Helena School District Teacher of the Year.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Diane Edgar
Executive Assistant

Board Approval:
 7.22.21