

**Minutes of the  
Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.  
RMDC Board of Directors' Meeting  
March 23, 2017**

**Members present include:** Susan Geise, Rebecca Blend, Bruce Day, Mike Delger, Helen Fandrich, Debbie Havens, Trever Kirkland, Lanessa Littrell, Jerry Loendorf, Bob Mullen, Roberta Spengler, Lois Steinbeck

**Members absent include:** Keith Meyer, Maria Pace, Daniel Pocha

**Guests:** Lori Ladas, Kathy Marks, Gale Anderson, Walter Hanley, Ashley Peña-Larsen, Liz Mogstad, Shawna Donaldson, Taya Hoven, Jacque Smith, Jaymie Sheldahl, Rod Applegate, Bill Peña, Ken Kersten, Duzzie Stolp, Kurt Mihelish, Kathy Rhoades, Beth Lindsay, Deb Hoyrup, Lucy Links, Diane Edgar

**Call to Order/Roll Call:** Susan Geise called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

Debbie Havens made the motion to approve the January and February Board of Directors and Finance Committee minutes. Trever Kirkland seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Senior Nutrition/Transportation Program Report –Walter Hanley**

Walt provided a packet of information about the Senior Nutrition programs; rather than discussing program statistics, Walt brought members of his staff to the meeting for introduction to the Board and to explain their various roles. Representing Home Delivered Meals, Walt introduced Ken Kersten and Duzzie Stolp, who deliver meals within the city and cover 50-60 miles each day on their route, and Kurt Mihelish, who delivers the rural area meals and covers about 70 miles per day. Walt praised their dependability and their ability to handle numerous situations while on their routes, including medical emergencies. Next, Walt introduced Kathy Rhoades, known as the "salad queen", who is largely responsible for the popular salad bar at the Neighborhood Center and makes an effort to be sure healthy options are available for the senior citizens. Beth Lindsay, Kitchen Manager, and Deb Hoyrup, Lead Cook, were commended for their ability to maintain a tight schedule of meal and kitchen work, feeding 800-1,000 people per day, starting their day by 5:00 a.m. Lucy Links, cook from the East Helena facility, was recognized for all her work in their kitchen as well. Senior Center Coordinator Bill Peña started in his role just over a year ago, and attendance has increased by over 2,000 individuals in that time. This is credited to Bill's philosophy of listening, using appropriate social skills, and his efforts to decorate and set up for games and events so those who attend can come and enjoy their time. Walt then distributed a column from the *Missoulian*, "Action Needed to End Hunger Among Montana Seniors", which was co-contributed by Shawna Donaldson, who was introduced as a Program Coordinator. Her job duties are varied, including paperwork for all programs, coding bills, visiting new clients, and delivering meals and commodities when the need arises. Walt wrapped up his comments talking about commodity foods delivery that happens three to four times per year, and had just been delivered the day before the meeting. The delivery included 11,000 pounds of commodity foods, valued at \$17,500, free to RMDC through the Federal and State government. He encouraged all present to mention the value of these deliveries to their Representatives, as it would be tragic for the nutrition programs at RMDC if those commodities were not available. Susan Geise commended all those members of the staff in attendance, and also Walt for his leadership and dedication to the programs.

**Director's Report – Lori Ladas**

Lori mentioned that Head Start Director Ashley Peña-Larsen would be at Hometown Helena next Thursday, March 30, at 7:00 a.m., at the Montana Club discussing Head Start and The Friends of Head Start's Extravaganza fundraising event. She then talked about "Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again", a budget proposal released by President Trump to increase defense spending by \$54 billion without increasing the national debt, and to accomplish this by cutting funding to programs including Weatherization Assistance Program, LIEAP, CSBG,



CDBG, HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and Senior Corps. While this budget proposal is the beginning of a long process, Lori commented that it is disconcerting to see that the President feels that America's safety is all tied to defense and military, while being willing to let people go hungry, be cold, and have no housing. Lori was asked what kind of financial impact this budget would have on RMDC if it were to pass as proposed, and she offered estimates on the dollar amounts currently received for these programs. Lois Steinbeck asked if a letter about the value of these programs should be written by the Board of RMDC and sent to congressional representatives. Jerry Loendorf said he would like all Board members to have the opportunity to sign the letter once written, and that the letter should be very positive and about the value of the programs to what RMDC does. Susan Geise offered to draft a letter and will submit it to the Board members for review.

#### **Finance Report Update – Lori Ladas**

Lori reported that the current cash balance is \$490,696, and the current A.P. balance is \$45,985. Lori also reported that she'd spoken to Joan Anderson, the Budget Analyst for Rocky Mountain Preschool Center, and their budget is holding steady at this time. Program Director Hannah Danzer continues to use vacancy savings in an effort to break even this year, and the Preschool is projected to do so.

#### **Committee Reports**

a. **Personnel Committee – Gale Anderson**

Gale referenced the minutes of the March 9 Personnel Committee meeting, which were included in the Board members' packets. She reported that Executive Director Evaluation results have been tallied and that Susan will meet with Lori and also the Personnel Committee in April to review results. Gale asked that if any Board members have ideas of goals for Lori in the coming year, they should send those to Gale's attention. The evaluation will be brought to the full board after it's reviewed with Lori, and Lori may decide if that meeting discussion will be open or closed. Bob Mullen commented that the tool being used for the evaluation is rather cumbersome; Gale said she is open to other options and willing to accept recommendations.

b. **Executive Committee – Susan Geise**

Susan reported that the Executive Committee had approved submission of the United Way grants via e-mail, as discussed at the February Board meeting.

c. **Whitehall Ad-Hoc Committee – Lori Ladas**

Lori began with a status report of the Whitehall Head Start. Meetings have been held with Head Start staff, classroom parents, and the school district. A formal resignation was received from both the Head Start Teacher and one Teacher's Assistant, as expected; the remaining Teacher's Assistant does not have the required qualifications to be a Primary Caregiver at the Head Start location. The Teacher position has been posted and Head Start is recruiting; to date, one application has been received, but the applicant did not have the required qualifications for the position. Work is also being done to sign up children in Whitehall; six kids will be back from this year (five income-eligible), and two new potential attendees have completed applications and they are income-eligible as well. Fourteen children are needed to fill the classroom. Bob Mullen has scheduled a community meeting on May 2 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and will invite the public to attend via school districts, newspaper, and flyers in the area. The Ad-Hoc Committee determined that a decision about whether to keep the Whitehall classroom open needs to be made by June 29, 2017, to leave time for other accommodations to be made if the Whitehall classroom closes. Bob expressed his appreciation for what has been done by RMDC staff to find a solution and work with the community, and Susan commended Head Start Director Ashley Peña-Larsen and the Head Start Policy Council for their efforts.

#### **Head Start Update**

a. **Helena Valley Space – Lori Ladas**

Lori began by discussing the Duration Budget Summary Handout, explaining that the Duration of Services Grant was awarded to extend classroom hours, making one half-day classroom a 7 hour classroom instead. The Helena Valley was the location selected for this extended-day classroom, as the need is great in that area and transportation is often cited as an issue for those eligible families. A property was originally identified on North Montana Avenue, but recently a new property became available at 1275



Fern Road, which is close to Rossiter school and central to a number of Head Start families. After seeing the property and speaking to lenders, it appears that a monthly mortgage payment could be financed to around \$1,300 - \$1,500 per month, after a \$50,000 down payment from Pennies for Progress and Friends of Head Start. The purchase of the property would result in a partial Federal Interest. Additional research will be done regarding details of the Federal Interest, and will be reported to the Board. The City Inspector has looked at the building and found it to be overall in good shape, with some minor electrical tune-ups needed as would be typical for any building of its age. Renovations would need to be made to set up for needed classrooms, offices, and community space. The building was built in 1988, and was originally built for WestMont, so many aspects of ADA-compliance were already considered when building.

As the Grant closure date of April 30 is quickly approaching, a decision needed to be made so progress could be reported to Head Start. Lanessa Littrell commented that Head Start Policy Council had already approved changing the proposed rent payments in the budget to mortgage payments, and to go forward with looking at a property and possibly putting in an offer on the property assuming it stays within the budget constraints. Trever Kirkland brought up the potential of losing funding if progress is not made toward a purchase; Ashley confirmed that this could result in a loss of up to \$51,000 in addition to start-up funding. To use the funds as discussed at the meeting, Ashley would need to write an amendment to the grant, which takes 30 days to go through. The funding can be obligated but not yet spent by the April 30 deadline. Ashley would need approval to amend the budget from rent to mortgage payments in order to proceed. Trever questioned the timeline, as the next Board meeting is not scheduled until the end of April. Bob Mullen asked whether there would be an option to put down some earnest money to hold the property, as the intentions of the seller are not known at this time and that may allow RMDC more time for due diligence.

After a five-minute recess, the Board reconvened.

**Helen Fandrich made the motion to make an offer on the property at 1275 Fern Road, contingent on obtaining satisfactory financing, maintaining the purchase cost and cost of renovations within the budget, and receiving the Federal grant funding. Bob Mullen seconded. Trever Kirkland abstained, Susan Geise opposed, all others present voted in favor. Motion carried.**

**Helen Fandrich made the motion that Ashley Peña-Larsen amend the grant budget to change the rental payments to mortgage payments. Jerry Loendorf seconded. Susan Geise opposed, all others present voted in favor. Motion carried.**

**b. Policy Council Report – Lanessa Littrell**

Lanessa reported that a quorum was not present at last Thursday's meeting. The Policy Council raised \$1,000 at Trivia Night through the Rotary Club, with \$470 raised at the event and the remainder being donated by a local business. Work has been started on the Art Walk fundraiser, which has been moved to September, and kindergarten coupons were discussed.

**c. Director's Report – Ashley Peña-Larsen**

Ashley handed out the Director's Report and the Head Start budget. Ashley noted that 73 children have been screened for lead, which is a Montana EPSTD requirement, but has not been traditionally done by Montana doctors. New statistical data included in the report this month included School to Home projects, number of children on the bus, number of subs, new CPS reports, and adult incident reports. The budget is looking good, with a spending budget of \$251,556.81 per month through the end of the grant year. An extension was received on the MPDG grant, which will now carry through August and can help cover training costs. Ashley said a Federal Review has been scheduled for the week of April 24.

**d. Attendance Policy – Ashley Peña-Larsen**

Ashley handed out a copy of the draft attendance policy. This policy was initially brought to the Board at an earlier meeting, and has not changed in context since that time. Two points were added, that the



policy would be explained to every parent at intake and that the policy would be signed at the beginning of each year. It was also reformatted to improve the document's appearance.

**Helen Fandrich made the motion to approve the Attendance Policy and Procedure Document. The motion was seconded, and the motion carried.**

- e. **Montana Preschool Development Grant Recommitment – Ashley Peña-Larsen**  
Head Start requested approval to recommit to participating in the Preschool Development Grant again for the upcoming year. The grant funding is estimated to total \$314,000 - \$315,000 for the year.

**Bob Mullen made the motion to approve the recommitment to the Preschool Development Grant. Helen Fandrich seconded, and the motion carried.**

**North Stone Residences – Partnership with MPEG – Liz Mogstad**

Liz distributed a packet of information about the proposed "North Stone Residences", a potential new collection of housing units in Helena. It would sit on the lot right next to River Rock, and would include a community room to be used by both sets of units and possibly a sidewalk built to connect the two lots. Liz said River Rock is always full and there is definitely demand for more housing units in Helena. Recognizing that Affordable Housing is one of the few programs at RMDC that brings in unrestricted funds (management fees, etc.), Liz determined it might be more fiscally prudent to partner with another resource rather than hiring part-time staff to assist with this project. Liz recommends partnering with Mountain Plains Equity Group out of Billings, a group she has worked with previously and that is the most involved investor she's worked with. While a letter of intent to pursue the project would be completed in June, Liz plans to pursue and draft a partnership agreement with parameters of the partnership, which she will present to the Board once it is drafted. The Board supported the idea to pursue this partnership.

**The Excellence in Non-Profit Communications Grant Award – Jacque Smith**

Jacque presented information about this grant in the absence of Kathy Marks, Operations Director. The Excellence in Non-Profit Communications Grant (ENC Grant) is described as a transformative experience that demonstrates the positive impact that targeted communication, strategic printed materials, and electronic presentations can have on a non-profit's mission and capacity for fundraising. Grant award winners will work with ENC partners to develop and strengthen the organization's communication plan, with strategic communication objectives, defining target audiences, and crafting key messages. This communication includes websites, handouts, and materials for distribution. Winners will work with the partners throughout the year with regular check-ins. Specific to RMDC, the hope is that the grant would assist with messaging, new brochures, electronic materials, social media tools and plans, refining the RMDC Communications Plan, and fundraising/grant writing. The goal of this work is to tie together all RMDC programs, to communicate what RMDC does and how to receive services, and to create a solid reasoning for why people should contribute to RMDC. The grant application is due on March 30, and finalists will be announced on April 13. The grant does require that a leadership team be formed, and the proposed team is currently Jacque Smith, Kathy Marks, Lori Ladas, and a Board member to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Diane Edgar  
Administrative Assistant, III



Bob Mullen

Secretary/Treasurer

4-27-17

Date