THREE RIVERS COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.
Board of Director’s Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 21, 2021
Three Rivers Community Action, Inc.
1414 North Star Drive, Zumbrota MN, and Remote via Zoom
9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.

Members Participating: Paul Drotos, Meredith Erickson, Galen Malecha, Heather Robins, Julie Steberg, Jo Anne Krier, Maritza Navarro, Erick Maki, Gregg Wright, Ruth Boudet

Staff Participating:
Jenny Larson, Executive Director
Clara Krause, Associate Executive Director
Kindra Papenfus, Chief Financial Officer
Vicki McKay, Human Resources Director
Leah Hall, Community Development Director
Jane Adams Barber, Early Childhood Director
Rob Cooper, Transportation Director
Donna Stamschror, Administrative Support Manager
Krystal Dube, Administrative Assistant

Members Excused: ReJean Schulte, Brian Goihl, Abdullah Hared, Dave Windhorst, Jodi Johnson

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Chair, Galen Malecha.

Determination of Quorum: Quorum was met.

*Approval of the February 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Paul Drotos made a motion to approve the February 17, 2021 meeting minutes, Ruth Boudet seconded, motion unanimously approved.

*Approval of the April 21, 2021 Meeting Agenda

Changes to the agenda. The date of the minutes to approve is February 17, 2021, the date of the agenda to approve is April 21, 2021, and the addition of an individual action item to close the existing bank account and Bank of Zumbrota.

Ruth Boudet made a motion to approve the April 21, 2021 meeting agenda with the noted changes, Meredith Erickson seconded, motion unanimously approved.

Case of the Month – Dianne Ford, HART and Community Outreach Manager
Dianne shared a story about a man who uses transit to get to his weekly medical treatments. In late 2017, he had complications and was told he would need to have treatments increased. The arrival time of his appointments were outside the operating hours for public transit. He was referred to the Three Rivers Community Action HART (Hiawathaland Auxiliary Regional Transit) program. Since then we have provided him 527 volunteer rides and continue to provide him transportation three times a week for treatment and other essential needs (grocery shopping, visiting family members, banking needs). He also continues to use Hiawathaland Transit multiple times a week for his in-town needs. The service has allowed him to remain living independently. The primary volunteer driver has provided him with 518 of his 527 rides.

Heather Robins asked how we recruit drivers for the HART program? Dianne said that she works with a lot of community centers, VFW’s, Lion’s Club, and the Chamber of Commerce. When recruiting drivers, we also find people who need assistance with rides. We also have brochures and flyers that we place around our service area to recruit volunteer drivers.

Galen thanked Dianne for coordinating the HART program and noted the need for volunteer driving services.

**Director’s Report**
Submitted by Jenny Larson April 15, 2021 for Board meeting on April 21, 2021

Jenny welcomed Clara Krause as the new Associate Director. She will start her new position in June.

1. **Energy Assistance** – With extra funds coming to Minnesota from the American Recovery Plan, the State of Minnesota has made some temporary changes to the Energy Assistance Program:
   - The 2021 Program Year has been extended to September 1, 2021. Applications must be postmarked by this date. We will keep our Energy Assistance staff on during the summer rather than doing a seasonal lay-off as we do in years where the program ends in May.
   - The last day for Emergency Repairs (heating system repairs or replacements) is June 1, 2021.
   - The income limit for the program has increased from 50% to 60% of the State Median Income. Three Rivers will be contacting households who were previously told they were over-income for the program to see if they would now be eligible.
   - We are still waiting for the guidelines for the new Water Assistance Program, but we do know that we will be administering that new program in conjunction with Energy Assistance.

2. **Bus Storage** – Red Wing. Currently, we store our Red Wing fleet of buses at a garage owned by the City of Red Wing. The City would like to use that space for its public works needs, and has been working with us on moving bus storage to a new building downtown (320 Bluff Street) that the City has purchased and is renovating.
to meet our needs. The new space is larger and will accommodate future growth of our fleet. That construction is now underway, and the City hopes it will be complete this fall. We are finalizing the terms of the lease with the City.

3. **Federal funding outlook** - In the March email update to the Board, I outlined a list of the American Recovery Plan items that will affect Three Rivers and the clients and communities we serve. We are still waiting for these funds to flow through to the state and local level, but we will keep you posted as we learn more. Congress is also working on the next federal budget, and the Community Action network, through the lobbying organization of the National Community Action Foundation, is seeking an increase in the Community Services Block Grant. I am pleased to announce that Representative Angie Craig has shown support for this increase, signing onto a bi-partisan dear colleague letter asking the appropriations committee to increase the CSBG allocation.

4. **State budget** - The Minnesota legislative session continues, and we are watching several items. Of note, the proposed budget from the Senate includes an increase in the Minnesota Community Action Grant. Other items still in play this session are funding for housing development and housing services, including a proposed new State Tax Credit. We are also watching for funding that will increase Child Care Assistance for families with low incomes, and for changes that will allow early learning scholarships to reach younger children.

5. **Give Local in Wabasha** - The Wabasha Kellogg Area Community Foundation will be doing a spring fundraising drive for area nonprofits. Three Rivers is pleased to partner with the foundation on this event, and we have identified our HART Volunteer Driver program to be the beneficiary of any funds raised for Three Rivers during the event.

6. **Community Initiatives** – Three Rivers actively participates in many local collaborations. This work allows us to work in conjunction with many community partners to address local needs. Most recently, our staff are working on food access in Faribault, backpacks/school supplies in Faribault, opioid responses in Rice County, food access in Goodhue county, homeless response teams in all 4 counties, family service collaboratives in all 4 counties, housing working groups in Goodhue & Olmsted counties as well as the Cities of Northfield, Red Wing and Lake City, and a racial equity collaboration in Northfield.

Jenny reminded the Board of her previous update to the Board, emailed on March 16, 2021 and included in the packet so it would get recorded.

1. **New COVID Emergency Housing Assistance program (CERA).** In December, the federal government created an emergency housing assistance program, which will bring about $280-300 million to Minnesota. The State of Minnesota has decided to select one centralized processing entity to administer the funding, and created an Outreach/Navigator role for local organizations to do
targeted outreach to tenants and landlords who will qualify for the CERA funds. The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency issued an RFP for these funds at the end of February and we had just 1 week to respond. Our team did a great job putting it together, and I am pleased to announce that Three Rivers was selected as a CERA Navigator, and we were awarded $250,000 to pay for staff and admin costs to do outreach and 1:1 application assistance with households throughout 2021. We will be using some existing staff, including keeping some of the temporary staff who had been working on the CHAP program, to do this work. We expect the program to launch at the end of March or early April, and will update you when we have more details on the program.

2. **Federal COVID Relief Bill.** Last week, a large COVID Relief Bill passed into law. Attached to this email is a summary that our state association put together summarizing how the funding will assist the households we work with and the program we operate. If you don’t have time to read the full summary, here are a few highlights of the federal bill:
   - $1,400 stimulus payments
   - Expanded tax credits (child, earned income, & child/dependent care)
   - Extension of expanded unemployment benefits
   - Housing assistance (renters, homeowners, homeless prevention)
   - Utility assistance (Energy Assistance and Water Assistance)
   - Additional Head Start funding
   - Child care assistance
   - Extension of expanded SNAP benefits
   - Expansion of the pandemic EBT and commodity food programs
   - Funding for older adult programs
   - Funding for rural public transit programs
   - Funding to state and local governments

We will be watching for funding opportunities that may come to Three Rivers as part of this bill. We certainly expect additional resources in Head Start and Energy Assistance. We will also be watching how transit, housing and older adult funding gets distributed. I will let you know as we find out about these opportunities. Needless to say, we can all expect that our programs will remain very busy in the coming year.

3. **Energy Assistance and Water Assistance Programs.** As part of the December federal relief bill, a new Water Assistance Program was created to help households with water and sewer bills. We have now heard that this program will be administered through the Energy Assistance network, which means that Three Rivers will be administering the program for Goodhue, Olmsted, Rice and Wabasha counties. With the March relief bill, we also expect that funding for Energy Assistance will increase substantially (we think double) in Minnesota. We are waiting for the State of Minnesota to give us timelines and guidelines for these programs. In the meantime, we are working on staffing plans that will allow us to administer these programs effectively.

4. **New Associate Executive Director.** After an extensive search that included internal and external candidates, I am pleased to announce that I have hired

April 21, 2021 Board Minutes
Page 4 of 10
Clara Castillejos Krause for the Associate Executive Director position. Clara has worked at Three Rivers for over 11 years in a variety of roles, working in Energy Assistance, Weatherization, and Housing where she is currently our Asset Manager. Clara is someone who has repeatedly shown an ability to take on new tasks and responsibilities with gusto. She has strong organizational and leadership skills, with high standards and a super eye for details. Clara is a native of Cancun, Mexico, and currently lives with her family in Pine Island. We will be working to fill Clara’s position before she starts her new role.

5. **Head Start COLA.** Each year, the federal Office of Head Start awards agencies a grant to cover a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). We have just been notified of the COLA for 2021, and we plan to use the funds to pay for the COLA the Board of Directors approved for staff in December 2020. Because it’s the federal government, we need the Board of Directors to officially accept the COLA. Krystal Dube will be sending a separate email with the information, and asking you to respond with your vote. Note that this is NOT approving an additional increase, just accepting funds that will allow us to cover the pay increase you already approved in December.

**Policy Action Items**

Jenny reviewed the consent agenda items.

**Consent Agenda Items**
- December 2020 FINAL Financial Reports
- March Financial Reports
- Mutual of America – Q1, 2021 Statement
- February & March Head Start Credit Card Expenses Summary

**Contracts, Awards & Contributions**

**Received**
- Minnesota Housing Finance Agency - $250,000 - Funding for Outreach & Navigation staff to support clients in accessing federal Rental Assistance funds administered by the state
- Minnesota Department of Transportation - $421,520.55 - Additional State Funds to cover local share requirements of public transportation program due to ongoing effects of Covid-19 pandemic
- Minnesota Department of Human Services - estimated 35,500 - continuing funds to support the Northfield Child Care
- Minnesota Department of Commerce - $20,167.81 – A16 Proactive funds to increase household’s capacity to sustain housing and resolve / prevent energy crises.
- United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha and Pierce Counties - $21,350 - funding to provide shelter and childcare for clients affected by Covid in Goodhue County
- United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha and Pierce Counties - $5,000 -funding to prevent homelessness in Goodhue & Wabasha Counties
- United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha and Pierce Counties - $7,500 -support HART Volunteer transportation program in Goodhue & Wabasha Counties

April 21, 2021 Board Minutes
Page 5 of 10
• Minnesota Housing Finance Agency - $45,000 - Additional funds to support planning process for housing development in conjunction with Bear Creek Church/Crossroads Campus
• Minnesota Department of Education - $4,956.74 - additional 2020-2021 program year funding to provide Head Start programs and expand services to low income children

Not Received
• None

Grants & Requests Submitted or to be Submitted
• Minnesota Department of Human Services - $1,105,666 - Renewal of 2 year Community Action Block Grant and MN Community Action Grants - flexible funding to provide a variety of programs in our 4 county service area
• Department of Health and Human Services Office of Head Start - 50,864 - One time funding for COVID-19 response actions or activities

Monitoring Reports & Responses
• Minnesota Housing Finance Agency – Covid-19 Housing Assistance Program (Chap) monitoring review letter dated April 1, 2021, and Three Rivers response.
• Minnesota Department of Commerce – Email dated April 1, 2021 with results of Energy Assistance monitoring

Approved Purchases between $10,000 and $150,000
• Hatch, Inc. - $43,956 – Smart boards for additional Head Start classrooms
• Paragon Development Systems – $17,747.52 - 27 laptop computers
• Swivl - $10,860 – live video technology for Head Start classrooms

Heather Robins made a motion to approve the consent agenda, Maritza Navarro seconded, motion unanimously approved.

*Individual Action Items

a) 2022-2023 MN Community Action Plan

Jenny reviewed the 2022-2023 MN Community Action Plan that will be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Human Services - Office of Economic Opportunity. The plan included a narrative, program summary, budget, performance indicators (outcomes), and services that will be provided. The total amount of funding anticipated from the Minnesota Community Action Grant and the Community Services Block Grant is $1.1 million over two years.

Paul said he is fascinated by the extent of the report and asked how it is all put together? Jenny said that every department is in charge of reviewing and updating their sections. The format of the report allows us to show how we link where we see the needs and what our activities and anticipated outcomes are. We report on the outcomes of this plan each year.
Paul Drotos made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 MN Community Action Plan, Ruth Boudet seconded, motion unanimously approved.

b) Knollwood Apartments, Pine Island, MN Project Update & Board Action Request - Approve the two (2) attached resolutions: Exhibit A Resolution #2021-4 and Exhibit B resolution #2021-5 for the Knollwood Apartments Project.

Leah reviewed the project update and resolutions.

Meredith Erickson made a motion to approve Knollwood Apartment Resolution #2021-4 and #2021-5, Jo Anne Krier seconded, motion unanimously approved.

c) Approval of the CoC (Continuum of Care) Governance Charter

Jenny reviewed the CoC Governance Charter.

Staff and Board discussed the history of the CoC and their role of coordination for the region. There are some efforts for similar work on smaller scale in the City of Red Wing and Goodhue County. The CoC is more of an umbrella that helps agencies that are funded federally across the region, but they do not get as deep as what Red Wing and Goodhue County are looking at doing at the local level. That local effort can coordinate with the larger CoC.

Heather Robins made a motion to approve the changes to the CoC Governance Charter, Erick Maki seconded, motion unanimously approved.

d) Proposal to close Mutual of America investment account and move proceeds to interest bearing checking account

Jenny & Kindra reported on a small investment account that was set up many years ago. The account is very small and there is an administrative burden. The bank has been sold and we do not have a contact at the new bank so it has been impossible to administer. Staff recommend closing the account. The funds will be moved to our existing account at Home Federal Savings Bank.

Paul Drotos made a motion to close Mutual of America investment account, Maritza Navarro seconded, motioned unanimously approved.

e) The national office of Head Start has approved an increase in funding to cover an annual Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) of 1.22% which equates to $22,189. We are asking the Board to ratify its electronic vote (approved via email) to approve a 1.22% COLA increase to all Head Start employees effective May 1, 2021. In December 2020, the Board of Directors approved an agency wide 3% hourly wage increase for all agency employees, which included Head Start. The 1.22% percent COLA will be used to offset costs associated with the 3% hourly wage increase. We reviewed and updated our wage/salary scale and have raised the minimum hourly wage for each Head Start position by 1.22% percent.

April 21, 2021 Board Minutes
Page 7 of 10
Meredith Erickson made a motion to ratify its electronic vote to approve a 1.22% COLA increase to all Head Start employees effective May 1, 2021, Heather Robins seconded, motion unanimously approved.

f) Head Start Transportation Waiver

Head Start has a rule that requires someone ride the bus with the children. It is difficult to find volunteers who can ride the bus. For the last several years we have received a waiver because of the technology available on our buses, such as cameras and GPS tracking. Staff are again asking for the waiver.

The board asked if there have been any incidents or safety issues with not having an aide on the bus? Jane said that they have not and that the technology has made it very safe.

Ruth Boudet made a motion for staff to apply for the Head Start Transportation Waiver, Jo Anne Krier seconded, motion unanimously approved.

g) Closing the existing bank account at Bank of Zumbrota

Jenny said that yesterday she found out that our bank information was accidentally leaked by a funder at a training. Kindra has called the bank to get it resolved and having a difficult time with the bank trying to figure out a solution. Jenny and Kindra recommended closing this account and moving funds to our new bank at Home Federal with the rest of the funding and banking activity.

Paul Drotos made a motion to approve closing the existing bank account at Bank of Zumbrota, Erick Maki seconded, motion unanimously approved.

Policy Discussion Item

a) Eastside Apartments, Rochester, MN Project Update

Leah gave the project background and update on this project that will include 40 units of affordable, workforce housing. Nine units will be supportive housing. The project has support of the City and the Rochester Housing Coalition.

b) Underwood Terrace, Lake City, MN Project Summary

Leah gave the project summary of this 32-unit apartment complex that is being proposed in Lake City, with the support of the EDA. There will be one, two, and three bedroom units. Eight units will be supportive housing. We will be holding meetings with the public and city council to solicit feedback and gain support for an application to Minnesota Housing.

c) Bank Transition Update

Previously the Board approved moving our primary banking to Home Federal
Savings Bank. Kindra reported that the bulk of the funds got transferred March 1st. Everything has been going smoothly for about a month. We have gotten excellent service and support, and we like the technology that is available. She is giving them an A+ rating so far.

d) Zumbrota Bus Garage

Jenny gave an update on the Zumbrota Bus Garage. We have been leasing space in Zumbrota and would like to put in a 3-stall garage on our own property, next to the new addition. Staff will gather proposals and bring them back to the board for discussion.

Board members made suggestions on gathering information on several items, including: cost of a 4th stall to plan for the future, heated vs unheated space, prepping for electric charging stations making possible an electric fleet in the future fleet, possibility of solar panels on the building.

e) COVID Emergency Assistance Summary and what’s next Summary, Renters checklist, Landlord checklist.

Jenny gave the Covid Emergency Assistance Summary and announced that RentHelpMN program launched yesterday. This program is to help renters who have been affected by COVID-19 pay rent and utilities. We are expecting to see an increase in calls for assistance and we have extra staff ready to help people with their applications.

Paul made a comment that a lot of people are one paycheck away from poverty and he’s glad that we help with auto repairs because the bills can add up fast. Sometimes it does not take very much to push some families over the edge and it is great that Three Rivers can help bridge that gap.

Advisory Committee

a) Head Start Policy Council meeting minutes from March 16, 2021 is on agenda packet pages 113-117. Next meeting on May 18, 2021.

Maritza, our Policy Council Representative, is here if anyone has any questions. There were none.

Comments from the public: None

Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting: 9:00 a.m., May 19, 2021, by Zoom, Three Rivers Community Action Board Room, 1414 North Star Drive, Zumbrota MN, or Three Rivers Community Action Faribault Conference Room, Faribo Town Square, 201 South Lyndale Avenue, Faribault.

Galen thanked Jenny, department directors and staff for the great job they have been doing during COVID-19. Three Rivers has a very talented and intelligent staff and he
thanked everyone for the hard work they have been doing and are very much appreciated.

Paul thanked Galen for his leadership, and Galen thanked the board members for being dedicated to the cause of Three Rivers and that the board plays an important part in its success.

Adjournment

Julie Steberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Maritza Navarro seconded, motion unanimously approved.

[Signature]
Chair

May 19, 2021
Date