

BENTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES BOARD  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
APRIL 20, 2021

The Benton County Human Services Board met in regular session on April 6, 2021 in the Benton County Board Room in Foley, MN with Board members Beth Schlangen (virtual), Scott Johnson, Ed Popp, Jared Gapinski and Steve Heinen present. Call to order by Chair Heinen was at 10:04 AM.

Human Services Director Robert Cornelius requested to add to the Human Services agenda a discussion on the Zoning Board Meeting with the City of St. Cloud. Johnson/Popp to approve the amended agenda. Motion carried unanimously per roll call vote.

Gapinski/Johnson to approve the Consent Agenda: 1) approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 6, 2021 as written and 2) to add the discussion of the Zoning Board Meeting with the City of St. Cloud. Motion carried unanimously per roll call vote.

Cornelius asked the County Board for representation at the Zoning Board Meeting with the City of St. Cloud regarding the new homeless facilities in St. Cloud and the potential growth of homeless population in St. Cloud – Benton County. The situation involves upcoming St. Cloud city decisions to allow two (new) warming houses to become homeless shelters and a third facility is looking to relocate to the AmericInn on Hwy 10. Gapinski said he will attend and plans on speaking on behalf of Benton County. Cornelius also plans to attend and to speak at the meeting. Gapinski is concerned that “if the City of St. Cloud can vote on this, but we (Benton County) are not allowed to vote on this, then why are we responsible for paying for this?” Cornelius stated that’s why we need to get involved and let our voices be heard. County Administrator, Monty Headley stated his concerns that “it sounds like this has been something that the City of St. Cloud has been working on for months, and this has only come to our attention a few weeks ago and why were we not invited to be a part of that discussion?” Cornelius stated that Benton County hasn’t provided any type of capacity or any resources to help this and Cornelius found that Benton County has the most workers per capita of the three other counties in our region, but it comes down to economy of scale. Second, we have not put a penny toward our homeless population, while Stearns County had three people who were on a grant that were working with the homeless population for the entire St. Cloud area, so it was a situation where we didn’t have to get involved. The grant has now gone away. It was then brought to our attention to start working on that, and a CARES package of \$20,000 was approved to help with that. The County Board also worked to get us from 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> in tax base to 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the County Board at that time had a huge responsibility trying to get our taxes back in line while attracting businesses to Benton County. Cornelius urged attendees to come to the meeting with solutions to this issue and to let them know we are willing to help and we will commit to a community effort of all three counties instead of all of it being moved onto Benton County.

Chair Heinen adjourned the meeting at 10:07 AM.

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Steven J. Heinen, Chair  
Benton County Human Services Board

ATTEST:

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Montgomery Headley  
Benton County Administrator