

Finance Committee Meeting Douglas County, Nebraska

Tuesday, April 15, 2014

The meeting convened at 1:03 p.m. in Room 903 of the Omaha-Douglas Civic Center, 1819 Farnam Street, Omaha, NE 68183. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is located on the wall near the entrance of the room. A notice of the meeting was published in the April 8, 2014 issue of The Daily Record. County Commissioners present at the start of the meeting were Clare Duda, PJ Morgan, Mary Ann Borgeson, Mike Boyle, Marc Kraft, and Pam Tusa. Others present at the start of the meeting included Joe Lorenz, Diane Carlson, Catherine Hall, Marcos San Martin, and Kaieva Williams of Administration; Deb Redding and Melissa Sewick of General Assistance; and Dan Esch of the Clerk/Comptroller's office. Commissioners Duda and Morgan conducted the meeting.

1. Preliminary 2014/2015 County budget review with selected department heads and elected officials.

General Assistance

- General Assistance's current budget for 2013/14: \$6,902,844
- General Assistance's budget target for 2014/15: \$6,930,879
- General Assistance's budget request for 2014/15: No specific amount yet

County Commissioner Chris Rodgers and Patrick Bloomingdale of Administration entered the meeting during this discussion; Ms. Williams left the meeting during this discussion. Speaking during the General Assistance budget discussion were Mr. Lorenz, Ms. Redding, Commissioner Boyle, Commissioner Morgan, Commissioner Borgeson, Commissioner Rodgers, Mr. Bloomingdale, Ms. Sewick, Commissioner Tusa, and Commissioner Kraft. Highlights from the discussion included the following:

- Ms. Redding said she believes General Assistance's 2014/15 budget will come in at a 2% cut from its 2013/14 budget, but she doesn't have a final figure yet.
- Mr. Lorenz said General Assistance's budget is back to where it was 10 years ago.
- Ms. Redding said there has been an increase in burial assistance.
 - Ms. Redding said General Assistance does the same type of verifications for burial assistance applications as it does for applications for general assistance.
 - Ms. Redding said 33% of General Assistance's cremation applications are for unclaimed bodies.
 - Commissioner Boyle asked Ms. Redding if there was a policy about not cremating bodies of unclaimed minors.
 - Ms. Redding said cremation is the only assistance that is offered, but that situation has never occurred with a child.
 - Commissioners Boyle and Morgan asked that General Assistance consider instating a policy where the bodies of unclaimed minors are not cremated.

- Ms. Redding said General Assistance is increasing its medical client aid by \$100,000 for its 2014/15 budget for physical therapy and occupational therapy expenses.
 - Ms. Redding said currently the physical therapy and occupational therapy charges for Primary Healthcare patients come out of the Health Center's budget. In 2014/15, General Assistance will start paying that expense, instead of the Health Center.
- Ms. Redding said there will be a \$10,000 increase to client bus tickets, due to an increase in clients participating in the Job Training Work Readiness program.
 - Ms. Redding said if a client is potentially eligible for transportation services through DHHS, General Assistance does require the client to apply for that.
 - Commissioner Boyle said he thinks Metro Transit should start contributing to this service.
 - Commissioner Morgan suggested contacting the Metro Board of Directors.
 - Commissioner Rodgers said before approving a Metro Board appointment, the County Board could ask the nominated individual to attend the County Board meeting and discuss this issue with him/her.
 - Ms. Sewick said General Assistance has approached Metro about providing a 10-ride bus pass for General Assistance clients, but Metro hasn't been very receptive.
- Ms. Redding said if Medicaid is expanded, the Primary Healthcare clients would become eligible.
 - Ms. Redding said right now the clients are below the federal poverty guidelines.
- Commissioner Rodgers said it may be a good idea to look into a co-op insurance program.
 - Commissioner Boyle said he would like to hear from Tracy Krause of Aon about whether or not clients at General Assistance can be insured as a group or if inmates at Corrections can be insured as a group.
- Ms. Redding told Commissioner Boyle that General Assistance does have an attorney on staff who handles cases involving people who appeal the loss of benefits.
 - Commissioner Boyle said he'd like to know what the rate is for denying benefits.
- Commissioners Borgeson, Boyle, Rodgers, and Morgan talked about re-engaging in discussions about forming partnerships with federally funded health clinics.

2. Other business.

There was no other business.

The meeting adjourned at 1:44 p.m.