

Child and Youth Services Committee Meeting
Douglas County, Nebraska

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

The meeting convened at 1:02 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 26, 2017, issue of *The Daily Record*. County Commissioners present at the meeting were Chris Rodgers, Mike Boyle, P.J. Morgan, and Mary Ann Borgeson. Others present at the meeting included Patrick Bloomingdale, Catherine Hall, and Pam Murphy, Administration; Pat Adams, Douglas County Attorney's office; Brad Alexander and Mark LeFlore, Douglas County Youth Center; and Constance Mierendorf, Douglas County Clerk/Comptroller's office. Chris Rodgers chairs the Committee.

A video recording of the meeting is available on the Douglas County Website:

<http://commissioners.douglascounty-ne.gov/board-meetings/videos>

Douglas County Youth Center

- Commissioner Rodgers thanked Mr. Alexander for his presentation at the Board meeting and gave him a sample of the Corrections report Dr. Foxall presents each month to the Board. Commissioner Rodgers said the Youth Center should report to the Board each month.
- Brad Alexander said Commissioner Duda is interested in establishing a foundation for the Youth Center.
- Commissioner Rodgers said conversations have begun about building a Juvenile Justice Center and that Commissioner Duda wanted to establish a foundation to help fund the site.
- Commissioner Borgeson said the County has other foundations and the option should be available to help fund the Youth Center. Formal steps need to be taken to create the foundation: filing articles of incorporation; appointing a board, etc.
- Mr. Alexander said the Youth Center would be a participant in the process.
- Mr. Alexander said the main concern at the Center is the PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) compliance that requires a staffing ratio of 1:8. Once the population exceeds 8 in the staff secure unit, another staff member must be added and over time is an issue. The Youth Center went from 120 secure beds to 80 and currently 93 youth are at the facility. Staff secure might have to be re-located.
- Commissioner Borgeson asked if other facilities would take these youth.

- Mr. Alexander replied that youth who are in staff secure are usually asked to leave other facilities and are sent to the Youth Center because they are “runners” or they are aggressive. The Center could change an existing area back to secure by retooling doors and locks at little cost. That would increase the capacity to 96.
- Mark LeFlore said the only other facility available for staff secure is Sarpy County.
- Mr. Alexander said the responsibility for placement and funding of youth in staff secure rests with Juvenile Probation. Probation determines where they go and also pays for them. He has had one meeting to discuss staff secure with Probation. The current capacity at the Center is 24 with the average population of 10 in 2016.
- Commissioner Borgeson raised the question of whether the Youth Center wanted to continue to do staff secure.
- Mr. Alexander suggested a meeting with Mary Visek, Chief Probation Officer, within the next month.
- Commissioner Boyle asked how the move away from staff secure would affect staffing and Mr. Alexander said it would not reduce staffing; youth would be reclassified to meet existing requirements and meet the 1:8 ratio.
- Mr. LeFlore said the Center is available to take more students into their programs. EPIC, for example, can take 15 students and it has only 8; it peaked at 11.
- Commissioner Borgeson said she would like to have a discussion about how JAC (Juvenile Assessment Center) is making decisions about referrals. The JAC decision-making may be too limited. There are a number of good programs available.
- Mr. LeFlore agreed that it is a challenge getting youth into programs. Last year they received only 2 from diversion in the Home Program. This will be a bigger challenge next year if the Sherwood Foundation funds the EPIC day program.
- Commissioner Rodgers said the conversation about enrolling more youth from diversion into Youth Center programs needs to occur at the next committee meeting.
- Commissioner Rodgers said Jerry Leahy has done some preliminary planning for a Juvenile Justice Center at the 42nd street campus. With the addition of a 7th Juvenile Court judge, the discussion about a new center needs to occur. The question is how to finance the center.
- Commissioner Borgeson said the Juvenile Justice Center has been talked about for years and rather than remodeling the 6th floor of the City-County building for an additional judge, the time has come to discuss the creation of a Juvenile Justice Center.
- Commissioner Boyle asked if a component for mental health might also be included.
- Commissioner Rodgers said the NFC (Nebraska Family Collaborative), which contracts with the state for case management, is also looking for a new building, and it might be worthwhile to collaborate with them.
- Commissioner Morgan asked how often Mr. Alexander thought a report from the Youth Center should be presented.
- Commissioner Rodgers said the reports need to occur monthly, but the reports would not be as in depth as the report Mr. Alexander presented at today’s Board meeting.

- Commissioner Morgan suggested that 3 of the Board members go to the Youth Center for a walk-through or participate in a graduation or other activity that would be helpful.
- Mr. Alexander welcomed the idea.
- Commissioner Borgeson asked how the Board could adopt a unit at the Youth Center.
- Mr. Alexander said Greg Hepburn coordinates Community Partners.
- Mr. LeFlore said the youth who are involved in the lunches with community members are being recognized for their achievements: earning a credit or working through an accommodation on their IEP (Individualized Education Plan). The lunches are a way to reward and encourage students for their progress. They are held on the first Friday of each month. Nancy King is the volunteer coordinator.
- Commissioner Rodgers said there is Community Based Aid money for Youth Initiated Mentors and Mr. LeFlore said the Center has done some mentoring partnerships through Midlands. They target youth who are just out of the juvenile justice system and try to match them with someone they know to mentor them.
- Commissioner Boyle asked if any work was being done with Hispanic groups. Mr. LeFlore said the Center has scheduled a tentative meeting in 2 weeks with Mr. Albert Varas, Executive Director of the Latino Center of the Midlands (formerly known as the Chicano Awareness Center), and 6 other South Omaha leaders.
- Commissioner Borgeson said she would like to work with the Office on Aging and resurrect the foster grandparent program.
- Mr. LeFlore spoke about the value of the family engagement liaison at the Center. Family visits are up 41%, which is a strong contributor to the success of the youth at the Center. Parents are contacted directly and are very appreciative of the level of caring the liaison provides. The multi-disciplinary treatment team also meets weekly to help chart the best path for youth success.
- Mr. LeFlore said the need still exists to have youth evaluated more quickly. There is a need for a psychiatrist to prescribe medication and to do evaluations that could cut the length of stay for some youth by 50%. The challenge is that there are too few psychiatrists available to do this work. The Youth Center is looking for resources to do those evaluations.
- Mr. Alexander said Probation and Boys Town have a contract to do psychiatric evaluations; the Center provides space for evaluations.

The meeting adjourned at 1:41 P.M.