



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

WORKING SESSION

October 20, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rabhi at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room, Administration Building, 220 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Comms. Bergman, Brabec, Gunn, Peterson, Ping, Prater, Rabhi, Sizemore, Conan Smith, Dan Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT: Comm. Turner

OTHERS PRESENT: Verna McDaniel, County Administrator; Kelly Belknap, Interim Deputy County Administrator; Brian Mackie, Prosecuting Attorney; Tina Gavalier, Finance; Ken Schrader, ITS; Cheryl Perry, County Administration; Jason Brooks, Clerk's Office; various citizens; and members of the press.

Roll Call

Citizen Participation

Marcia Bombyk, Professor Social Work at EMU, neighborhood organizer in Ypsilanti, read a letter from Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez, adult graduate of Headstart. In her letter the congresswoman asserted that enrollment in Headstart can help break the cycle of poverty.

John Franks, proud parent and Headstart representative. He reported that Headstart prepared him for school. He stated that his son is enrolled in Headstart. He told the board that he is now working on his Bachelor's degree and that his son has benefited enormously from the Headstart program.

Jemma Wallace stated that her son is the most hyper kid she's ever seen. She reported that she has been trying to teach her child for a long time but has seen amazing improvement since she enrolled him in the program. She mentioned that the Headstart program is excellent with her son whom she characterizes as being "border line" ADHD. She encouraged the board to maintain the program.

Jill Koeppe, employee of Headstart, stated that she choose to teach at Ypsilanti Headstart because she was familiar with the area. She reported that she worked hard to get the qualifications necessary to teach there. She stated that the people she works with are very hard working and dedicated to teaching. She asserted that Headstart is a wonderful program.

Diana Bowman, teacher with Headstart, reported that she became involved with Headstart 25 years ago when she gave birth to a brain damaged daughter. She stated that she enrolled her daughter in Headstart 25 years ago. She reported that a Headstart teacher changed her life when she gave her a new way to approach her daughter's disability. She encouraged the board not to cut funding for the program.

Michelle Trummel, homeowner, mother, and teacher asserted that the meeting tonight felt as though it was merely a formality. She reported that there are over 40 Headstart employees. She added that all of those employees will lose their job if the County lets its grantee status with the program lapse. She then stated that if Headstart did not have a grantee she would lose both her job and her house.

Natalia Harris stated that she came to the meeting to voice support for Washtenaw County Headstart. She reported that she has enjoyed being a part of this program because the staff has helped her to achieve positive goals for both her and her daughter. She added that she felt that Headstart provided her daughter with the foundation she would

need to be successful in school. She reported that Headstart taught her daughter some life skills including how to prepare food for herself. She asserted that college starts at Headstart.

Melodie Tolbert, staff person at Washtenaw County Headstart, encouraged the board to rethink Headstart funding. She argued that it was a choice between funding Headstart now or more prisons later. She stated that the program needs the support of the board.

Nicole Smith stated that even though her children have only been enrolled in the Headstart program for a month she has witnessed an incredible improvement in their behavior. She reported that it has dramatically improved the sociability of her youngest daughter. She told the board that her eldest daughter has returned from Headstart with great drawings. She stated that the Headstart program is giving her family food and providing her daughters with home made meals while they're at school.

Shirley Beckley, grandparent with a grandson, reported that her middle aged children were involved with Headstart so she has been involved with the program for a long time. She hopes that the county will not cut the program.

Tiffany Gore, mother of a 23 year old son, reported that her son got a lot out of the program and that it helped him to overcome a disability. She stated that her son now attends Michigan Tech. She mentioned that her three year old daughter was diagnosed with an adjustment disorder. Tiffany reported that the Headstart program has made her daughters life easier. She encouraged the board to maintain the Headstart program.

Wadler Fleurina thanked the board for the opportunity to speak tonight. He reported that his two children are enrolled in the Headstart program. He stated that he is thrilled with the education that his two children have been receiving at Headstart. He added that in his home country, Haiti, there are not educational opportunities like Headstart. He stated that Headstart is the future for the community's kids and he then implored the board not to cut funding.

"Unidentified Citizen" reported that her nephew spent a period of time in a shelter and has subsequently suffered from anxiety. She stated that the Headstart program has helped her nephew. (look up her speech online)

Jenita Holbrook, from Kansas City, MO, stated that she grew up next to crack houses and lived in a neighborhood that was subject to drive-bys. She reported that she lost 2 brothers in less than a year to murder. She asserted that Headstart breaks the cycle of violence.

Pastor Dwight Walls reported that he came to the board meeting because he feels that this is an important issue. He stated that the County has an opportunity to preserve a program that has been around since the 1960's. He mentioned that his sister was one of the first people involved in the Headstart program. He added that she was part of a study to track the effectiveness of the program. According to Pastor Dwight Walls the results of the study showed that Headstart helped the students in almost all aspects of their lives. He invited the board to go through the budget with him and look for money for the program.

Caryette Fenner, President of AFSCME Local 2733, stated that her daughter had an incredible experience with Headstart. She reported that her daughter is now working on her Master's. She mentioned that at one point in her life Headstart employees encouraged her to go back to school and get a job.

Flo Burke reported that her niece had attended Headstart. She stated that she had recently attended her niece's wedding. She hypothesized that Headstart was instrumental to her niece's success. She noted that the program referred to by the pastor was really about pre-schools not Headstart specifically.

Sarah Burg, business owner, stated that she has two children who have been involved with the program and one who is currently enrolled in Headstart. She stated that she does not know where she would be without the program. She reported that without this program she would not be able to go to work or afford daycare. She stated that she has a Master's degree and is not a former Headstart student but she wants her boys to go to college, which they are already talking about.

Commissioner Follow-Up to Citizen Participation

Comm. Conan Smith thanked the audience for coming out and sharing their stories. He reported that he has not talked to a single commissioner who questions the value of the program. He stated that the County needed to be cautious that it was not so arrogant as to assume that it was the only or the best provider of any given service. He went on to say that the board must be sensitive to the fact that there are other critical services that must be provided in the community. He stated that the board must be smart about approaching those services in a creative way so that as many services as possible may be maintained. He assured the audience that the audience was not there to get rid of Headstart.

Comm. Peterson asked about the order of the agenda, wondering whether Headstart would be addressed first?

Comm. Rabhi responded that he would be arranging the agenda to take Headstart first.

Discussion Items:

Outside Professional Service Contracts – Tina Gavalier, County Finance Analyst, Kelly Belknap, Interim Deputy County Administrator Tina Gavalier and Kelly Belknap gave the presentation (on file in the County Clerk's office).

Comm. Ping asked what is the waiver. Tina Gavalier responded that it is just to waive the RFP process.

Comm. Prater asked what the scope of work was and what does it cost? Tina Gavalier responded that the RFP outlines scope and then they outline the cost. She stated that a contract is written at that hourly rate with a maximum of x. Comm. Prater stated that there are two contracts on here that expire in 2025 for legal services. He asked if those are retainers. He went on to ask what the original amount meant and if that changed in time. Tina Gavalier responded that it could if the contract is amended. Comm. Prater asked why would there be a 14 year contract. Tina Gavalier responded that she did not know the details without looking at the contract. Comm. Ping responded that she knew that we bid out for Vanoverbeke because he is the pension attorney. Comm. Prater asked why there is a contract that extends till 2025. Kelly Belknap responded saying that Administration will find out and let you know. Comm. Prater asked if Reach & Reach have a contract. Tina Gavalier responded that she can check for the commissioner. Comm. Prater stated that it is recommended that contracts are rebid every 5 years. He asked if that was a County policy. Kelly Belknap responded that it is not a policy. Comm. Gunn stated that the County did an RFP for auditing.

Head Start –Community and Economic Development, Patricia Horne McGee, Head Start

Patricia Horne McGee gave the presentation (on file in the County Clerk's office).

Comm. Ping asked if Headstart is completely free to its students. She asked if the program is available to people who could pay to come. Patricia McGee said it is sometimes open to people to pay but typically only to parents whose children have disability. She then added that it is a federal guideline that prevents people from paying.

Comm. Peterson stated that ending poverty is the key to breaking the cycle. He reported that he has worked for everything he has and that he does not want a hand out. He said that enrollment in Headstart is not a handout but an opportunity. He stated that the lives saved are the trophies for human services. He then said that Headstart speaks for itself. He reported that he had no idea that the people of the board he sits on were discussing cutting funding to Headstart. He stated that he wanted to know how this was possible. Comm. Rabhi stated that the process is that if the County gives up grantee status then it is out the hands of the board. Comm. Peterson reported that he is concerned that there is backroom dealing taking place. He raised concerns about who would take over responsibility for Headstart if funding was cut. He praised Patricia McGee's leadership over Headstart. Comm. Peterson stated that he would like to have a second meeting on this subject. He asked Patricia McGee if she has been asked to put together an alternative budget. Pat McGee responded no but that she included in the budget options for cuts that could be made. Comm. Peterson asked how many years, the budget had decreased. Patricia McGee responded that the budget has been decreasing since 2006. Comm. Peterson stated that he is anticipating a follow up meeting.

Comm. Rabhi stated that he shares some questions about Head Start and is curious to hear about the WISD meeting.

Comm. Prater stated that all he was doing was pointing out that there are 16 different departments that got increases. He added that the total amount of the increases is in excess of 6 million dollars.

Comm. Conan Smith clarified that those are not line item increases they are reallocations of internal expenses that were previously allocated to single lump sum lines. He noted that this meant that County budgets were not dramatically increasing. He added that he wished Comm. Peterson was in the room to hear the explanation of the budget that he will have to vote on. He said that the actual amount of money the County has is going down and that departments are not being overfunded. He stated that this is a tight budget with no fat on it.

Comm. Bergman stated that the board does not sneak things on the budget.

Comm. Prater stated that the amount of the increase was \$3 million.

Comm. Conan Smith reiterated that what was happening was that the budget was decreasing and it may appear that some departments received more but that this was only a reallocation of money.

Comm. Sizemore stated that there may be sources of money from the county. There are some buildings that could potentially be sold.

County Administrator's Report

None

Items for Current/Future Discussion

None

Pending

None

Citizen Participation

None

Commissioners Follow-up to Citizen Participation

None

Adjournment

Comm. Gunn seconded by Comm. Bergman moved that the meeting be adjourned until November 3rd, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Yousef Rabhi, Chair

Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Peter Simms, Deputy Clerk

APPROVED: November 3, 2011