

Washtenaw County  
**Community Action Board**  
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: March 26, 2007

Meeting Time: 6:00 PM

Members Present: Cyril Berry, Elette Collins, Shoshana DeMaria, Joseph Dulin, Michael DuRussel, Stephanie Gordon, Mandy Grewal, Juanita House, Cynthia Maritato, Brenda McKinney, Hurley Myers, Rolland Sizemore Jr, Donn Wolf, Trudy Swanson, Cassandra McCallister

Guests Present: Thomas Manchester, Diane Keller

Staff Present: Trena Rusher, Jenny Bivens, Susan Sweet Scott, Aaron Kraft, Tiffany Lucas, Justin M. Al-Igoe

I. Call to Order

DuRussel called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

II. Approval of Agenda

DuRussel moved to approve the meeting agenda. Dulin supported. The meeting agenda was approved.

III. Approval of Minutes

DuRussel moved to approve the 11/27/06 meeting minutes. Wolf supported. The meeting minutes were approved.

IV. Report of the Chair

A. Paradise Manor Fire Family Fund

- Commissioner Peterson was on the scene the night of the fire and called upon the community action department of etc's to mobilize immediately to bring together its community partners to make sure that the needs of the families affected by the fire were met.
- Jenny Bivens was the point person of the Emergency Response Team and worked with the County to set up the Paradise Manor Fire Family Fund.
- There were four funerals paid for from the funds raised and residual funds will be funneled through community agencies to the families' assigned case managers to ensure their needs are met.
- This very timely and organized response demonstrated our readiness to respond, should another emergency happen in our community.
- The group will also be working together to advocate more preventative action.
- The building at Paradise Manor has been declared unsafe to enter. Walter Norris at the Ypsilanti Housing Commission is working with the insurance agency to determine plans for the building.

## B. MCAAA Report (Cyril Berry)

- The MCAAA will be holding its annual quarterly meeting on Wednesday, April 25, 2007.
- Al Sharpton will be a special guest along with the First Gentlemen.
- Rusher interjected that if any Community Action Board member was interested in attending they should inform etc's staff.
- Shoshanna DeMaria, Trudy Swanson, Elette Collins, and Brenda McKinney raised their hands to express their interest in attending.

## C. Report of the Board of Commissioners (Sizemore)

- Commissioner Sizemore thanked etc's for all the work it has done with the West Willow Fires in addition to the Paradise Manor efforts.

## V. Early Childhood Development is Workforce Development

- Three or Four years ago the County put together a committee to implement success by six, but felt the program would be difficult to implement statewide.
- This idea pulled from the Hi-Scope Perry School study, which found that children exposed to preschool had a 1/3 benefit margin, meaning these children were 1/3 more likely to finish high school, go to college, get married, and find employment.
- The committee still felt the business community was missing from the process, which would be needed to help this initiative go well, and took the idea to the Michigan Association of Chambers. From this the toolkit was created. It has been renovated twice since creation.
- This initiative is based on the belief that parents are the first teachers. This is based on studies that show that the brain of a newborn will change in response to outside stimulus.
- At birth most of the neurons humans have are present. Whenever a child is exposed to new experiences more neurons are created. Normal brain development will have a lot of activity and strong emotional connections with others can super charge learning. A neglected child has minimized potential because she has not learned to love or care, and the brain changes from being focused on learning to being focused on survival.
- Children don't usually come in contact with certified personnel until kindergarten.
- This presentation will be made to community action boards and others throughout the state, and will support the First Steps program.
- The First Steps program works with parents to make sure that students are developmentally ready for school.
- The immediate action interested persons should take locally is creating awareness, in the form of letters, and word of mouth.
- The committee will be putting together an outline of the steps that need to be taken.
- Volunteer work will be available and opportunities for training to be a local presenter will also be available.

## VI. Report of the Executive Director

### A. Local/State. Federal Updates

#### *Federal*

- David Bradley has been on the hunt trying to keep funds for community action based domestic programs.
- Democrats have made a commitment to these programs.
- David Bradley does expect that CAA's will see an increase despite the Iraqi fund increases.

*State*

- We are trying to build a relationship with Governor Granholm to support her No Worker Left Behind program.

*Local*

- We will need to make sure that we are ready to deal with the huge re-tool that will be needed once the ACH plants close. We have begun to have talks with the city, and we are trying to re-design the way we approach these situations. We are finding that the workers are not reading at the proper levels, so will need to find a different way to package learning. It should be education with dignity to make it a rewarding experience.
- We must begin retooling these ACH workers to fill good jobs but, making workers realize that they need help is the first step. We must figure out at the same time how to get good jobs into the community.

B. Ypsilanti Gateway Community and Economic Development Corporation Update

- We have three houses currently. We are closing on one and will be closing on the other two within the next couple months.

C. Resolutions

- Wolf moved to approve the resolution on the Michigan Community Action Agency. Meyers supported. The resolution was approved.
- Berry moved to approve the resolution on the emergency food assistance program. Wolf supported. The resolution was approved.

D. Programs Updates

*Housing and Energy*

- Weatherization update - The end of the week will be the end of the fiscal year and is on track to meet the goals.
- The department has been sponsoring energy efficiency workshops to help community members in need. Attendees receive an energy kit and a \$100 voucher towards their DTE energy bill.

*Emergency Services Update*

- There are county funds that will be used for eviction prevention and foreclosure prevention. Have not had any foreclosures yet.
- Things are going well in Senior Nutrition. Over 1900 were served this year.

*Senior Services and Michigan Enrolls*

- The Foster Grandparent program will be at the Kensington Court from 11:30 am to 2:00 PM on
- TEFAP distribution served over 604 households.

- EITC assisted 79 households, and over 130,000 individuals. Taxes are prepared at the Michigan works Service center and at the extension services office.

## VII. Report of the Officers, Committees and Liaisons

### A. Report of Officers (DuRussel)

- There is no report at this time

### B. Workforce Development Board (Wolf)

- Trenda Rushers office has organized a huge effort to help combat the effects the Pfizer layoffs. There is a third revision of the Pfizer Grant that has been officially approved by the state.
- There were over 3100 employees laid off, 70 percent of those employees will be kept by Pfizer. There are 150 administrative professionals that are coming out of Pfizer that will not be kept.

### C. Head Start (Collins)

- Lincoln Schools will not have a head start program.
- Betty Brown has formed a group to teach parents how to fight for their causes within the government.
- There is a new fitness center for the head start staff.
- MSU extension is teaching parents how to make healthy snacks for themselves and their children.
- The dentistry program is going well.
- The Head Start National Conference in San Antonio is coming up.
- DuRussel moves to sponsor Collins for the Head Start Conference. Wolf supports.  
Motion carried.

## VIII. Other Business

- Sizemore reports that there is campaigning to make Rawsonville a class A, four lane road.
- The County is hosting a Community Collaborative for Washtenaw County. There will be representation from both boards and we will pay \$5000.00 to participate.
- The community Collaborative board has elected to have all of the human service agencies at the table on the collaborative.
- DuRussel moves to table approval of the \$5000.00 participation fee until it can be given further consideration.

## IX. Adjournment

DuRussel adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM.

