

Town of Plymouth

80 Main Street

Terryville, Connecticut 06786

Human Services Commission

Telephone: (860)585-4001

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Human Services Special Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2020

I. Call to Order: Chairwoman Sally Bain-Picard called the June 16, 2020, Human Services Commission Virtual Zoom Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Fire Exit Notifications: N/A

II. Attendance: Chairwoman Sally Bain-Picard, Commissioner Cathy Beaudoin, Commissioner Reverend Joel D. Kotila, Commissioner Tracy Dupont, Commissioner Karen Saccu and Lee Ulinskas (Alternate). Also in attendance: Carrie Tedd and Juan Berrios from HRA.

Excused absences: Commissioners Helena Schwalm and Fred Schwalm

III. Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairwoman Sally Bain-Picard led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Invocation:

Reverend Joel gave the invocation.

V. Public Input: N/A

VI. Acceptance of Minutes:

A motion was made by Commissioner Tracy Dupont, seconded by Commissioner Karen Saccu to approve the February 18, 2020 minutes. This motion was approved unanimously.

VII. Human Services Report:

See attached report from HRA.

Case Manager Carrie Tedd gave the case management updates. Carrie stated that phone calls have gone up significantly. People are looking for money while waiting for their unemployment benefits. 211 told them that Human Services gives out grants, which is not correct. No towns are offering that. The Human Services Office offers gifts cards and utility assistance, upon

Erica Colby
TOWN CLERK

2020 JUN 26 AM 11:27

PLYMOUTH, CT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
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approval. Funds have been donated by the Rotary Club, Salvation Army and the Town of Plymouth.

Carrie reported that she applied for the Thomaston Savings Bank COVID grant. Should hear by the end of the month. She applied for basic needs (gift cards for grocery stores). She stated that she is getting a lot of phone calls requesting help with assistance as there is an average waiting time of 10 to 18 weeks before unemployment benefits is received. She reported that Town Hall may possibly be opening up at the end of the month. Many residents prefer to come into the office. Getting a lot of renter's rebate applications. She mails the packets and they return it in the lock box at Town Hall. She received 40 food boxes from the Salvation Army. Carrie gave out 10 food boxes within a few days.

Chairwoman Bain-Picard stated that it was last minute for the Thomaston Savings Bank COVID grant and Carrie worked during the Memorial Day weekend to get the grant in on time. She thanked Carrie and Juan Berrios.

Juan Berrios reported that HRA is getting the Community Services Lock Grant which is funded through the Federal Cares Act that was passed. He is just waiting on approval from the State Department of Social Services. With that grant, they will have a dedicated flexible resource person to assist with rental payments. Residents impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic will qualify. The benefits will be available until 2022. To qualify, the residents have to let them know they were impacted. The amount is up to \$1000.00 and will be a onetime assistance for the 18 month period. It will cover up to two month's rent.

Carrie reported that she joined the Rotary Club. Their meetings are every Wednesday at 8:00 AM. They offered to donate some money but have not given the exact amount. The dues are \$35.00 per quarter and \$11.00 weekly.

Chairwoman Bain-Picard will reach out to Mayor Merchant and Finance Director Ann Marie Rheault to see if that cost can be covered by the Town. If not, the Commissioners agreed to have the costs covered by the Community Fund.

A motion was made by Reverend Joel Kotila, seconded by Karen Saccu that if the Town is unable to pay for the cost of the quarterly dues and weekly fees, then the Community Fund would be utilized. This motion was approved unanimously.

VIII. New Business:

a. Small Wonders Program – Back to School Update – Commissioner Beaudoin reported that she talked to Ann Marie Rheault about a week ago. She stated they are waiting on guidance

from the Governor in reference to what is going to happen with the school year. It is on hold. Everyone is on same page.

b. Financial Records - Chairwoman Bain-Picard reported that the line item of Reserved Eviction - \$1400.00 will be moved over to the Community Fund. It will be available for rental assistance. The Hospice Fund will be renamed to the Scholarship Fund. All of the money is in one account with the Town. It used to be in two accounts. All the money has been returned to the Community Fund with interest. Originally the funds were temporarily used to assist the recent fire victims, by the Town.

c. Senior Gift Bag Program for Christmas 2020 – Chairwoman Bain-Picard reported that in the past years, Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation has been extremely generous. The Commission had received \$1000.00 grant to assist with the purchase of IGA gift cards. Due to COVID-19, the grant guidelines were different. No grant was offered for this. Without the grant, the cost would be \$1500.00 for the 100 gift cards.

Carrie Tedd stated that she received gift cards from United Way and Main Street Foundation. She has five (5) gift cards left.

Commissioner Saccu suggested discussing the gift card purchase at a future meeting. All of the Commissioners were in favor of this as there is still time.

Chairwoman Bain-Picard reported that the non-profit status has been put on hold.

d. COVID-19 relating to spending and/or funding – Chairwoman Bain-Picard reported that she authorized Carrie Tedd to spend \$1000.00 and to document it in an excel spreadsheet. Carrie Tedd has not used that money yet.

A motion was made by Commissioner Karen Saccu, seconded by Commissioner Tracy Dupont to authorize the use of additional spending from the Community Fund to be used during this State of Emergency during the COVID pandemic. We authorize Carrie Tedd to use \$1000.00 to \$3000.00. Then the Commission will review it. This motion was approved unanimously.

IX. New Business:

a. Scholarships - Commissioner Tracy Dupont reported that she received one application. The scholarship was awarded to Julia Zaniewski. The scholarship was \$1000.00. Julia is first in her class. She has impressive grades and does community services. She overcame challenges her sophomore year when her father passed away. She is going to Albany College for pharmacy. The tuition is \$54,000. Commissioner Dupont participated in the motorcade that delivered the scholarships to the recipients.


X. Chairman's Comments: Chairwoman Bain-Picard thanked everyone. She reported that the 501(c) 3 is not forgotten. She will discuss strategies with Commissioner Beaudoin. She does not see a reason to meet in July and August unless something comes up. The Commissioners are in agreement with not having a meeting in July and August.

XI. Council Liaison's Comments: N/A

XII. Adjournment:

There being no further business of the Human Services Commission, a motion was made by Commissioner Karen Saccu, seconded by Commissioner Cathy Beaudoin to adjourn. This motion was approved unanimously. The meeting ended at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Linda Schnaars
Recording Secretary



**Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
Community Services Department**

Plymouth Human Services Monthly Report

May 2020

Submitted by: Carrie Tedd and Juan Berrios

Reporting Period: May 1st, 2020 through May 31st, 2020

| Services | Total Count |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Phone Calls | 372 |
| Walk-ins | 0 |
| Appointments | 20 |
| Rental Assistance | 0 |
| Medicare Savings Program | 0 |
| SNAP Applications/Renewals | 0 |
| Private Fuel Bank | 7 |
| Senior Housing Outreach | 0 |
| Energy Applications | 10 |

HRA COVID-19 Response: Plymouth Town Hall is closed to the public until further notice due to COVID-19. HRA remains committed to providing services for individuals and families during this time period. The Human Services Office continues to be operational during this time and appointments are being conducted through phone and email contact. Several programs such as our Energy Assistance and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs continue to operate virtually. HRA has an established Work from Home plan for all of our Case Management staff. HRA has also provided Carrie with equipment to be able to work remotely as needed. Carrie continues to remain stationed at Town Hall and is following all directives provided by Mayor Merchant during this time.

CSBG CARES Act Funding:

HRA will be receiving CARES Act funding through the Federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). With this additional funding, HRA will be creating a Flexible Resource Fund to assist those who were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with Rental or Mortgage Assistance; Basic Needs; and Employment Supports. The Town of Plymouth is within HRA's catchment area and residents would be able to apply

directly through the Human Services Department. More information will follow over the coming month or two once the Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services, reviews and approves of our plan and budget.

Town of Plymouth COVID-19 Response: Town Hall is remains closed to the public. Residents can request assistance by phone, fax, email and through the Town's portal for all services. All employees of the Town Hall are following the safety guidelines of space when speaking with one another.

Appointments and Services: Residents can request assistance by phone, fax, email or the town's website for all services provided by town hall. If they are unable to complete a specific transaction, they can request an appointment for service. Carrie is assisting the majority of clients through phone and email, with the exception of emergency and essential needs, and taking all safety precautions at the office.

Elderly, Quarantined and Disabled Populations: The department is working with the Plymouth Food Pantry volunteers to assist the elderly and disabled residents to assist them with groceries, pharmacy pickups and deliveries. Carrie works directly with the two main volunteers by coordinating this service. The volunteers coordinate with the clients served by this program to work out details and assess needs.

Energy Assistance: The Energy Assistance Program has received various extensions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Energy Assistance Program ended on June 1st, 2020. A total of 10 energy applications were completed during the month of May. To date, a grand total of **310** Plymouth residents have applied for Energy Assistance with **260**, or 84%, having been approved for assistance. This results in a grand total of **\$190,909.23** awarded in benefits for FFY2020.

VITA Free Income Tax Assistance Services: Free Income Tax Assistance services have been temporarily suspended until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The IRS has extended the filing and payment deadlines through July 15th, 2020. HRA hopes to resume services as soon as Governor Lamont's Executive Orders have been lifted. HRA has rolled out its Virtual VITA platform for all affected customers. Residents can call the Human Services Department or visit HRA's Website at www.hranbct.org/VITA for more information.

Private Fuel Bank: There were 7 requests for oil delivery and Eversource payment assistance through the Town's Private Fuel Bank. If anyone has an urgent need for an emergency oil delivery, please contact the Human Services office.

Renters Rebate: The application for the 2020 Renters Rebate program will be available from April 1st through October 1st, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Human Services Department will be mailing out application packets for completion. The packets will contain a return envelope which can be dropped off at Town Hall at the new Human Services Lockbox. Please call the Human Services Office to receive additional information and to request a packet. 25 residents have called requesting appointments for the program. All 25 were mailed application packets with detailed instructions.

Outreach at Senior Housing: Outreach was completed at Gosinski Park and Eli Terry Senior Housing. Services are temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will resume once Town Hall officially reopens. Renters Rebate packets were dropped off at both locations for the residents to apply with specific instructions.



**Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
Community Services Department**

Plymouth Human Services Monthly Report

Rental Assistance: There were no Rental Assistance applications processed during the month of May. There is the potential for an increase in requests during the month of July due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grants, Gift Cards & Toiletry Bags: Carrie applied to the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation's COVID-19 Relief Fund. The deadline was on May 24th, 2020 at 11:59pm. The grant was submitted on time and a copy of the grant was provided to Chairwoman Bain-Picard. The Human Services Department has been receiving several calls with regard to delayed unemployment benefits. As a result, several grocery and toiletry bags have been given to clients. The grocery gift card inventory is getting low and we are hoping to replenish them with donations and/or grants.