

<b>Called to Order: 5:00 PM</b>	<b>Via Zoom</b>	
I. Roll Call and introductions		
<p><b>Roll call:</b> Ruth Sousa, Charley Martin-Berry, Martha Beathem, Ron King, Betsy Fitzgerald, Charles Rudelitch, John Harris, Jonathan Thomas, Lisa Veazie, Barbara Clark, Walter Kumiega, Dr. H. Lori Schnieders, Grant Lee, Wayne Hanscom, Nicholas MacDonald (<b>Quorum Present</b>)</p> <p><b>Staff Present:</b> Rebecca Palmer, Kevin Bean, Kate Pielmeier, Ida Bagley, Anne Ossanna, Melissa Mattes, Donna Zdanis, Cheryl Robbins, Rose Honders, Bobbi Harris, Kathy Spencer, Dale Basher, Lee Hardison</p> <p><b>Guests:</b> None</p>		
II. Items for Board Action		
<p>1. Resolved, to approve the Board Meeting Minutes from 1/25/2021.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Discussion: None</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Action:</b> Ruth moved to approve last month’s minutes, Barbara seconded. John also seconded on the phone.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Motion passed.</b></p> <p>2. Resolved, to utilize the tool of Consent Agenda for future Board Meetings. – B. Fitzgerald.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Action:</b> Grant moved to approve, Martha seconded.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Motion passed.</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Discussion:</b> Martha had a question about whether or not grants/funders would be alright with using the Consent Agenda. Betsy and Rebecca clarified that the Consent Agenda is not always appropriate but we will use it when we are able to. Grant and Martha agreed and seconded.</p> <p>3. Resolved, to approve the re-establishment of a line of credit account with PC Connection (IT vendor) – limit of \$100,000. – K. Bean.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Action:</b> Ruth moved to approve, Walter seconded.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Motion carries, all approve.</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Discussion:</b> Kevin stated we used to have a line of credit with PC Connection but we never reestablished it. We have a new need for new equipment such as new servers. There is a 30 day pay cycle, and we would be able to pay it all off within 30 days. Kevin also stated we would likely only ever go up to 70-80K out of 100K.</p>		
III. Policies for Review		
You have received a copy of the policies for review.		
<p>1. Phishing Policy – HR Director (Donna Zdanis)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Donna proposed we move to a two-way authentication process to reduce our risk for Phishing.</p>		

**Action:** Lisa Veazie agreed. Lori moved to pass. Martha seconded.

**Motion passed.**

**Discussion:** None.

2. Child Care Payment Policy Revision – ECE Director (Melissa Mattes)

**Action:** Charles moved to pass. Lori seconded.

**Motion passed.**

**Discussion:** Melissa reviewed the previous policy. Service (childcare) was NOT provided if parents did not pay prior to the service week (by Monday morning). However, this was never ideal because many of these families are “at risk” and will likely have an occasional emergency or financial issue. If the family cannot pay, but we do not watch their child that day or week, the parent cannot go to work and this exacerbates the original problem. We are still using the two-week termination policy, but Melissa instead wants to continue serving families behind on paying for up to two weeks. This gives the family time to pay and get caught up on payments while also not increasing DCP’s liability beyond the two-week period. Finally, parents will also be allowed to set up a payment plan immediately with fiscal. This will help keep children in their childcare program and avoid gaps in service.

Ruth asked if payment is due noon on Friday as written in the Board Packet or Monday morning as Melissa just said. Melissa said we always formally said payment was due Fridays at noon, but a lot of parents are paid on Fridays and may not have time to cash or deposit their check and have access to their money the same day. Monday morning allowed more flexibility for the families living paycheck to paycheck.

Charley Martin-Berry expressed interest in this change but wondered if cash payments were allowed ever. Melissa and Kevin both said cash is a risk. Cash payments can get lost and make fiscal nervous. There is a safe in fiscal, which is in Kevin’s office, and it is usually locked. However, the centers do not have safes, and we are also lacking staff available to accept and process a cash payment at each center. Cash was accepted in the past but some payments were lost.

Charles asked if Square (mobile phone application) or other debit transaction apps have been considered. Melissa reiterated the lack of staff and or staff time to process payments like this. Melissa doesn’t want teachers or other classroom staff leaving to process payments. Kevin said we CAN take PayPal payments, and he hasn’t heard of anyone complaining that we cannot accept cash.

Charles also asked Melissa about late fees; she said the policy is slightly subjective. If the family has a first offence and it’s a true emergency or isolated incident the late fee is waived. Repeat offenders are usually the ones charged a late fee.

3. Policy for Approval Early Care and Education eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, and Enrollment

**Action:** Ruth moved to accept. Grant seconded.

**Motion passed.**

**Discussion:** See pages 14-15 in the Board Packet. There are three NEW priority factors listed on pages 16-17. There has always been a points-based system of determining need and eligibility for ECE Programs per Head Start regulations. The new priority factors included: 1) The child/family is new to the community, 2) they are new to the community *due to abrupt change*, or 3) they are a single-child family (meaning there are no other children at home for the child in question to play and socialize with).

Ruth had a question about the 100-130% income level (relative to poverty). There are STRICT policies about the 130% or over category, but there is some wiggle room for those falling in 100-130%. Ruth wondered if this was a typo because it seems odd to accept ANY family over income. Melissa said it is not a typo; there is some flexibility for families in this income bracket. As long as she enrolls primarily below 100% income families, she is allowed to enroll some people within 100-130%. Ruth moved to accept these new factors WITH some word changes to clarify this issue. Grant seconded the motion. No one opposed.

IV. Presentation of DCP's "Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program" (LIHEAP/HEAP):

1. Rebecca Palmer (Executive Director) and Lee Hardison (Energy Services Director). Related documents in your board packet.
  - a. DCP has been involved as a vendor for HEAP for years with Maine Housing. There are examples of the eligibility determination process in the Board Packet. However, the system seems broken. How can we fix it?

**Action:** N/A.

**Motion:** N/A.

**Discussion:** There have been media calls about HEAP and the application process. Folks feel it is too long, there are barriers to getting the application process started, and there are limitations to when DCP can start processing and working on HEAP applications because it is a seasonal program. Folks spend weeks trying to call for an application appointment and then it takes at least a month to process most applications. This means families go weeks without service. If they weren't one of the first families in line for that year, they may go a few weeks without proper heating into October, November, or December. In cases like that, ECIP or THAW funds are used when available to get folks one-time temporary help (\$600 maximum, which usually covers \$400 in fuel, \$200 in delivery fee, netting the family about 100 gallons of fuel) before their HEAP benefits arrive. However, HEAP is a massive program with a lot of funding. Why are we still

relying on ECIP or THAW for a program that is SO well-funded?

In addition, Lee said DCP prioritizes households that have elderly individuals and or children age six or under. They also schedule appointments for completing applications and do a lot of this work over the phone (due to COVID-19). However, Lee said a lot of folks have preferred doing the process this way over the phone. They have one appointment scheduled every 30 minutes to try and help as many people as possible. The application asks for one month's worth of income, and eligibility is determined based on that amount. Once the application is completed, the packet is mailed to the family to sign and return. At this point, the family has 20 working days to return the packet to DCP. Once the signed packet is received, DCP has 30 days to process the application. As such, the application date is considered the day the SIGNED packet is returned to DCP not the day we speak to the client on the phone (or Lee and her staff would never have enough time to process everyone's packets).

There is a petition to make HEAP a year-round program so the application process can be streamlined. If DCP can start processing applications even one month sooner, Lee estimates we could serve up to 1,000 people SOONER. Unfortunately, Maine Housing does not allow us to start working sooner. Grant wondered about a self-declaration income form and if this would shorten the process so we can serve more households. Lee said a self-declaration was used for some things. Maine Housing DID figure out a way to pull forward some repetitive aspects of the application process (such as social security number or identification documents). Once a client has applied once, there are SOME things streamlined for subsequent years.

Rebecca said Maine Housing is working on a portal for clients to apply digitally which may save time. MH is also considering an "abbreviated application" that might save additional time for repeat customers. Grant suggested using volunteers or temporarily rerouting some staff to HEAP application processing for one or two weekends in a row; it seems increased staff is the only immediate way to speed things up. This was considered, but DCP is understaffed in many divisions, not just heating and housing.

Martha asked if there have been any problems with deliveries given driver shortages, etc.. Lee said they weren't always charged a delivery fee for HEAP work. However, some vendors have had to charge the delivery fee this season, and that drastically cuts into the person's actual benefit (a \$600 benefit only covers \$400 in fuel because of the \$200 delivery fee). Martha also wondered about EmpowOR; I (Kate) said EmpowOR does help expedite things in some ways, but EmpowOR will only truly save us time once all DCP programs are IN EmpowOR. The initial push to get all programs integrated into EmpowOR is very time consuming and I am currently the only staff working directly on digitization. In the meantime, programs like HEAP will not benefit much from EmpowOR. Ida's division is the only one fully on EmpowOR, and I am still working on Bobbi's housing programs.

V. Division Directors Written Reports, Brief Updates, and Q&A Session:

1. Anne Ossanna – Friendship Cottage

See the report in your Board Packet. We delivered 5,316 meals! We have had 11 consistent individuals in the At Home program until recently (one was discharged to the hospital and one passed away). For the next 7–8 months Anne will be meeting with providers to look at the isolation of elders during COVID-19. There is a chance to present a case, do a peer-review, and experts in the Tri-State region will give their recommendations. We just received some funding for direct care workers for this research recently; it can be used for new staff bonuses, retention bonuses, or for supplementing lost billable hours, etc. This should help staff stay on. Finally, the Office of Elder Services had a rate increase and \$50,000 in funds will be distributed soon (twelve equal payments for 2022 shared among the seven At Home/Direct Care programs like Friendship Cottage in Maine.

2. Rose Honders – At Home

Nothing to add that isn't already in the Board Packet. Programs seem to be willing to collaborate more lately. We are utilizing resources a bit better and trying not to duplicate services offered. There is a new grant to work on and membership in At Home has increased recently too. It's a lot of work but everything is going really well. Rose feels positive about how everything is going.

3. Ida – Supportive Services Division

The only thing to add is Breakthrough Youth (BY). It's the newest program in the Supportive Services division. It falls under Improving Outcomes Youth and serves children and young adults age 13–24. There are four modules spread across 25 sessions and participants can learn practical skills for: interviewing for a job, paying the bills, safe sex, making good choices, budgeting, etc. One of the goals is to prevent pregnancies among those under age 18 as well as avoid setbacks in education. Lastly, the recovery centers have been doing some more outreach recently. Charley Martin-Berry asked how long the BY Program is and how much funding there is. Ida said the goal is up to five years. We are subcontracted out with ACAP and Penquis for this program.

4. Cheryl – Transportation

Not much to add to the report other than some issues with ordering vehicles. There are some older vehicles in the fleet that need to be repaired or retired, but busses are on backorder and manufacturers are behind on production. The process is lengthy. We currently have a backup plan of ordering some minivans instead of busses. Cheryl does not want to resort to this plan but we may not have a choice.

5. Bobbi Harris – Housing

Bobbi's report wasn't finished on time to include in the Board Packet. Housing has been understaffed in general for a few weeks. There have been big labor issues with Weatherization too. We were down two people: one with COVID-19 and one with a workman's compensation issue. One person is coming back to DCP temporarily to fill-in for the AST Program. Bobbi did manage to hire another energy auditor, and one current staff person was recently certified to be an auditor. We now have four energy auditors in total, but another staff member is out on FMLA. Even with some new staff on board, Tammy and Bobbi have been the only two main workers for Housing right now. It's also Heat Pump Season, the vendors around here are also short-staffed, and it's taking longer than usual to do repairs. However, we did managed to repair 20 furnaces recently! Lastly, Bobbi suggested that if anyone is HEAP qualified AND owns rather than rents, to send them to Housing instead of HEAP; if they qualify for HEAP they qualify for housing repair, and this might help alleviate some of the staffing issues for HEAP (especially because Bobbi has a lot of money available for Heat Pumps currently)!

6. Lee has nothing new to add. See her presentation above.
7. Melissa had to step out to deal with a COVID concern. Pass.
8. Donna – HR Director

There isn't much else to add. Pam has been busy onboarding 6 new staff members which is good!

9. Kevin – CFO

We had a \$20,000 surplus in February but it has gone down a little. There was a deficit from Friendship Cottage mostly from booking transportation services from our DCP Transportation Division. This lead to a \$25,000 deficit. Maternal Child Health has a small deficit of about \$5,000 most likely due to onboarding new staff. However, Kevin is hopeful Ida can bring it back. Perhaps home visits have decreased lately due to weather and the holidays. We also had 2 million paid from Maine Housing which brought our bank totals back up to 3.3 million. Finally, revenues and expenses are right at 5% on both sides.

Some people have phased out of ERA already or will soon (18 month limit on benefit). This is something we should be aware of as it may lead to folks seeking assistance in other divisions of DCP. We reached out to Makenzie and asked her to compile a list of folks who's ERA benefit will expire in the next few months or has already. We will see if any of those people want help from Whole Family Coaching to transition from ERA to another still-stable housing situation.

Charley Martin-Berry asked about the timeline around housing assistance funds. As far as Kevin and Kate are aware, they are NOT extending the funds any further. This is tricky because most people will lapse their benefit in the fall,

Downeast Community Partners (DCP)  
Meeting of the Board of Directors, February 22, 2022

<p>RIGHT before winter. It's bad timing for a rent-relief program to end and we did hope they would extend it to spring 2023.</p> <p>10. Rebecca Palmer – Executive Director</p> <p>There is a job posted for Development Director. Sarah Nugent has already been missed but Rachel has been doing a great job so far.</p> <p>There is also talk of starting a DCP Housing Committee. The goal is to generate additional funding and or develop more affordable housing. Rebecca feels we should be both leading and partnering towards affordable housing. Lori, Grant, Martha, maybe Walter, and Charley have all expressed interest in sitting on such a committee.</p> <p>11. Back to Melissa Mattes –</p> <p>Nothing to add. There are two updates from Head Start that do not impact DCP but Melissa is required to report out on them. They are in the Board Packet.</p> <p>No questions.</p>	
VI. Business meeting adjourned at 6:25 PM	<b>Wayne Hansom</b> made the motion to adjourn <b>Martha Beathem</b> seconded.
Respectfully submitted by Kate Pielmeier, Community Services Block Grant and Database Specialist on March 7, 2022.	