

DRAFT Minutes
Trempealeau County Executive & Finance Committee
January 11, 2010

Committee Chair Dick Miller called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. in the Wisconsin Room of the Courthouse in Whitehall, Wisconsin.

The open meeting law requirements were met.

Committee members present:

Wally Geske
Barb Semb
Douglas Winters
Dick Miller
Sheree Nelson

Others in attendance:

Jami Kabus
Jeff McIntyre
Dana Conrad
Paul Syverson
LaVerne Michalak
Sherry Rhoda
Elsa Kulig

Motion by Doug Winters and seconded by Wally Geske to adopt the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

There were no minutes on file to be approved

Discuss Proposed Consolidation of Health, Senior Services, and Human Services Departments

Dick Miller opened up the discussion with making sure that all the members were informed on the possible consolidation. He stated that currently there are appointed acting directors of the Health Department and Senior Services. He asked for opinions on how to proceed and when to proceed with the possible consolidation. His thoughts were to bring it to the County Board, and to make it effective as soon as possible, so the level of services provided to citizens continue to stay where it is at or higher.

Wally Geske questioned the advantages of consolidating the Health Department with Human Services. Sheree Nelson mentioned that Public Health could then be eligible for a level three classification. Jeff McIntyre continued with stating that some people may be concerned that Public Health will not be as recognizable by the public and would lose public awareness. Jeff assured everyone that Public Health would not take a back seat to Human Services. He elaborated by saying that Public Health would work closely with economic support staff and family services to help clients and streamline services. He stated that Public Health is prominent in the community and their services are largely proactive. Human Services is more reactive by the nature of their services. By working together, Jeff's hope is that they can work to help people be capable to stay in their homes and thus having to use less tax money for those people that would not need the additional services. Dick mentioned that he heard from a citizen who was concerned about the proactive vs. reactive traits of the departments merging together. He feels that there is no reason that the two cannot be comingled successfully. Sherry Rhoda stated that Public Health is proactive. Dick clarified that he understands the difference of delivery of service but feels Public Health and Human Services share the same philosophy. Sherry Rhoda questioned the consolidation, since the departments have already been working together. Dick stated that there will be a different, higher level of communication since there would be one department head and not three. He asked Jeff about his staff meetings. Jeff stated that he one to one meetings with his staff every two weeks. Jeff's main concern, as a department head, is what is best for the person needing services, they need to react and then find ways to prevent the problem in the future. Dick mentioned that the line staff would be able to better coordinate services; they could work together to develop a case plan. This would create broader coverage. Jeff agreed that there would be a more streamlined process for services. He would set goals with the staff. The consolidation could lead to a level three Public Health program and very few rural counties have a level three program.

A copy of the proposed resolution was distributed.

Doug Winters mentioned that he is concerned if the employees can work together as one big happy family. Jeff said to ask the former Unified Board employees how they feel after their department was consolidated into Human Services. He wants his staff to want to come to work and take pride in their work. Barb mentioned that she has talked to some employees who were consolidated into Human Services when the Unified Board consolidation was passed, and she has heard positive comments. Jeff has already heard positive feedback from the Senior Services employees.

Wally stated that he feels that County Board will ask the same questions they have asked about the advantages of the consolidation. He feels if it will be better then do it, if not, do not do it. Sherry Nelson stated that yes it will be better for the reasons mentioned: streamline in how services are delivered, better coordination of services, and increased communication. Wally mentioned that yes they need to be concerned with making sure to provide services in the best way possible. Jeff stated that if a catastrophic event was to occur in the County and if the departments were consolidated they would be better able to attack with a coordinated plan; the process would be better streamlined. For example, instead of each of the three departments having their own plans, one encompassing plan would be in place to serve the needs of the affected. The classes would be brought together to serve, and there would be less turf wars between the departments.

In reference to the resolution, Dick asked if there was any reason the Board rules would have to be changed. LaVerne Michalak stated that the committee name would have to be changed to Health and Human Services Board. This standing committee would be required to have certain qualified individuals on it , so some membership may have to be changed, some committees would be eliminated, and an aging unit would have to be created. Dick asked if they could wait and change the rules at the time of reelection. LaVerne mentioned that there would be a time gap. Jeff said in response to a question that the state does not have to approve the consolidation. GWAAR (Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources) needs to approve the rules relating to aging. They would prefer that the duties of the LTS Supervisor/Aging Director are for adults and aged persons and that their supervisory duties do not include B-3 or Children's Long Term Support Waivers so Jeff will then supervise the current employees who do those things. Also, an Aging Director would need to be designated, as well as a Public Health Officer, who also can be a supervisor, and their organization structure would have to be sent in.

Dick questioned if they could combine the three committees to function as one until the new board rules have been passed. Barb mentioned that when consolidations have happened in the past that is what was done. It would only be for a few months and they would have the expertise of all the members to assist with the possible consolidation. LaVerne said that it would be acceptable for joint meetings to be held. Dick mentioned that it may be simpler for the balance of the term. Sheree Nelson stated that maybe it would be best to do everything at once and keep the other committees involved as subcommittees. Barb said it would be foolish to reappoint members for only one or two months. Sheree felt there should be structure over form and them all meeting together would make the merger valid. LaVerne mentioned that they could deal with all the issues at once, but Dick's suggestion of joint meetings is an option. The resolution could be revised to say there would be joint meetings with the necessary committees through April. Jeff discussed two things that would have to be done if the consolidation were to pass. He would get approval to advertise for the Public Health Supervisor and a unit clarification to bring the employees who are in the Courthouse union into the Social Services Union. He is hoping to work with all necessary people to work through the change.

Wally mentioned that he would like to have joint committee meetings until April when the new Board comes in and the committee assignments are completed. He mentioned that would mean fewer meetings for members to attend since there could possibly be fewer committees and members would not be spread as thin. Barb agreed and thought with a mixture of members the new committee would be familiar with all of Human Services services. Sheree Nelson questioned why the resolution stated March 1st as an effective date? LaVerne stated that it could be changed. Sheree Nelson felt that it makes the most sense to do it as soon as practically possible to eliminate confusion. Dick agreed and mentioned that the sooner it takes place the sooner the team can come together to streamline and offer delivery of the services.

Motion by Sheree Nelson and seconded by Barb Semb to adopt a RESOLUTION to Establish County Department of Health and Human Services with amending the Resolution to be effective Tuesday, January 19, 2010, and replace the Last further resolved with the committees will meet jointly until the new County Board rules are passed. Motion carried unanimously.

Next regular meeting date scheduled for February 2, 2010.

Committee Chair, Dick Miller, adjourned the meeting at 9:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Winters
Secretary

Minutes submitted by
Elsa Kulig