

## November 27, 2018

Williams County hosted a Special Meeting this 27<sup>th</sup> day of November 2018, beginning at 3:30 pm in the Broadway Commons Conference Room to discuss the proposed Social Services Redesign Plan.

Present: Terry Traynor, Helen Askim, Holly Snellings, Rich Wardner, Brad Bekkedahl, David Rust, David Richter, Pat Hatlestad, Cory Hanson, Beau Anderson, David Montgomery, Lindsey Harriman, Steve Kemp (arrived 4:00 pm)

Askim called the meeting to order and gave an introduction for the meeting agenda.

Askim expressed two primary concerns with the plan: the proposed timeline of implementation and that counties might lose the ability to make localized decisions.

Traynor gave an introduction and provided background information about Senate Bill 2206, the Social Services Redesign Plan. He stated that counties have historically managed Social Services, but costs are rising dramatically without a rise in property value. SB 2206 was initially passed to fund with state funding, but to not change the structure. NDACo does not support fully-state run Social Services because we do need local services and local staff.

Bekkedahl stated that more and better services are needed locally. Jobs will not be lost – if there is change in employment or responsibility, then that will happen through attrition.

Askim said that the region has a bad example of how the state has run things in the NWHSC.

Bekkedahl said that is being fixed with bringing back a local Director.

Richter asked how full the positions in Social Services for Williams County are.

Snellings stated that the County is never fully staffed. Currently there are 4 positions open with 2 being filled and 2 being left open. The open positions are Eligibility Workers. These are not being filled at this time due to pending workload distribution changes. Williams County will be part of the Eligibility Pilot Project to see if there will be efficiencies.

Richter asked that if this plan passes, will Williams County be fully staffed.

Askim stated that her understanding would be that the work will just be redistributed with the employees we have, but overall, it is hard to get social workers.

Snellings added that the situations in our community are very different. This year the County has seen more than 1300 cases and the number keeps increasing. Williams County is fortunate to have a local board look at what we need.

Askim stated that the County has been able to obtain training for staff to perform services that normally clients and staff would have to travel to Minot for. Under a state-run organization, this would not have been allowed.

Snellings added that Child Advocacy comes to Williston two times a month from Minot, but 80-85% of their caseload is really here.

Bekkedahl asked Traynor if these situations would be covered in the caseload analysis. Traynor responded that it would depend on how detailed the analysis is.

Bekkedahl stated that Social Services is mostly state and federal mandates and property tax funding for Social Services needed to be alleviated.

Kemp said that it is four counties primarily funding the state and so often we lose control and have to take care of things ourselves.

Bekkedahl stated that the state provides funding with county control, but do not know where it is allocated.

Askim stated concern with staff oversight and how that would work in the new plan.

Wardner stated that other zones/areas he has visited have also expressed concerns about who is in charge, who do they report to. They suggested that the Zone Director could be the Zone board and he supports that idea. There was also the issue of equalization of pay.

Richter asked if there was a state salary plan.

Askim responded that there is, but it is very strict. County compensation plans vary. The state controls job classifications.

Montgomery asked if the bill can be crafted to address our concerns and prevent changes that could happen should new DHS leadership come in.

Traynor responded that this will be dealt with in the DHS budget bill.

Wardner responded that “yes” our concerns can be address by going into the statutes to make changes through legislation.

Bekkedahl requested that the County outline what their “perfect world” would look like for a structure and provide to Chris Jones and Traynor.

Bekkedahl asked what counties Williams would want to combine with to create a zone.

Snellings responded McKenzie and Divide County because of judicial similarities.

Montgomery stated that the Northwest Advisory Council also includes these counties.

Harriman asked what the next step and where advances with the bill will occur.

Traynor responded that they will take place in the DHS budget hearings and meetings in sub-committees.

Hatlestad expressed concern that this will not get done in 80 days.

Wardner stated that we’ve learned we need to all be communicating on this topic.

Bekkedahl stated that there have been 40 committee meetings.

Snellings replied that those committee meetings were not about the redesign plan – they were about other topics. Only one County Social Services Director was part of formulating the redesign plan. The redesign plan was first announced in September of this year.

Bekkedahl stated that if there isn’t a plan, then this will likely get pushed another 2 years. They will listen to our concerns.

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 pm.