CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Churchill County Social Services Advisory Committee was called to order at 3:16PM on the above date by Gail Bursill.

PRESENT: Pete Olsen, Co-Chair, Churchill County Commissioner - Representative for Elected Official

Gail Bursill, Chair, Red Cross Consumer Representative Shannon Ernst, Director of Churchill County Social Services

Craig Mingay, Civil Deputy Attorney - Absent

Holly Padilla, Office Aide - Churchill County Social Services

It was verified that the agenda for this meeting was posted in accordance with NRS 241.

AGENDA

The agenda was reviewed. Commissioner Olsen made the motion to adopt the agenda as posted. Gail Bursill seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

The minutes from 02-13-12 were reviewed. Commissioner Olsen made the motion to accept the minutes from 02-13-12 as written. Gail Bursill seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair, Gail Bursill, inquired if there were any public comments not listed. Ms. Ernst informed the committee that we did receive the CDBG grant (reduced), to fund the Out of Egypt Food Pantry. Commissioner Olsen inquired about the reduced amount. Ms. Ernst explained, the funding that was approved would allow for Phase One to be completed. Completion of this phase will allow for the building shell to be completed, with additional construction to follow in the future.

Item 6 – Child Safety Seat Program

Ms. Ernst advised the committee that the Commissioners have approved Social Services to administer the car seat program. Ms. Ernst has sent in the official documents to the Department of Safety showing our commitment to the program. Once the official declaration from the State has been received, confirming that we are an authorized agent to administer this program, Ms. Ernst, Craig Mingay, and Joyce Edgemon will sit down together and draft the formal MOU that will be used for the program, as well as, the guidelines for the financial management aspect of the program. Ms. Ernst also informed the committee that there were sufficient funds in the program to allow for a Community Safety Awareness event to be put on this summer. Ms. Ernst also informed the committee that there would be sufficient funding to cover the costs of updating all the materials used in conjunction with the program – brochures, posters, etc.

Item 7 - Update on Food Programs

Ms. Ernst informed the committee that the Commissioners have approved the food programs being taken over by Out of Egypt Food Pantry. A letter has gone out to those residents who currently pick up Project Food and Backpack for Youth. This letter explained how they will rotate from our program to the Out of Egypt Food Pantry program, and then how to reapply when their current term comes to an end. A list of all the other agencies in the county who have food programs and/or hot meals available will be provided to each resident picking up their food items. Food Bank of Northern Nevada SNAPS Outreach will also rotate over to Out of Egypt Food Pantry. They want to have a volunteer here and in Winnemucca to help with the rural outreach. This change and the assistance given to Out of Egypt Food Pantry will show that Social Services is participating in the fight against hunger in our county, but eliminate the duplication of food distribution services. Gail Bursill inquired as to how the information about the other resources is relayed to the clients. Ms. Ernst explained to her that Social Services has a resource guide that is given to each client providing them with information about the types and kinds of resources that are available. If they are not resources available through our office, this resource guide provides the client with the necessary contact information to seek assistance with other agencies.

Item 8 - CSBG Funding Update

Ms. Ernst advised the committee that we are doing well on meeting our goals. One of the goals was to get together with other members in the community to have "roundtable discussions" to better understand what each agency in the community is providing, how to access those services, and to define where the gaps and/or duplications are taking place. She also explained to the committee that there have been, and will be, significant funding cuts. The May 2013 allocation is being looked at, and there are significant cuts coming. Churchill County does not have a high unemployment rate compared to other counties in the State. When the calculations are performed, we are at an economic distress factor of 1. This means, that according to government guidelines, our funding will be reduced from \$94,000 down to \$73,302. The biggest concern currently is how we match other grants, as this grant is used for that purpose. These dollars are matched to help pay for the housing programs, the front window at 40%, and the Coordinator position, which helps to ensure accurate data collection on a day-to-day basis. Everything must be documented to show what we are doing.

Employment is one of the big areas they want to see results in. Jody Brown is now working for CEDA, under Social Services contract, as the Employment Coordinator. Jody will make the appointments with local businesses, and Ms. Ernst will go along to provide Jody with in-the-field training and guidance. Jody and Ms. Ernst will explain to potential employers what we have to offer, why they should hire now, how we can help offset their training costs, and then ultimately link candidates to these openings. There is a misconception in the community that Social Services, JOIN, and Job Connect do not have the qualified individuals available to fill the open positions in the community. This partnership with Social

Services and CEDA will allow us to dispel this misconception and get people to work. Commissioner Olsen expressed a concern with Job Connect not sending properly qualified people for openings which have been posted with them. There was a discussion among the committee members that there is a problem in this area. Ms. Ernst will be meeting with the head of Job Connect from Reno to discuss these issues and seek resolution. Ms. Ernst also advised the committee of the differences between using the CEDA Employment Coordinator versus Job Connect. Jody will take the job descriptions provided and hand sort through all applicable candidates that Social Services, JOIN, and Job Connect have. Jody will send only qualified individuals for interviews, she will sit in on the interview process, and she will also address any concerns with new hires during their probationary period in order to solve any issues that might arise and to ensure the best fit for both the employer and the employee. Ms. Ernst then explained to the committee that Jody will be working with CEDA, as well as, the county in getting people back to work.

Ms. Ernst then advised the committee, that there was recently a CSBG monitoring audit. Gary Gobleman, with CSBG, recently came and monitored our grant documentation. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee the areas of concern that Gary had and how our documentation differed from his expectations. One of the concerns Gary had was with the way our files are organized. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that because of the multiple programs we have, and to meet confidentiality requirements, our files cannot look exactly as Gary would like to see them. Because of funding cuts, Ms. Ernst and Gary discussed the use of discretionary funds to facilitate the employment component that needs to be shown. The use of discretionary funds now will allow other funds to be carried over for next year and allow for additional training for Jody and other staff members. There also needs to be greater case management. Ms. Ernst advised the committee that Jennifer and Manny will be attending a two-day training in Reno in regards to case management.

The bottom line is that we will have to do more with fewer dollars. One of the great benefits of our roundtable discussions has been finding out who provides what services in the community. For example, we have been able to eliminate the duplication of food services by having Out of Egypt Food Pantry assume our food programs. Also, there are many organizations in the community which are providing emergency assistance. This has allowed us to take a look at doing more with the wrap around service coordination aspect. This will allow us to provide more case management with our clients, as we work with them to document their efforts to attend those required meetings and classes to ensure long-term stabilization.

Item 9 – Community Partners/Resources Roundtable Committee Update

Ms. Ernst informed the committee that the first roundtable meeting was held in February, and the second roundtable meeting was held in March. The first meeting had approximately 52 attendees. There were two attendees that didn't

see the purpose of having the roundtable discussions and thought this was just something that could be handled by emailing back and forth. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that this was not the most effective form of getting things done because there is not the same question and answer ability as in the face-to-face meetings. Ms. Ernst explained that those who had open minds to these discussions and shared their information were very excited about learning what was offered in the community. There was a lot of valuable information exchanged at our first meeting. Committee members were excited to learn about services in the community that they were not aware of before. The first meeting had an agenda that addressed the start of our discussions and where we would like to go from there. This will be an ongoing agenda allowing us to always introduce new attendees and bring them up to speed on what is going on, make necessary updates to information previously presented, continue on with the agenda items as originally outlined, and address new needs and ideas as they arise. The first meeting was a success and all attendees agreed that this was worth continuing and making the commitment to attend. We realize that with everyone's busy schedules, they may not be able to attend each meeting, but each member will receive a copy of the minutes so that they will be kept informed and can pick up where they left off. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that the first meeting was 3 hours in length, the second meeting was 2 1/2 hours in length, and that each meeting will get shorter. This allows for people not to be rushed and to obtain the maximum benefit of the meetings. Commissioner Olsen inquired as to what the goals of this roundtable committee are and how long the meetings would continue. Ms. Ernst explained the goals of the committee were to put names and faces together, to get to know who we worked with in the community better, to educate each other on all the resources that were available, to acknowledge gaps and/or duplications in services, and to allow each organization to work most efficiently, individually and collectively, in the community to best use the dollars that they have available. Ms. Ernst explained that over the course of the next several months, we would continue with monthly meetings, then move to quarterly meetings, and finally to semi-annual meetings.

The effort keeps growing and the committee members have been really great about sharing their opinions on those organizations that they feel should be invited and be involved in this process. Everyone networking together allows us to make sure that invitations are extended to the proper individuals and that no one is missed. This networking has opened our eyes to all the duplications that are out there, allowed us to take better control of the funds we have available, and to control how those funds are dispersed. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that one of the next things we will be working on is the referral guide. Everyone is so used to the paper system which is too costly to keep updated. As a committee, we are working with Nevada 2-1-1 to see how the system can be updated by each organization and utilized most effectively by those who would make searches; thereby, allowing Nevada 2-1-1 to be the most up-to-date referral guide. The committee members will be trying this system for 30 days noting both the good and bad, and then we will revisit Nevada 2-1-1 at our next meeting. Mr. Evan Miller, Nevada 2-1-1 Community Resource Specialist, will also be attending a

future committee meeting to provide a demonstration of the system, answer questions from committee members, and to provide one-on-one assistance to committee members with inputting and updating their information to make sure their organization is accurately represented and their information is being utilized most efficiently.

Ms. Ernst then directed the committees' attention to the Meeting Organization information that was compiled after the first meeting. This information was reviewed with the committee. Gail Bursill inquired as to why each agency does not have names and/or phone numbers listed. Ms. Ernst informed Gail that this list is a work in progress. It would be updated and/or added to as current agency information changed, or as new organizations attended the meetings. Ms. Ernst advised the committee that this list is an ongoing resource list for the committee members, but it was not meant to be a referral guide to be distributed to others. It was just an informative, quick-glance way for the committee members to become familiar with what is offered by each organization.

After completion of the Nevada 2-1-1 review, the committee will then move on to looking at our referral systems — what is in place, what isn't, and what needs to be. Ms. Ernst then explained the HMIS system to the committee. This computer system was formerly known as MetSys, but has since been bought out and is now known as MetSys Clarity. Ms. Ernst discussed with the committee how the HMIS system works, the changes and enhancements recently made to the system that have made it even more user friendly, the fact that this system is free to everyone, and how we could all utilize this system to more effectively track and see what services people have been referred for and are receiving. Anyone can use this system for free; however, you have to sign on with MOU's to make proper referrals. This system will also allow for scanning and the achievement of paper-free environments. Two of our grant funders are now going to require that everything be scanned so they can monitor us more efficiently. This system will also allow us to scan in picture IDs, so that we will have a client's picture associated with their file.

Item 10 – Social Services Department Retreat/Office Planning Update Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that Social Services held an all-day office retreat on March 20, 2012. The goal of this retreat was to establish new policies and procedures in regards to the assistance we give to clients. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that the retreat was a 2-stage, full-day retreat complete with team building exercises, as well as, policy and procedure discussions. The retreat was conducted at Parks and Recreation and started out with a half-day of team building exercises. These exercises were facilitated by Jorge and Danny who guided the staff through the obstacles and instructed them on how to work together as a team to complete the challenges. This step was necessary before we could get into the policy and procedure part of the day. The team-building words that were drafted in the morning session, combined with the skills that we were taught during our team-building exercises, enabled us to

come together to draft new policies and procedures and formulate ways to better understand and communicate with our clients.

Social Services needs to look at saving dollars so that the lesser dollars we have to work with will go further. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee the guidelines for the assistance we give. Years ago, it used to be \$150 every 12 months. It was then changed to \$200 every 18 months. Under code, this change did not need to be presented for public hearing, so it was just drafted, presented, and approved by the commissioners. In 2007, we were looking at raising the level to \$400 every 2 years, but then the economy crashed and nothing was changed. We are now looking at proposing assistance once every 3 years. We are looking at a maximum of \$1,100 per person. Because this is such a big change, it will be put out for public comment.

Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that we see people who plan so they will be able to utilize assistance as soon as their time restrictions have expired. Clients currently come to the window thinking we are going to pick them up out of a hole and take care of all their problems. They are looking for the hand out and not the hand up. Many clients show up at the last minute on the last day, under the assumption that we will just hand out vouchers to help them avoid a disconnect. When asked why they waited until the last minute to seek assistance, there is never an answer. There is often a great frustration level when they realize that we cannot help them on such short notice. These clients are not receptive to the referrals to JOIN and Job Connect which could help stabilize them in a more long-term way. This is not helping them. Ms. Ernst explained how clients perceive our agency and how that perception needs to change. She also discussed the role that we will play in changing that perception.

By changing our guidelines and requiring clients who have fallen on hard times to take responsibility for their situation, we are also dispelling the notion that things can be fixed at the last minute. Clients seem stuck in the idea that there are no jobs, that they will continue to get extensions on unemployment, and have become very apathetic about changing their situation. Gail Bursill brought up the question about loss of healthcare benefits also being a reason clients would choose to stay where they are. Ms. Ernst advised the committee that this was, indeed, part of it, but that there were other programs out there to fill in the gaps of healthcare coverage such as NV Checkup, Access to Healthcare, etc. We must educate our clients and help them to think outside of the assistance box.

Our goal as an office is to help them stabilize in long-term ways. One of the ways we can do this is to extend the time allowed between assists. This will force clients to take a more detailed look at their stability situation and take accountability for the long-term. Years ago, it was a requirement that before any assistance was given, there had to be a budgeting class taken. It is time once again to tie assistance to requirements that will encourage clients to take responsibility for themselves. We need to help them boost their income, get into apartments they can afford, provide budgeting skills, etc. Requiring job search

and budgeting classes, along with Manny attending the case management training, will allow for us to better serve our clients and tie these services together. Assistance will come after the requirements are met. One of the ways we can ensure we have the opportunity to continue working with them, is the Energy Assistance Application. This application must be completed every year. We can help them complete the application, copy and attach all the required documentation, and submit the application on their behalf.

Ms. Ernst then explained to the committee that by requiring bank statements, we are able to get a feel for where the money is going. It is going to McDonalds, Starbucks, Red Box, and Pay-Day Loans. This is not acceptable. Business as usual is allowing us to hinder them rather than help them. We no longer offer a budgeting class in this community, and this is a disservice to our clients. Commissioner Olsen inquired about the time and cost necessary to put on a budgeting class. Ms. Ernst assured the committee that several of the local banks have offered to do this at no cost. This is something that the banks do to help the community and to promote the services that they offer. There are no strings attached for the clients. It is just another example of resources that are available in the community that will allow us to all work together to solve community needs. Gail Bursill questioned the anger this would stir up in some clients. Ms. Ernst addressed the committee and explained to them that threatening emails and threats against our department are nothing new. They are not taken lightly, but we cannot be intimidated by them either. Most of the people that resort to this behavior understand the system and are abusing it.

Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that she wrote the grant to serve clients and provide homeless prevention. It will not be our policy to make them homeless and then bring them out. If they are homeless, they will be placed in the proper program; if they are not homeless, they will be given case management, direction, tools for remaining that way and stabilizing. Ms. Ernst explained to the committee that the goal was not to put a band-aid on the problem for a lot of people, but to help less people with greater results. Another area of concern with CSBG monitoring, is that we do not have any of our clients start a savings account. One of the goals that HUD is requiring now is that clients begin a savings account. They would like to see 60% of the client base accomplish this, but that is not feasible. Ms. Ernst has asked for 10% to be the goal.

Gail Bursill brought up the concern of what happens when circumstances change – divorce, loss of job, etc. Ms. Ernst explained that the emergency services are linked by individual to household and can only be accessed once within the time restrictions that have been established. However, when circumstances do change, clients can always come back for housing counseling, Job Connect referrals, etc.

This is not an action item for today; this is just information for consideration. Ms. Ernst will formally draft the new policies and procedures and they will be addressed at our next committee meeting.

Item 11 – Future Items for the Agenda

A draft of the proposed policy and procedure changes to the amounts of assistance given, the time guidelines to reapply for assistance, as well as, the CDBG detail for grants will be presented.

Item 12 - Schedule of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held on May 30, 2012 at 3PM.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 4:48PM by Gail Bursill. Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

APPROVED:

Gail Bursill, Chair, Advisory Committee