



MAY 2021 BOARD MINUTES

Board: Alix Midgley, Ben Ryan, Brendan Clark, Brian Arnold, Carla Respects Nothing, Elissa Hardy, Eugene Wade, Jenna Hansen, Jennifer Biess, John Feeney-Coyle, Kelli Barker, Mike Malloy

Staff: Jamie Rife, Julie Winkowski, Layla Said, Matt Meyer, Rebecca Mayer, Sierra Trujillo

ADMINISTRATIVE

Brian said we could begin with the policy discussion since Jamie has to leave early to present at the Boulder City Council meeting.

TOPICS

Policy Discussion (Matt)

Matt wanted to note that we are not asking the Board for a decision at this time. He wanted to begin to engage the topic of policy since there are a few things that have been coming up recently. MDHI has now positioned itself in a way where we are now being approached about doing more policy work, and he knows some members have expressed interest in this work, but he wants a clear process about what and how we engage in policy from the Board. In the little we have done, it's very clear we don't have the current capacity in time, resources, and expertise in how to do this work. It's very clear we need people who know what they're doing for this to be effective. There are a couple of things going on. We are now starting to work more closely with county governments since the regional convening. This means we can elevate discussions around zoning and creating more housing resources through that process. AS a result of doing that work, MDHI was approached by HOST about a convening they did this time two years ago, where they did a summit on Housing and Homelessness. Matt said he's sure a number of the people from the Board even attended the event. They had keynote speakers and experts with and without lived experience. It was very conference-y, there were some policy discussions, but there wasn't a lot of follow up after the meeting. HOST asked if we would like to hold a more focused, strategic discussion at the regional level, trying to get some alignment within the different communities to create more cohesion around the region. Matt asked Jamie if this was accurate. Jamie agreed and added that it could be beneficial this time to bring in builders and affordable housing developers to align different stakeholders around what we're already doing.

We were also approached about the article in Westword that had to do with the safe outdoor spaces and the new proposal by the Denver Republicans. They would make 4 sites of undisclosed sizes, which would allow them to enforce camping bans more aggressively outside of the safe outdoor spaces. Is that something we take a position on? How do we approach that as MDHI? Matt felt it was a good time to have a conversation with the Board as we move into a more political arena as an organization. Matt asked "what are the wishes of the board? Is that a good use of our focus and efforts? What else would the Board need to know for us to make this decision? If there maybe an advantage where we stay neutral on some things, such as the initiative 300?" Matt said he doesn't want us to do policy badly or halfway. He wants to know if we should be prioritizing this if it's the wishes of the Board. He would like the Board to give him some actionable items for staff to inform the Board at the next meeting. The purpose of this meeting is not for the Board to come to a decision, but for the Board to explore if this is something we'd like to do.

Kelly asked how we would define policy work. Matt said 1 type is at the regional level. For example, advocating for the elimination of single-family zoning so that we can have more multi-family dwellings. We could also be doing state level advocacy and securing funding at the state level. Matt said we were also asked by the NAEH to coordinate “Hill Day” for our Colorado Partners. This is primarily for the Metro Region, but Matt has also reached out to other CoC partners. Matt sees policy work as being the types of policies we’d like to see in legislation from the municipal to the national level. The Board could also want to focus on only the regional or national level.

John noted that when we’re talking about policy work, there is also talk of political advocacy work. He asked if Matt or anyone else has investigated what restrictions we may have as a 5013c or what HUD might see as political advocacy work. John said there might be some restrictions on political advocacy, so he has some concerns. Matt responded that we would need to look into this. He sees no concern with us coordinating Hill Day and meeting with local representatives to advocate for policy and funding at the federal level to address homelessness. He thinks restrictions wouldn’t exist at the county or state level. Matt said the team would ask HUD during office hours.

Elissa said that she thinks MDHI has positioned itself where we could be a valuable player in this space. Jenna added that she believes MDHI is a critical player that hasn’t had their voices heard as effectively as we could. She said the counties could benefit from having more backing from MDHI. She believes we could play an important role in the education aspect. She thinks the regional approach is critical too. She mentioned she added some follow up questions in the Chat.

Brendan asked, if MDHI were to take on a bigger role in this area, would it fill a void or are there other groups that are really doing this from the perspective of representing the people? If there were, then it would seem like a natural partnership for MDHI to leverage the work already being done by those groups. Matt responded that the entity in our space that plays the biggest role is CCH, who has an active policy wing. He said they have developed that capacity and they do a good job at it. For CCH to do that, they had to build it internally as a part of what they do. Matt said people with lived expertise are represented at Denver Homeless Out Loud. He said we are active with them, as well as CCH. He thinks it could still be helpful to have another voice that is aligned, and there is also an importance in maybe having subtle differences and more nuanced responses amongst those that are out there. There is probably a space for MDHI, but he doesn’t think those are exhaustive. A lot of it is Denver centered. Brian thinks the space where we work in has a big need for someone who is advocating regionally, talking to partners, and seeing what they are trying to accomplish. It would also have staff that oversee policy since its another thing we’re taking on.

Alix mentioned the CCLP since they are exclusively in this space. They may be an entity that we partner with, so that homelessness issues are front and center. The Homeless Leadership Council has also put out letters around this stuff, but she sees them as still feeling their way around policy work. Ben said he’s glad the group is having this discussion; he thinks this is a great time for this. He said that when we talked about it in some committee meetings, he was initially thinking about not wanting to embark on this. However, after hearing some of the conversations today, he thinks there might be an important need to get involved in this work. He mentioned he had some concerns. He said that when we’ve tried to do this before, it has been hard for the Board to reach a consensus. Maybe we don’t have to endorse certain initiatives or advocate for certain legal changes. He sees our point of power as our access to data and how we can communicate that data and tell stories around it. He thinks we can get involved in that way, as well as in the educational arena. He sees that as one of the biggest barriers, referring to people’s education on homelessness. He thinks that rather than play the political games, we can affirmatively educate and have initiatives to share data with other organizations that are doing this work. Ben said people who are involved in it need help to support this work. Our raw data and analysis can support the policy asks that they’re going after. He thinks that would be a good opportunity to partner with people. He thinks this is a really worthy discussion.

Matt said he’d like to follow up with a question that is directed to the entire Board. He thinks it’s intriguing for us to occupy a space where we are informative as opposed to taking a specific stance. We would be a voice of objective data, and extending that to research on best practices, what’s. We could look at what’s going on in other communities and really inform those communities. Matt said if that’s accurate, we should use the example of the Denver Republican

proposal. How would the Board imagine we engage that from a perspective of using data and best practices from other communities to inform the discussion?

John said he can respond. He agrees with Ben that we should do what we do best, providing the data and doing a more nuanced and substantive approach as opposed to a pure advocacy role. A way to use this initiative as an example in a more nuanced way, which is what our reputation is and what we want it to be, as opposed to promoting a yes/no position would be creating fact sheets to law makers, to the public, and to the press so people can be informed about those issues. There is a way to write those that may be interpreted as taking a position, but John said he has always seen us as being a substantive, nuanced, and thoughtful organization. This response is opposed to an op-ed to any type of issue. He said he thinks it gets a little more wary when it comes to pure political advocacy, where you're always putting your credibility on the line.

Mike Malloy said he agrees with Ben and John in being objective. He believes providing factual information on best practices could go a long way. He says having worked at CCH with Casey and her policy team, they made her a VP because of all the work she was doing. It's a political minefield out there, and your agency and your credibility can get easily wounded. He feels more confident after hearing what other folks have said.

Jennifer said MDHI plays a unique role providing community data, and she thinks the regional perspective is very helpful. She thinks MDHI should play a role and believes that this meeting is a good way for us to scope what a clear path would look like for policy and advocacy work. What are the advantages, what do we think would it take, and what wouldn't we do? She would like to know if we picked a direction, what is the cost of not doing XYZ? She thinks everything is great in a vacuum, but what wouldn't we be doing from a staff or funding perspective. Matt said in addition to the opportunity cost, where does this add to our mission, so that we can do a cost/benefit analysis in terms of achieving mission. Matt said this is something we could work up. Brendan said Jennifer brought up a good point, especially from a financials perspective, he thinks we're in a good spot right now. It seems like from a financial position, this seems more doable right now but it might not always be the case. What would it take to be sustainable?

Matt asked Eugene if he was trying to add something. Eugene added that he remembered being on the Board when they tried to repeal the camping Ban, and we had different groups coming to us from different positions. He said this put us in an awkward position when we didn't have a clear stance. If we had something written officially that we are coming from a data-driven angle, we would be better able to address things that came up. In general, he thinks being neutral and providing data points and best practices is the best way to go. Alix said she appreciates everything everyone has said. What she would like to add is that homelessness is a human rights issue, and by such it is inherently political. Even if we are just sharing numbers, it is impossible to strip numbers of their politicization. She added that regardless, we need to do it wholeheartedly. She said if we as an organization are taking a stance in wanting to end homelessness, it is not possible for us to be neutral in any way. Matt said on a personal note, he would find it untenable if the Board wants MDHI to remain neutral. He doesn't see the data approach as driven by neutrality versus objectivity. He wants to be fact-based as opposed to making more emotional arguments. Matt thinks we should elevate the conversation to focus on the facts.

Carla asked if this is something other CoCs do. Matt answered yes, some other CoCs do engage in policy. He added that he can look into it more directly to see what it looks like in other CoCs. She said she is on a national urban indigenous coalition to end homelessness. She said it is made up of CoC members from different states and their homeless communities. She knows Seattle has a big hand in the political circuit. She said one woman created CCM and she is running for Mayor now, so she's getting a taste of what other cities are doing. Matt said he thinks that's an excellent point.

Matt thanked the group for this conversation, and that it is helpful to know next steps. He said he wanted to reflect back what he heard and synthesize the staff follow-up. Matt heard that there is interest in this, that it is a topic worth exploring, the way for us to be exploring this topic is different than a traditional lobbying approach, but one that uses our data to inform political discussions around homelessness in our community, and working that up within the organization. Financial cost and opportunity cost is something we should calculate. Is this sideways energy or not moving

us forward? Matt said he will sit down with the team to try to formulate the analysis. He will also talk to Brian and the Executive Committee about when to get it on the next agenda.

Consent Agenda

Brian asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. John motioned to approve. Alix seconded the motion. Brian asked if there was any discussion that the group wanted to have around the consent agenda. He thanked the group.

Brian covered the consent agenda.

Vote – John motioned to Approve, Alix seconded, all in favor, none opposed

Draft Budget Agenda

Julie started with revenue. She said we slightly reduced this account to align with 2021 donations. Julie said she is going to go through this quickly due to time constraints. In-kind donations are the same, same market rental value for our rental space, and the usual sock donation from Bombas around Christmas. For foundation grants, this 200K represents what we expect to bring in for unrestricted funding, but we foresee that. The Community First grant was extended. She wanted to highlight that we did not secure additional funding from Mile High United Way, as there was a change in grant-making priorities. Line 13 is our carry-over funding, which is significant this year. We have a number of grants that we received the revenue for in this fiscal year, but not the corresponding expense. That consists of our Community Wins grant, Community First foundation, and our operations expense for MHUW.

Matt interjected that with the grants, there is a discrepancy regarding when we receive the money and when we accrue the expense. We have to recognize the revenue when we receive it, but the intention was expected to be carried in subsequent years. It is an artificial look to the deficit. Julie said she was going to get to that later, but the corresponding expense is not going to be incurred in future years. The other thing Matt wanted to let the Board know was about the MHUW funding. They spoke to us up front about cutting the funding and it has to do with them enacting their own strategic plan.

Julie continued with the Budget presentation. Flex Fund is our goal for our individual contributions towards those experiencing homelessness who do not fit in our Rapid Rehousing criteria. We have seen an increase in spending and are anticipating an additional 100K from this. ESG-CV1 is a grant that started this Fiscal year, but it didn't ramp up as quickly as we thought. It is essentially a lot of carry over funding from this fiscal year. Line 27, this 1.2 million is our new ESG-CV2 funding. When we first were notified about the award, we thought there would be a 6-month extension. However, we just found out it will be extended through August of 2022, so there will be a need to recast this budget. There will be no net impact on revenue and expenses. And the assumption that we will have a new Coordinated Entry expense and revenue for the year is specifically from Coordinated Entry taking funding from our Planning Grant. Briefly, if you look at membership revenues, this is the amount that we receive from the NOFA from other agencies. The BitFocus line is what we bill out for annual licenses to providers. We haven't had solid numbers yet from the provider, but they have told us that it is a 3% increase. Our net revenue is a 1.8 million increase from the previous year. In terms of expenses, we have added 3 new Improvement positions. This is considering a new Improvement Advisor, a Grant Coordinator to support Jamie, and a Landlord Coordinator. We took into account these would start in July of the new fiscal year, as opposed to last year when we staggered the start dates.

Brendan asked if we consider pay raises and COLA adjustments. Julie said there is a 3% increase factored into all positions.

Julie said she added an additional line in to support Sierra's DEI work. This includes things like the YALC, talking circles, and everything to support diversity and equity initiatives. The PIT count is quoted slightly less than last year. Line 69 is a new line for network grants, these are funds provided to us that we outsource to other agencies. Line 70-71 are ESG RRH and HP dollars, and they relate directly to the revenue. These are new awards that we're going to be spending on homelessness assistance. Lines 77-79 are our Flex Fund dollars. We've adjusted this to account for corresponding revenue and increases in need. Line 83 is for telephone communications. We have been reimbursing staff for their

internet and telephone bills, but with the reality that we are going back to the office soon, we are going to reduce the internet reimbursement. For 'Board, staff training, and development,' we have put in a huge investment in our DEI and consulting to support Sierra and her efforts to continue our education. A theme in our financial statements the last few months has been capitalizing a project from 2018, which is now trued up to show the actual expense for it. And then Line 102 is for BitFocus licenses. We are still waiting from a quote from BitFocus to see what the actual expenses are going to be. We've already been informed that there is going to be a 3% increase. So total expenditures, Line 107, we have increased our budget by 2 million dollars. Carry over from CV1, increase in salary expense, and ESG. It looks like we have a deficit of 111,000. However, if you account for the carry over funding and add in depreciation, then this is a balanced budget.

This is a draft, and we are very confident in the net revenue for the year. There might need to be slight adjustments as we move into the next week or month. Julie asked the group for questions. Matt said he thanked Julie. He acknowledged that putting together the budget is a lot of work, and he appreciates everything she has done to get us to this point. Mike Molly seconded Matt's comments. Brian said her presentation was super good.

Ben had a question, what is the status of our reserve fund? Are we planning to contribute to that at all under this budget. Julie said there is approximately 250K we are planning to spend in the next fiscal year. It's a 5 year grant, so we have that amount of time to spend it, but we plan on spending 250K based on the current projection. Matt added that we are being very conservative on donations and foundation grants because he's confident we'll get it.

Executive Session (Closed)

Brian asked the MDHI staff to leave the meeting so that the Board could hold its closed, executive session to continue Matt Meyer's performance review.