



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

## County of Dane

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January 7, 2020

TO: Shawn Tessmann, Director  
Dane County Department of Human Services

FROM: Supervisor Melissa Ratcliff  
District 36

SUBJECT: The Human Services Board

As you know, the Human Services Board has broad duties specified in both Wisconsin Statutes and in the Dane County Code of Ordinances. While the Human Services Board struggled to find its footing in the past, the current members are committed to playing a meaningful role in helping the county meet the needs of the community. I believe there is an opportunity to harmonize the work of the Department of Human Services and the duties required of the Human Services Board in the upcoming strategic planning process.

The Human Services Board is authorized to exercise the duties and powers specified in Wis. Stats. 46.23(5m), which are summarized in the Dane County Code of Ordinances, Section 15.15(5) as follows:

“...The human services board and its committees shall be advisory to the health & human needs committee of the county board on major issues and with respect to planning, budget, policy and program evaluation matters. The human services board, jointly with the health & human needs committee, shall commit to a long-range planning and strategic policy process that incorporates mechanisms to assure the broadest and most effective consumer and citizen involvement in determining priorities, policies and effective service.”

In recent months, the Human Services Board has conducted two focus groups to engage residents around one of the most important issues facing the county – the access and delivery of mental health services. This effort was completed with a light touch by the Department of Human Services, with Human Services Board members arranging for the venues, the logistics, and taking notes.

This is an example of our dedication to the mission of the Board, and our commitment to raising awareness of the body’s work and attracting future members.

I understand that the strategic planning process is a heavy workload. I believe the members of the Human Services Board could be partners in this work. Perhaps a couple of the community events could be organized as a Human Services Board public hearing? Or members of the

Human Services Board could serve as table hosts at engagement events? The analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats should include a discussion with the Human Services Board. We can serve as a resource to the important work of the department, particularly in the area of resident involvement. It would be a waste to ignore the opportunity to shape how to best use a motivated body as part of the department's work.

The Dane County Code of Ordinances also state, "The human services board shall confer with the director of the human services department and members of his or her staff and may call upon the director to provide such staff assistance as may be required to carry out its functions." Clearly, without staff support, the Dane County Human Services Board is unable to address the charge specified in both statute and ordinance.

I believe there is a mutually beneficial path forward. I look forward to discussing with you and my fellow members how the department can best benefit from the work of the Human Services Board, and vice versa.

CC: Supervisor Jamie Kuhn, Chair, Health and Human Needs Committee  
Supervisor Sharon Corrigan, Chair, Dane County Board of Supervisors  
Michelle Dickenson, Department of Human Services  
Members of the Human Services Board