

# Meeting Minutes

Village of Downers Grove  
Human Service Ad Hoc Committee

---

Council Chambers

07/28/20

7:00 PM

---

## I. Call to Order

Village Manager Dave Fieldman called the meeting of the Human Service Ad Hoc Committee of the Village of Downers Grove to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Downers Grove Village Hall.

## II. Roll Call

**Committee Members Attendance (Present):** Samantha Aycock, Becky Campbell, Tom Connolly, Chris Gilmartin, Kimberly Nagy

**Absent:** Stephanie Williams, Azizi Marshall

**Staff:** Village Manager David Fieldman, Administrative Secretary II Rosa Berardi

**Guests:** Mark Thoman, Downers Grove Township Supervisor; Bridgett James, DuPage County Department of Community Services

Mr. Fieldman asked for a motion to permit electronic attendance by Samantha Aycock, Chris Gilmartin, and Becky Campbell.

Ms. Nagy moved to approve the motion. Mr. Connolly seconded the motion.

Mr. Fieldman declared the motion approved by voice vote.

Mr. Fieldman explained that there were six Human Services Ad Hoc Committee meetings scheduled in 2020. The meetings were to take place monthly from January through June. However, due to the current circumstances only the January and February meetings were held. The committee will pick up today where they left off in February and the meetings will continue on the last Tuesday of each month from August through October.

## III. Approval of February 25, 2020 Minutes

Mr. Fieldman asked for a motion to approve the February 25, 2020 minutes.

Mr. Connolly moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Nagy seconded the motion.

Mr. Fieldman declared the minutes approved by voice vote.

## IV. Presentations by the DuPage County Department of Social Services and the Downers Grove Township

Mr. Fieldman introduced Bridgett James of the DuPage County Department of Community Services to discuss the services they provide to individuals and families in need of assistance.

Ms. James used a PowerPoint presentation to explain all of the services, programs, and resources the DuPage County Department of Community Services provides to its residents. The department consists of 190 people and is composed of several different units including:

- Intake and Referral Services
- Aging and Disability Services

- Community Development
- Family Center
- Housing Supports and Self-Sufficiency

Ms. James spoke of the Community Resource Information System also known as CRIS. CRIS is a database of resources maintained by the community services staff that assists residents in many areas which include: health; housing; transportation; clothing and household goods; education; income and finances; individual and family support services. The resources in the CRIS database can be accessed on the web at [www.dupagecris.org](http://www.dupagecris.org) or by calling 1-800-942-9412 or 1-630-407-6500.

Ms. James explained the DuPage County Community Services Department has many programs available to the residents of DuPage County including: Clothing and Household Goods Vouchers; LIHEAP Energy Assistance; Homeless Prevention; Family Self-Sufficiency; Community Care; Home Delivered Meals; Caregiver Resource; Adult Protective Services; Long Term Care Ombudsman. Details on these programs and others offered through the DuPage County Community Services Department can be found on the DuPage County Website at [dupageco.org/Community\\_Services/programs/](http://dupageco.org/Community_Services/programs/).

After the presentation, Ms. Aycock thanked Ms. James for sharing so much information and asked for a copy of the PowerPoint she presented. She also asked how the County communicates the services they offer to its residents and asked specifically about communication with the senior population.

Ms. James responded by stating the county communicates through Community Outreach Programs, via the school districts and the townships within the County. Other methods of communication include the Age Guide and the Regional Council on Aging. The County is doing its best to reach the senior population; especially those that reside in subsidized communities.

Ms. Campbell asked if the County works with other villages to promote their services.

Ms. James responded by saying that she has done the same presentation with other villages.

Mr. Gilmartin asked Ms. James to share some challenges the department had before COVID 19 and asked how they've worked through them during these times.

Ms. James said that she's seen an increased number of walk-ins; many of which are of the homeless population with no cell phones. She also stated that she tries to exchange information with them safely. She tries to refer them to Community Outreach Programs. She stated that they've seen an increase in the number of senior services food drop offs. She said during these times it is a "learn as you go" type of thing. The employees at the County are adjusting and doing what they feel is safe to do.

Mr. Gilmartin also asked if the County's Community Service Department had any holes or areas of improvement to work through and if there are any homeless programs and/or other state-funded programs they can recommend to residents.

Ms. James responded by stating that affordable housing is difficult to find as the cost of living is higher in DuPage County than many other counties. She stated that there are voucher and subsidized programs out there, but not enough of them. She spoke of the publicly funded transportation system. She talked of housing referrals and state-funded grants. She added that it is unfortunate, but the assistance the County can provide in some of these instances is only temporary.

Ms. Nagy said that she noticed there are many services provided to children, the disabled, and the senior population but asked about the age 40-50 something population without a disability. What happens to them?

Ms. James stated that the County has connections with many services and agencies. They assess each person/situation and many times refer people to other agencies and services like Metropolitan Family Services. There are also times that the County may need to get the authorities involved.

Mr. Connolly asked Ms. James about her background.

Ms. James said she has been working with the DuPage County Social Services Department for 8 years and before that she worked as a licensed social worker.

Mr. Connolly stated that he knew of people from his church and other organizations that he would be referring to the County for assistance and questioned where most of the referrals to the County's Social Services Department come from.

Ms. James replied by saying that most referrals come from hospitals, local townships and partner agencies. She also said the County welcomes the referrals.

Mr. Fieldman introduced Mark Thoman, Supervisor at the Downers Grove Township.

Mr. Thoman thanked Mr. Fieldman for allowing him to speak. He stated that he is a long time resident of Downers Grove and has attended many Village Council meetings over the years. He ran for the Downers Grove Village Council twice and has been an active member of many commissions.

Mr. Thoman also used a PowerPoint presentation to explain all of the services the Downers Grove Township Human Services Department has to offer.

Mr. Thoman said the main demographic areas of the Downers Grove Township Human Services Department services are:

- Youth aged 13 and under
- Senior citizens aged 65 and older
- Those in need of temporary general or emergency assistance

Mr. Thoman spoke of the Youth Life Skills Programs the township offers. He stated that the programs are offered to children from grades 4 through 8. He said that with modern technology and the use of the smartphone, the need for the children to be taught life skills is important.

Mr. Thoman talked about the Elementary Youth Education Program for children in grades 4 through 6. He said that they are state-required courses that are led by licensed instructors with a topic approach that is grade appropriate. The focus at this age is on: character building; bullying; empathy; anxiety and stress management.

Mr. Thoman went on to describe the Middle School Youth Education Program for students in grades 6 through 8. These courses are led by high school "peers" that are recruited and trained by instructors. The topics approach is also grade-appropriate and focuses on: positive goal setting; anxiety and stress management; drug and alcohol prevention strategies.

Mr. Thoman stated last year the township programs were taught in 26 schools. He said due to the pandemic the program is more than likely on hold for the upcoming school year. Mr. Thoman went on to say if the schools are not allowing outside programs to come in then the Township will look to use their website to reach the children.

Mr. Thoman spoke of the Downers Grove Township Human Services General and Emergency Assistance Program. He explained these programs are for those people that “stumble and fall” needing a little help to get back on their feet and move on with their lives. The program offers help with rent and living expenses. The Township refers people to the county for long term help. He stated that they refer people to the food pantries, Salvation Army and other non-profit organizations for assistance. The Township intakes and processes LIHEAP applicants (Low Income Energy Assistance Program). He said they also screen and intake candidates for SSDI (Social Security and Supplemental Security Income Disability) and have assisted people with applying for unemployment during COVID.

Mr. Thoman went on to talk about the Senior Programs which include: Dial-a-Ride; reduced rate RTA pass; IL Benefit Access Program intake; temporary handicapped parking placards, Banner News information newsletter; Vintage Times cable programs; driver’s education classes; car care check-up clinic; Senior Survival Series information programs. Mr. Thoman spoke of the many groups that the Downers Grove Township helps and how those groups in turn help the Township residents. An example of one of those groups is the DuPage Senior Citizens Council. A complete list of programs can be found on the web at [www.dgtownship.com](http://www.dgtownship.com).

Mr. Thoman gave some examples of donations given to the township from local businesses and how bringing those donations to local shelters has touched so many lives. He went on to say that he has been using social media, in particular Facebook and Next Door, as a platform to push information especially during COVID. He said that during the pandemic the Township used social media to assist the seniors and the physically handicap residents in the area by providing a list of grocery stores that set aside shopping times for them to shop before the rest of the public was allowed in.

Ms. Aycock thanked Mr. Thoman for his presentation and asked him if the Human Services team at the Township is gearing up to work remotely with School District #58.

Mr. Thoman responded by saying that this past spring they provided the school district with information online and in modules for the teachers to use. He said the Township is prepared to meet the needs of the schools however they want them to. He said that the modules have been refined over the decades, but there is nothing like face to face interactions with the students.

Ms. Campbell asked about the challenges the Township has encountered with the senior population, persons with disabilities, and with people that cannot access social media.

Mr. Thoman responded by saying things have been challenging since March, but the Township has made changes to accommodate the times. He gave an example of a change made to the senior frozen meal pickup process to make it "contactless". He also said that the pandemic has prevented the township from holding the programs that used to allow the seniors to interact with each other - which is very unfortunate. He added that with a total of 149,000 residents in the Downers Grove Township area there can be challenges reaching everyone, even without the complicated circumstances. The Township works consistently with other townships in the area to get ideas and give ideas to better serve its residents.

Mr. Gilmartin asked Mr. Thoman if he is concerned about the middle school mentor program not starting up again.

Mr. Thoman replied saying the program may fall to the wayside if it doesn’t pick up within the next 1-2 years. He added that if it resumes there will need to be at least 20-30 students interested in the program for it to be effective.

Mr. Gilmartin asked for an example of how the Township has offered temporary help to its residents.

Mr. Thoman explained that they can help in an "emergency" type situation. He gave an example of a one-car household that could not pay a vehicle repair bill and was left without a car. The township assisted by making a payment to the garage that made the repairs directly. He said they assess each situation and if long term assistance is needed those residents are referred to the county. Mr. Thoman noted that the township assists residents with the process to apply for Social Security and Disability Insurance.

Ms. Nagy asked about the Snowflake and Snowball Programs.

Mr. Thoman said that the two programs are interchangeable. He said they have never had an issue with getting teens that are interested in the programs. He continued by saying that the issue has been having the space at the township offices to accommodate the kids. He said he is excited for the new "Township Center" to open. The Township Center is to consist of a large meeting room, a food pantry, and a kitchen. The center is due to open in February of 2021.

Mr. Gilmartin commented on the Downers Grove Township area really consisting of 149,000 residents. That was more than he thought.

Mr. Thoman said the Township consists of all or part of the following municipalities: Downers Grove, Burr Ridge, Clarendon Hills, Darien, Hinsdale, Lemont, Oak Brook, Westmont, Willowbrook and Woodridge.

Mr. Fieldman added to the conversation by saying that depending on where the residents of the Village of Downers Grove live they can belong to one of 4 different townships: Downers Grove Township; Lisle Township; Milton Township; York Township.

Mr. Connolly asked if the township is looking to expand the organizations it works with

Mr. Thoman replied stating the Township started supporting the DuPage Senior Citizens Council and they have hosted several frozen meal pick up events; all of which have been very successful. He said the township is also working closely with other townships in the area to be sure they are all aligned in the programs they provide and referrals they make to the county.

Committee Chair, Ms. Aycock thanked Mr. Fieldman for allowing her the opportunity to participate in the meeting remotely. She said she would like to compile the information received from the presentations given by the library (in February), the township, and the county and get it out to the public. She said the information would be beneficial to all that have been affected financially, especially those impacted by COVID.

Mr. Fieldman stated that he would reach out to Nami and the Youth Outlook Program to present at a future meeting.

## **V. Public Comment**

There was none.

## **VI. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosa Berardi  
Administrative Secretary II  
Village Clerk's Office