



Vera House Strategic Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 20, 2024, 5:30- 7:30
Meeting held via Zoom

Attendees: Agnes McCray (Board of Trustees), Susan Gayes (Board of Trustees), Dawn Penson (President Board of Directors), Pierre Morrisseau (Board of Trustees) Rickey Brown (Board of Directors), Kristen Biello (Board of Directors), Kamesha Graves (Vice President Board of Directors), Daquetta Jones (Chief Executive Officer), Sandra Russell (Secretary Board of Directors)

Absent: Nelisha Barron, Matthew Malinowski

1. Meeting started at 5:38pm
2. Newest Board members, Rickey Brown and Kristen Bilello, welcomed to the board.
3. DEI Activity
 - a. Attendees asked to discuss what allyship means to each attendee. Dawn Penson defined the levels of Allyship, and the attendees discussed how that relates to Vera House.
 - An Ally shows up when it is convenient, an accomplice shows up when there is a risk, a co-conspirator decides to go into the risk proactively, because they helped create the plan in the first place.
4. Tricia Matthews, Karen Benenati, Dawn Penson, Kamesha Graves and Daquetta Jones are going to be part of a 15-month program with the Gifford Foundation. They will be assessing the lifecycle of Vera House. At the end of the 15-month Vera House will be awarded a grant. We need backups for this. Any Board members interested in doing do are asked to reach out to Dawn or Daquetta.
5. Meghan Dean, Dawn Penson, Daquetta Jones and Dana Z met with the Community Foundation on 8/12/24. We need to stop using money from the Foundation. The Foundation has regulations about how they administer the fund. We have \$1.4 million in the fund, and we will reach a point where we ask for funds, and they say no. Dawn discussed the history of how the Community Foundation started managing the money. Pierre spoke about additional history of the money move and getting fundraising back online to address the drain on the Foundation money. Gala and white ribbon campaign are Trustee fundraisers, and that money goes back into the Foundation. Dawn spoke about new Board leadership, and we are all in alignment raising money for Vera House. The capital campaign will have a silent phase for raising funds to we are serious about raising money.
6. Transformation Campaign – Communication Plan



- a. Overall feedback of the plan, no one has no issues with the plan and no suggested changed. Kristen asked where are in the process are we. Dawn provided background of why this plan came to be. Lack of fundraising and lack of alignment with the previous Board of Directors contributed to the situation we are in today. Based on the feedback from Melany (Community Foundation) this has been changed to a 12-month program. Daquetta is working on adding a giving pyramid to show how the different levels of giving will affect this campaign. It was noted that is an internal document only and is not to be shared with anyone else. There were discussions about what needs to be done to the plan document. There was discussion about more than one incident not being the only cause of the agency going into crisis. This was caused by an escalation of a series of circumstances. This is a transformation plan that we need to look ahead and move the agency toward stabilization and transformation. The Board needs to be aware that we need to support Daquetta and the agency's forward movement. We (BOD and BOT) need to be as transparent as possible with the donors going forward.
- b. Daquetta Jones is going to make some edits based on feedback. The committee will be meeting next month. They will discuss finances, platforms, graphics and other plan details. A large portion of the money needs to go to shelter repair, so people do not turn away from shelter based on its conditions.
- c. Every is asked to review the donor list to see if there is anyone they know and is willing to ask for donations. Attendees were asked to bring up any fundraising ideas that they may. Suggestion of a wall of giving for donors at certain levels.
 - Ideas brought forward: A social gathering where donors are invited in to meet and see/feel Vera House. Since our shelter location are confidential, we may be able to do it at 723 James St. Include a video of the inside shelters. Show how we address eldercare in the community. Spending time in nursing facilities. Go to local banks and educational institutions in the area and see if they want to be involved with this committee in some way.
- d. Getting the message out there needs to include what Vera House does to help the community. Start with the 15-year list to get the silent phase started.
 - TikTok
 - DocuSeries that Daquetta Jones is part of with assist.
 - Update website with relevant stories and events.
 - Need to be strategic with when we announce this campaign.
6. Daquetta Jones is going to send out links to all documents so everyone can work on the same document



7. This is the last Strategic Board meeting. The Committee will be meeting in October, but all are welcome to attend. Next Board of Directors Meeting—September 17 5:30-7:30 at the Community Foundation on the third floor.
8. Committee Updates: 2022 Audit is projected to be completed in the beginning of October. 2 Interviews for Board Development. Sandra Russell will reach out to Will for a new date for Property committee meeting

Meeting ended at 7:25pm