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Juvenile Welfare Board Meeting : 1953 : 11 : 12 : Minutes

Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County.

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Meeting of November 12, 1953
Held in Clearwater

Present: Mrs. Harrison, Chairman; Mr. Parry, Secretary; Mrs. Helland; Mrs. Jackson; Mrs. Strickland; Judge Gardiner; and the Director, Dr. Herbert D. Williams.

Motion: Minutes
The minutes of the October 21 meeting were approved as submitted to the members by mail, on motion by Mrs. Holland, seconded by Mrs. Strickland, and carried by vote of the membership.

Motion: Expenditures
Expenditures for November 15 were explained by Dr. Williams. Mrs. Jackson moved and Mrs. Holland seconded the motion that the check list covering checks #3313 to 3332 in the General Operating Account, and checks #427 and 428 in the In-School Counseling Account be approved for payment. The motion carried.

The financial report for October expenditures was discussed.

The Director explained that the Juvenile Court reports for September had been delayed and were being submitted at this time.

The Director reported that investigation had disclosed that Leslie Sheppard, toward whose support the Juvenile Welfare Board is providing funds, has no parental veterans' status, and that no funds will be available from this source. This was a follow-up of a request from the Board to determine the availability of veteran's status and funds for Leslie.

The Director reported that the meeting for recognition of foster parents had been quite successful, and that some applications for foster home status had been received by the agencies participating.

Motion: Request for support of Robert and Diane Ryan
A request from the Children's Service Bureau for financial assistance in providing care for Robert and Diane Ryan, whose mother is unable to provide for all of their support, was read to the Board. Mrs. Jackson moved and Mrs. Strickland seconded the motion that the Board supplement the efforts of the mother to care for the Ryan children, pending her ability to give full support, with the Juvenile Welfare Board's contribution not to exceed $20 a week. The motion carried.

The Director gave a brief summary of some of the facts and figures to appear in the Sixth Annual Report of the Juvenile Welfare Board. He also gave a run-down of the topics which will be included in the report.

Mr. Parry introduced Mr. Thomas Smith and Mr. Stanley Hatfield, members of the Pinellas County Budget Board, to the Juvenile Welfare Board.

Mr. Parry read a report in reference to the delinquency situation in Pinellas County, and the need for assistance in the form of staff and travel allowance resulting from Mr. Patrick's illness. (see attached report)
Members of the Juvenile Welfare Board expressed their approval of the appointment of a citizens committee by the Board of County Commissioners to explore the facts in reference to the delinquency and child welfare situation in the county, with a view to making a recommendation regarding changes. Judge Gardiner expressed the feeling that the appointment of such a committee could be interpreted as lack of confidence in the Juvenile Welfare Board, but the other Board members did not agree with him.

Motion: Appointment of a caseworker

Mrs. Holland moved that the Juvenile Court be urged to appoint a white male caseworker to assist the Court in performing its duties. Mrs. Jackson seconded the motion, which carried. This motion was in line with the approval of the Board of County Commissioners for the employment of one additional assistant counselor.

Judge Gardiner explained the law relating to taking juveniles into custody whenever they were in a dangerous situation or when they had violated the law.

There was some discussion in reference to recent newspaper articles purporting to quote the Juvenile Judge to the effect that the Juvenile Welfare Board was responsible for the delay in processing cases in the Juvenile Court. The Judge stated that it was his staff who were responsible for the delays and who changed petitions from delinquency to dependency. It was pointed out that the Judge had the authority to determine whether a child was a dependent or a delinquent.

There was some discussion of the payment of prisoners' board bills. The Director reported that Mr. Cooperman had advised the Board against paying these bills. Action was delayed pending receipt of a written opinion from Mr. Cooperman.

Sidney S. Parry
Secretary

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT BY COMMISSIONER
SIDNEY S. PARRY, BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MEETING OF NOVEMBER 10, 1953

I was assigned to a committee to assist in ferreting out the facts about juvenile delinquency as such in the community and about correspondence, in great quantity, received from Judge Gardiner.

I found a lack of concrete facts, a lack of any documentation in the Judge's correspondence or in any of his appearances before this Board at any time. I have reviewed the minutes of this Board during Budget Hearings and find that no facts or figures indicating a need for additional assistance were presented by the Judge. As a matter of fact, no need for further assistance was presented by the Court in due time to be provided for in this year's budget. Certainly, then was the time to make any such a request, in the orderly, well-known and well-recognized conduct for establishing the personnel for any office or board -- including the Juvenile Court.
In studying the records of Juvenile Delinquency in Pinellas County, I find that the nationwide average of one delinquent child in 50 in 1952 is far in excess of the Pinellas County rate of less than one delinquent in a hundred population in the same year. I find a slight increase numerically—308 to 323 in total figures in Pinellas County in 1951-1952. This increase need not exist. Therefore, I find, in conjunction with other officials, that the figures available to me indicate no rapid outbreak of juvenile delinquency in the last few years. I, personally, believe that the recent outburst of child violations of law have resulted in part from the constant repetition of the statement by certain officials that juvenile delinquency runs rampant and that the "curtain law" protects such violators. Certainly the Juvenile Court Act was not intended to have the result of thus encouraging delinquency.

I further find that information as to the number of children jailed in the county which is supposed to be filed monthly by the Juvenile Court with this Board is not available and apparently has not been filed for many months. Therefore, this information has not been available for this committee's study.

I can only presume that, due to the illness and absence of Chief Counsel or Ed. Patrick that some further assistance, as was given by this Board last year and for the same reason, is again needed. Based upon this assumption, I recommend the funds be made available for a temporary special deputy counselor to assist in catching up on the backlog of cases caused by the illness of the Chief Counselor. I suggest that the Judge be informed that if further assistance was necessary for this year, that it was his duty to present these facts to the Board of County Commissioners and Budget Board at the time of hearings on the budget and that these Boards must rely on such presentation—or lack of it—in setting up a budget and, further, that these Boards are as bound by the budget thus established as are the offices operating under the budget.

This Board has always been sympathetic towards the Juvenile Court and Welfare Board and has always granted requests substantiated by facts. This Board is not accustomed to having demands made to it, especially when those making the demands fail to assist the Board to the extent of offering some factual data in support of such a demand.

Obviously, we as Commissioners are desirous of finding a lasting, workable plan for most efficiently and effectively operating in the field of juvenile assistance and correction. We have approached the matter factually, objectively, without politics or personal feelings, it being our belief that the welfare of our children must be placed on a plane above, and separate from personalities or politics.

In continuing this approach, I recommend the appointment of a Citizen's Advisory Committee on Juvenile Welfare to work with this Board, and such other courts and Boards that indicate their desires, for the following purposes:

1. To determine what further the County Commissioners or any other county office or agency can and should do to assist in the matter of Juvenile Welfare as it relates to Juvenile Delinquency.

2. To determine what revisions in the presently used administrative measures and means are needed or would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Juvenile Welfare work and specifically the matter of juvenile delinquency.
3. To study the present Juvenile Court Act and Pinellas County's Special Act, to make recommendations for amendment, change or revision, if any, in order to assure maximum legislative authority and assistance in this matter.

Committee of five:

1. One from the St. Petersburg Times to be named by Nelson Poynter.

2. One from the St. Petersburg Independent to be named by Loyal Phillips.

3. One from the Clearwater Sun.


5. Leonard Cooperman, Attorney for the Juvenile Welfare Board.