

## Meeting summary 3/28/18

I met with Kim Fraser, Executive Director, today to discuss the disconnect between the Forbes House and the Lake County ADAMHS Board. I was not representing the Forbes House, nor did I speak on their behalf. As a representative of Lobbyists for Citizens, I was very interested in ensuring that the Forbes House, a 40+ year old Lake County institution that has provided exemplary services to the Lake County citizens, does not cease to exist or has to curtail their services due to reduced funding.

Our purpose in meeting with Ms. Fraser was to try to understand the future direction of the ADAMHS Board, and to determine if there is a "seat at their table" for the Forbes House.

Ms. Fraser indicated that due to reduced Federal and State funding there is a concerted effort to consolidate 'non-profits' nationwide, and also in the State-mandated ADAMHS' Boards throughout the State of Ohio. The ADAMHS Board of Lake County has decided that consolidating the 'non-profits' are in the best interests of Lake County taxpayers.

They believe that there are economies of scale in supporting an entity that can provide multiple family services, rather than having to resort to multiple agencies to assist a single family. However, if there are smaller 'non-profits' that can provide a unique service, they would certainly entertain the thought of financially supporting them.

The State of Ohio laws governing the various ADAMHS Board in the State of Ohio are clear that all funds spent by the Lake County ADAMHS Board must be spent in Lake County. The Lake County ADAMHS Board is supporting WomenSafe, which is located in Geauga County, but are only paying for services rendered to Lake County residents. Ms. Fraser indicated that WomenSafe can provide additional services, such as counseling and case management, for which the Forbes House does not have certification. Also, due to the nature of domestic abuse, sometimes it is in the best interest of the women and children to live some distance from their home for safety reasons.

Ms. Fraser stated that the Forbes house has not submitted a request for funds to the ADAMHS Board. I asked if they have passed the deadline for submitting the request for funding. I was told that all funding requests are due by May 1<sup>st</sup> for the next fiscal year starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. If the Forbes House submits a request, they will be considered by the ADAMHS Board.

I also mentioned our concerns for their renewal of the .7 levy on the May ballot. It is our position that our ever-increasing real estate taxes are going to price seniors and others living on fixed incomes out of their homes that they have worked all their lives to achieve. With the Crime Lab levy on the May ballot and the possible Lakeland Community College levy on the November ballot, the tax burden on Lake County seniors will start to be unbearable.

Many more people are going to pass the housing affordable threshold of 30% of their annual income being spent on their mortgage, utilities and property taxes.

***(Comment: There is obviously a disconnect between the Forbes House and the ADAMHS Board. From Ms. Fraser's perspective, she believes that she is doing what is in the best interests of the residents of Lake County. It appears that she has chosen WomenSafe of Geauga County over Lake County's Forbes House, since she has made the financial commitment to them by installing them in the Beacon Health facility in Mentor.***

***Although Ms. Fraser is the Executive Director, she does have a Board of Directors and three County Commissioners to whom she must report. From my discussions with the leaders of the various agencies under the ADAMHS Board umbrella, I get the impression that Ms. Fraser***

***has a strong domineering personality, since they are afraid to go against her wishes.***

***I was told that the Forbes House has an annual budget of approximately \$700,000, and receive annually ~ \$40 - \$50K from the ADAMHS Board. Although the lack of ADAMHS Board funding will curtail some opportunities to help Lake County residents in need in the short term; thankfully, it will not put them out of business.***

***It appears that the Forbes House wanted to remain as an autonomous agency that provides domestic abuses services, rather than being combined into a larger entity and lose their identity within the community. I can really identify with their decisions. Unfortunately, the business "golden rule" applies here: "Those that have the gold, make the rules."***

***I truly hope that there can be a meeting of the minds between the Forbes House and the ADAMHS Board. Forty years of serving the community should count for something.***

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***I would also like to make Lake County residents aware of a discussion I had with Ms. Fraser concerning the ADAMHS Board "Non-Profits". I naively thought that "Non-Profits" were established for "the betterment of mankind"- to give back to the community, to make life better for all of us.***

***After reviewing the financial statements of some of the ADAMHS Board "Non-Profits", I can see how truly wrong I was. The phrase "Non-Profits" is merely an IRS designation describing an entity that can live off of government funding, and off the backs of local taxpayers. There are healthy salaries, and benefits being paid; and significant profits are being made by some of them. Lobbyists for Citizens will continue to monitor them for the citizens of Lake County.***

***The ADAMHS Board is not a "Non-Profit" agency. They are a governmental body established by the Ohio Revised Code, and report to the County Commissioners. Unlike Lakeland Community College and the Lake Metroparks, they are not totally autonomous, since they must get the Commissioners' approval to place a levy on the ballot. To get the financial information about them, we had to obtain the information from the Commissioners' legal expert, Mr. Dave Hackman, it was not given freely by the ADAMHS Board, and we were not permitted to see salary or benefits by individual.***

***"Non-Profits" are required by I.R.S. rules to provide annually financial statements for public viewing. Many of the "Non-Profits" freely gave us their information, and others we had to get the information from an independent website.....Guidestar.org.***