



St. Vincent de Paul Society Milwaukee Archdiocese

Voice of the Poor Committee

Minutes from the Meeting held on Sept. 10, 2022

In Attendance: Dave Busch, Richard Fedler, Tom Jozwik, and John Weber

Call to Order: After taking a summer recess in July and cancelling the August meeting due to a large number of scheduling conflicts, the Chairperson called together the first in-person meeting of the VOP Committee in over two years, at 11:10 AM.

There was general conversation as to the low attendance. The Chairperson stated that we may have underestimated the ongoing impact of the pandemic, as well as the convenience of the online meeting format.

Minutes: The minutes from the VOP meeting held on June 11th, 2022 were emailed to committee members and reviewed before the start of this meeting. The chairperson asked the committee members in attendance if they had any corrections that needed to be made to the minutes. No corrections were offered and the June minutes were accepted by general consent, as submitted.

Subcommittee Updates:

Energy – Dave Busch reported that the Citizens Utility Board has produced a number of webinars to help residential utility customers to take steps now to stave off increases in home heating costs and your utility bills.

A Sept. 22nd webinar will feature insights by Chad Laibly from [Wisconsin Focus on Energy](#), and Cristina Carvajal from [Wisconsin Eco Latinos](#), as well as Tom Content from [CUB](#). You can see a replay of the webinar, [Action Steps You Can Take to Use Less Energy at Home](#), on CUB's [YouTube channel](#), and you can download the full presentation slides here:

<https://cubwi.org/download/cub-residential-webinar-09-22-2022/>

Busch also reminded us that the home heating season begins October First. People in need should apply now for Energy Assistance. Energy assistance is a one-time payment during the heating season (October 1-May 15). The funding pays a portion of energy costs, but it is not intended to cover the entire energy costs of a residence. The amount of the energy assistance benefit depends on a variety of factors, including the household's size, income, and energy costs. In most cases, the energy assistance benefit is paid directly to the household's energy supplier.

Vincentians should view this website for more information:

<https://energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/AgencyResources/energy-assistance.aspx>

Criminal Justice: E. Michael McCann was unable to attend this meeting and discussion on this topic was tabled until the next meeting.

Health Care - Marian Lamoureux was unable to attend this meeting and discussion on this topic was tabled until the next meeting.

Dave Busch reported that as of Sept 9th, there were 1,279 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 putting the seven-day average for daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases is 1,250. Due to the widespread availability of home testing kits, the [Department of Health Services](#) assumes their numbers are underreporting the severity of COVID. The pandemic is still impacting the elderly population disproportionately with 66 percent of all COVID cases requiring hospitalization are comprised of people age 70 and older. Currently 70 percent of Confirmed COVID deaths in Wisconsin occur in people age 70 and over.

Housing: John Weber reported that Wisconsin Help for Homeowners ([WHH](#)) is a new statewide program that can help with overdue bills like mortgage payments, property taxes, utilities, and more. The program is open to individuals and families who live in Wisconsin with overdue housing-related bills, both with and without a mortgage, who meet income and other eligibility requirements, and have experienced a qualified economic hardship since January 21, 2020. You can start the application process by calling 855-246-6394.

John also reported that Milwaukee County plans to use \$19 million of American Rescue Plan funding to build affordable housing in the Milwaukee suburbs in an effort to reduce racial disparities and improve residents' health.

Weber also provided a link to a short article that outlines the ways you can get housing assistance in our area, here: <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2021/07/how-to-get-rental-assistance-in-wisconsin/>

Food/hunger: Tom Jozwik reported that the date the date for the [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#) was moved to Wednesday, September 28. The Biden Administration at that time will announce “a blueprint for ending hunger and addressing diet-related diseases.” It will be the first such White House Conference since 1969. Related events to coincide with the conference are being encouraged among the health care community, hunger and nutrition advocates, state governments, colleges, etc. The conference’s ultimate goal is to end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases in the U.S. by 2030.

A task force was set up to advise the conference and advance its objectives. The task force is a group of nonpartisan, non-government subject matter experts. They released 30 high priority “actionable” policy recommendations in August. The top six are: (1) Improve collaboration among federal agencies to address hunger, nutrition, and health—and increase these agencies’ accountability; (2) Support food sector small businesses owned by historically underserved and marginalized groups; (3) Improve the readability and content of packaged food labels; (4) Increase access to, and participation in, federal nutrition programs by expanding eligibility, simplifying enrollment, and improving convenience for participants; (5) Facilitate health system screening for food and nutrition insecurity and follow-up referrals to appropriate interventions; (6) Strengthen federal nutrition education programs such as SNAP-Ed.

The announced goal of the conference is to “end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030, so that fewer Americans experience diet-related diseases like diabetes, obesity, and hypertension.”

Immigration: Armand Carriere was unable to attend this meeting and discussion on this topic was tabled until the next meeting.

Human Trafficking – The VOP Committee is looking for another member that may be interested, passionate, or knowledgeable on the subject of Human Trafficking and willing to report on this topic in future meetings. Discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Labor/Minimum Wage – Dave Busch reported that Wisconsin's unemployment rate rose slightly in August to 3.1 percent. But unemployment in our area remains high. Milwaukee County's rate is at 5.4 percent, Racine County is at 5.6 percent, Kenosha County's rate is 4.4 percent. The data also shows that Wisconsin counties having the highest concentration of Native Americans, also have unemployment rates that are over 4.5 percent, with Menomonee County leading the state with an unemployment rate of 8.9 percent!

One bit of good news is that the state recently came up with five million dollars in "[Wisconsin Fast Forward](#)" training grants for employer. Up to \$5 million in funding is available to employers who demonstrate a critical need for skilled workers and are seeking training grants to develop and implement a business-led skills training program.

Waukesha Update: David Anderson was unable to attend this meeting and discussion on this topic was tabled until the next meeting.

Racine Update: Jim Erven was unable to attend this meeting but filed this report via email: Acting on information presented by SVDP National Program Director Ryan Carey, the Racine County Council voted to remit a "first ever" donation of five thousand dollars to the National [Friends of the Poor Grant Program](#), which assists other Councils and Conferences that may be in higher need of resources due to the challenges posed by higher numbers of people in need or in highly distressed communities.

Holly Anderly, Director of the Homeless Assistance Leadership Organization ([HALO](#)) in the city of Racine, delivered a presentation to local SVDP Conference members on homelessness. Holly provided information on the process and availability of shelter space in the Racine area, and provided insight on the anticipated seasonal demand for the upcoming fall and winter 2022 season.

Old Business:

SVDP Awareness Month – Dave Busch reported that we will kick off SVDP Awareness month with a special mass for Vincentians at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Milwaukee, on Sunday September 25th, at 9 AM. Vincentian and Deacon Rich Gulig will be assisting Bishop Jeffrey Haines celebrate this mass. There will be a reception after mass, offering some time for fellowship, coffee and donuts with Vincentians from across the Archdiocese. The feast day of St. Vincent is September 27th, which falls on a Tuesday this year.

North Central Region Meeting – Dick Fedler reported that the North Central Region Meeting held in Waukesha at the end of June was a big success. Dick was able to attend a number of workshops that interested him. Based on what he saw, attendance very good with members in evidence from all across the North Central region.

New Business:

In-person VOP Meeting – John Weber has graciously hosted a picnic in his backyard. Food and drinks were plentiful. John proved to be a pretty great chef, and he served up a great batch of sauerkraut!

Next Meeting: The next VOP meeting will be held **online**, on the second Saturday in October. Please plan to join us on Saturday, October 15, 2022 at 9AM. The login information can be found on the last page of these minutes.

Adjournment: The meeting was formally adjourned at 1:15 PM, with the VOP members reading a closing prayer for the health of all of our committee members.

*“drive away from me all forms of sickness and disease,
restore strength to my body and joy to my spirit ...”*

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MILWAUKEE ARCHDIOCESE VOICE OF POOR COMMITTEE

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Here is the information for logging into the ZOOM Meeting:

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Milwaukee is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting for the VOP Committee monthly meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84435969715?pwd=WFN2NIhkV1c1SVpqd2I1RG5oVkl5UT09>

Dial by your location. 312 626 6799 US (Chicago).
Meeting ID: 844 3596 9715

Or call in (audio only): 312-626-6799