

In the Council Chambers of the Showers City Hall on Wednesday, February 23, 2011 at 7:55 pm (after the scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting) with Council President Susan Sandberg presiding over a Special Session of the Common Council.

COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL SESSION  
February 23, 2011

Roll Call: Mayer, Piedmont-Smith, Rollo, Ruff, Sandberg, Satterfield, Sturbaum, Wisler  
Absent: Volan  
Also Attending: County Commissioner Iris Kiesling.

ROLL CALL

Council President Sandberg gave the Agenda Summation

AGENDA SUMMATION

Council Attorney/Administrator Sherman read rules of the meeting looking to have a council member adopt the rules as a motion for proceeding with the Special Session.

HEARING ON THE EFFECT OF  
THE PROPOSED REDUCTION IN  
FEDERAL SPENDING ON LOAL  
SOCIAL SERVICES

*The Council has convened this session to hear from the public about proposed federal cuts to social services programs currently before the U.S. Congress offered in HR1, and the advocacy role the council might take in regard to these actions.*

*The council will hear from the Mayor and then from directors of three local agencies directly affected by the impending reductions in federal spending. These directors will limit their remarks to no more than seven minutes a piece.*

*The council will set aside no more than 20 minutes for members or the Council and Monroe County Commissioners to ask questions of these directors.*

*Members of the public may speak once for no more than 3 minutes per person. Those wishing to speak are asked to line up at one of the two podia, sign-in when at the podium, state their name and city or county of residence, and then address the Council in the issue.*

*Written comments may be placed in the box by the podium to the audiences' right or given to the City Clerk who is seated by the podium to the audience's left.*

*The Council will alternate hearing from speakers at one podia and the other, and he President is charged with assuring that speakers follow the rules and with keeping in order in the Chambers.*

*The Council desires to limit this Special Session to no more than three hours. IN order to keep within that time frame, the President may indicate the last speaker in each line to be heard toward the end of the meeting.*

*The Council will consider a motion to direct the President to write a letter on behalf of the Council to federal officials regarding these proposed reductions in federal spending. Before sending the letter out, the President will circulate it among Council members for their suggestions. Council members will then briefly discuss and vote on the motion without further public comment.*

It was moved and seconded that the rules read above be adopted for this Special Session.

The motion was approved by a voice vote.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes from this meeting, the DVD records and any written statements submitted to the council be forwarded to the Representative Todd Young for his consideration. The motion was approved by a voice vote.

Sandberg called on Mayor Kruzan to begin the testimony portion of the meeting.

- Rules

- Testimony

Mayor Kruzan thanked the council for convening the listening session, and said that people voted for better government, not crueler government. He said they voted to send Americans back to work, not to cut the very funding that would help accomplish that goal. Kruzan said that social service and non-profit agencies were economic developers that empowered people to achieve their potential and the more we empowered people to increase their earnings, the more our tax base would grow and the more our entire community would prosper.

He said making an investment that returned huge dividends was a fiscally responsible concept. He said that failure to adequately fund human infrastructure was a moral failure which would exacerbate this nation's economic woes. He added that we had a common responsibility to stop these cuts and said 'thank you' to those who worked every day to improve the human condition. Finally Kruzan said it was important for him, and all elected officials present at the meeting, to know that there were many people in government and politics who stood with them.

Penny Caudill, Administrator Monroe County Health Department, said that at the Futures Clinic 85% of the clients were at 100% or below the poverty level. She said less than 1% were in the full pay category and that the vast majority of patients were uninsured. She said that in Indiana, the loss of Title X funds meant over 7500 people would no longer have access to affordable preventive care and birth control. She said this could force the closure of 45 valuable health clinics, put 200 people out of work, and that without this access to low cost or free birth control and counseling pregnancy-related costs could increase by \$37,000,000.

Caudill added that expected impact from the loss of Title X funds would be an increase in sexually transmitted diseases, complications of untreated infections, an increase in cancer, increase in unplanned pregnancies, possible miscarriages, and a lack of early prenatal care which would result in low birth weight babies. She said Title X funds were vital and their loss would cost the nation and communities more in the long run.

Todd Lare, Executive Director of the South Central Community Action Program, said that while the political decisions guiding this issue were being made in Washington, the real impact of these short sighted, uninformed and unwise decisions would be felt in every community across the country. Lare emphasized that the president's proposal would cut the Community Service Block Grants by 50% and reallocate the remaining 50% of CSBG funding nationally to a competitive process. He said essentially that would mean that many agencies could be assured of NO Community Service Block Grant monies, creating great pockets of disparity in funding, largely affecting rural areas. He added this would make it nearly impossible to fund any programming on a year to year basis.

He requested letters be sent to President Obama, Congressman Young, Senators Lugar and Coats supporting CSBG services and the restoration of Head Start funding. He advocated calls to the White House and active, loud and unconditional support from elected leaders, business leaders, and faith leaders. He urged people to write letters to the editor and do anything else which might help. He also mentioned the Facebook site at *Save Community Action* in the Causes section.

Lisa Abbott, Director of the Housing and Neighborhood Development Department, described the proposed cuts and what they actually meant in relation to dollars. She said that the city anticipated a 66% reduction in the amount that would be available to assist social services. She said that last fiscal year, the social service funding alone from CDBG helped to provide services to over 8500 people representing the neediest people in our community and who need these services to survive. Abbott said a reduction in Physical Improvements funding would affect the owner-occupied housing program. She said this would mean that fewer people, who are the very lowest on the income scale, would be able to have emergency repairs done to their homes, ultimately affecting the habitability of their home.

Abbott said that the other program which would lose funds was the Housing Counseling Program which offers default counseling, reverse mortgage counseling, pre-purchase, homeless and rental counseling.

Testimony (Cont'd)

She said last year this program served over 500 households with 50% of them in default. She said cuts to the Pre-Purchase Program (which sponsors the Home Buyer's Club to help people learn about the home buying process to avoid a lot of what has created the problems) would reduce services that could be provided and the number of people who could be served. Abbott summarized by saying the cuts would hurt the city's ability to help people as they funded the agencies that serve the people. She said that this funding was part of the agencies' CDBG allocations and part of their operating budget. She said that the agencies would be scrambling to fill that void.

After a few questions from the Council, Sandberg reminded the audience that they each had three minutes to speak.

Meri Reinhold, Executive Director with Monroe County United Ministries said that whatever level of cuts occurred would have a very serious impact on the services provided by her agency. She said the biggest source of funds had to do with the Child Care Development Block Grant both through vouchers and a contract that with the State of Indiana. She said this program kept parents working and attending school and therefore increased their potential for greater earnings in the future. She said it also enabled their children to attend a high quality program that provided them the best opportunities for growth and development of their potential.

Cecelia Peacock, Monroe County resident and single mother of two Head Start Children as well as a fourth grader in town said the Head Start program had been unbelievable for her. She said she used entitlement programs like food stamps and CASY (*note: Childcare Voucher System Program*), but said she was happy to say she was off both of those, due in large part to the Head Start program, which afforded her children an educational and interactive environment that she could never afford otherwise.

Bobby Summers Executive Director of Martha's House said that the waiting list for those needing emergency shelter was longer than the limited resources the shelter received. She said the three percent of our gross national product that was spent on the most vulnerable people was where this proposed legislation was to cut. She said it would unfairly compromise their life style, while preserving the needs of the wealthiest of this country.

Scott Alber, volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul, said that preserving this funding actually would help in the long run since it would offer leverage and was better government. He said cutting funds to programs like SCCAP put more of a strain on St. Vincent de Paul and other religious organizations. He suggested that tax cuts for the top earners had little negative effect on them. He added that since most of that money was saved or not spent it did not benefit the economy, while money from unemployment and programs like SCCAP was money that would go directly into the economy, returning \$1.75 for every dollar spent.

Jamie Andree, managing attorney of Indiana Legal Service said the agency was in the business of "homelessness prevention" through the defense of foreclosure, eviction and collection cases that may take the money for an un-owed debt that a low income household would need to pay rent or utilities. She added that 2 staff attorneys who work with foreclosure and homelessness and who were funded though AmeriCorps would be part of the cuts.

Marc Haggerty, Bloomington said he tried to look at this in context, and that for the last ten years, this country's surplus had been eroded by the

funding of 2 wars. He referred to the great wealth of Wall Street and said this had become class warfare. He expressed concern that Rep. Todd Young would support this cut in social service spending, yet would not propose a cut in his or his staff's salary or their health benefits.

Tawana King, member of the Circles Initiative, said this program that was funded through SCCAP enabled her to receive her Associates Degree. She also said that with the funding proposed to be cut she was able to get assistance through MCUM and food stamps. She said these cuts were not deserved.

Kay Goodman, Circles participant said that Circles would be the first program to go when the cuts were enacted. She explained that Circles, a program that ends the cycle of poverty through the intentional development of networking, training and support is in 57 communities in the United States. She said she has grown and learned how to work her way out poverty with the help of Circles.

Linda Patton, resident and Circles member, said she had a packet of letters from Circles volunteers to present to the Council. She read one of the letters from a volunteer that talked about the educational and nurturing work that volunteers perform with the children of Circles participants, and how much would be lost for kids if the funding was eliminated.

Sheri Benham, Executive Director of Stepping Stones, which provides transitional housing and services to youth aged 16-21 said the agency definitely empowered the residents, and a loss of funding would mean fewer services as described by the next speakers.

Bethany Smith, a resident of Stepping Stones, said the experience had changed her life by allowing her to leave a home of abuse and drugs, find a job and receive the support she needed.

Lauren Hall, independent living coach at Stepping Stones, said she couldn't imagine the horrible effect on the youth of the community if the proposed federal funds were cut.

Benham concluded by saying this would be a step backward. In the five years Stepping Stones had been in existence, the agency was able to expand services and build stability. She said the loss of funding would mean a reduction in staff and services – something she said the community would need to figure out together.

Marianne Aurich, Monroe County resident, said she drafted a letter which she sent to every politician from the President on down. She said this was very easy to do by going to that person's website and clicking on the contact information. She said the letter she sent detailed the types of things that people in need of assistance go through, such as trying to sleep when it is so cold that there is frost on the inside of the windows, finding safe child care on minimum wage, or attempting to keep up after losing a job or being severely injured along with all of the other experiences. She said we pride ourselves on our religious and moral ethics and we tell other countries to take care of the same kinds of things. She questioned how we dared to do that.

Kay Bull said the Republican Party hated Bloomington because there was too much solidarity in this community, too many people who would stand up and say things. She said if Mitch Daniels could fly over Bloomington and just burn it down, he would.

Gracia Valliant, long time resident of Bloomington, said the magnitude of these proposed cuts was almost more than she could wrap her head around. She said her concern about the cuts in CDBG money was what others had expressed. She mentioned families who were working or were in school and could not afford childcare without the CDBG money, therefore they would be on the dole again. She said it couldn't be good economic and fiscal responsibility to blatantly cut without really considering what worked and what didn't work.

Shawna Meyer-Niederman, Bloomington resident, said that at the Crestmont Boys and Girls Club, 52% of the families had an annual income of less than \$5,000 and 80% percent of the members were from single female head of household families. She said that without a doubt The Crestmont Club served the community's highest concentration of the impoverished children that lived within this community.

Colleen Moore, Monroe County resident, said that the Circles program had changed her life. She said that living in poverty made it very hard to find encouragement, especially in her own group. She said that her Circles Allies gave her the encouragement, strength and motivation to attend IVY Tech.

Beth Krouse, Executive Director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of South Central Indiana, said the loss of CSBG funds would require a cut in staff which would mean providing fewer "bigs" for their children. She said one program that would be eliminated completely would be the grant for mentoring children of prisoners, which she said provided outreach to children who had incarcerated adults, guardians or significant others.

Jennifer Head, a Head Start mother, said the program helped with early detection of learning and physical disabilities along with support services. She said the children in Head Start also received academic assistance to help them achieve on par with their peers when they entered kindergarten, without which early elementary teachers would have to provide extra assistance to help remediate these children to grade level.

William Vance Jr, President of the Monroe Branch of the NAACP, said his organization was in opposition to the cuts in CSBG funds. He noted the negative impact it would have on the poor.

Toby Strout, Executive Director of Middle Way House, said the impacts of budget cuts could be devastating to her agency which had struggled mightily to ensure that thousands upon thousands of women and children could be alive today who might not otherwise have been. She said they moved from danger to safety and many, many hundreds of them had moved from dependency to self determination. She also said with these budget cuts that women and children would die because places like Middle Way House would not exist, and some of those who survived would face futures of poverty and homelessness because opportunities would be taken away.

Strout said she didn't believe that the last election was about cutting programs and services, but a desire to change the unemployment situation. She said the answer was an investment in programs represented at this meeting, entrepreneurship, clean energy, and things that would provide jobs for the future.

Kristofer Bowman, said that Head Start was a big help in early childhood development, and not only head Start, but other vital programs would be taken from those in need with the proposed budget cuts.

Carrie Felton, Circles member, reminded the Council that if support was taken from those in need, it would not empower them; rather it would make them feel powerless.

David Keppel, chair of the *Task Force on A Just Peace*, Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, said there was an extraordinary need and extraordinary efforts to deal with that extraordinary need. He said tax cuts for the wealthy had left the United States more unequal than it had been at anytime since before the Great Depression in 1929. He said we recovered from the Great Depression not by giving further tax cuts to the wealthy, but on the contrary, through programs to improve the lives of all Americans.

Erin Cooperman, representing AmeriCorps, talked about how the proposed cuts could create a reduction in local services sponsored by AmeriCorps including health and nutrition counseling which could reduce obesity and therefore would end up saving money.

Jada Barbry, Bloomington said that not only does Head Start provide amazing educational help for children aged zero to three along with preparation for kindergarten, it also had a supportive learning environment as well as support for adult learning programs and information on how those families could get assistance.

Marsha McCarty, Catholic Charities said just because her agency was not funded by funds proposed in the cuts, did not mean her agency wouldn't be affected. She said there would be a ripple effect because as other agencies were cut, it would mean more demand for her agency's services.

Julio Alonso, Director, Hoosier Hills Food Bank said the proposed budget cuts would create a larger unquantifiable result as people already on the margins would lose assistance for anything from heating to childcare. He said if food and fuel prices continued to increase the way they were expected to, the pantries and kitchens served by the Food Bank would see an increase in clients.

He said he agreed for the need to get the federal budget under control, but the true explosion in federal spending had been largely from fighting two wars for nearly ten years. He said that abruptly ending the wars would be precipitous and even maybe disastrous, but the war on poverty deserved equal consideration. He continued by saying that the war on poverty was a war we were losing.

Shirley Stumpner, Director of South Central Community Action Head Start, provided statistics about the program. She said families served were at or below 100% of the poverty level, which meant that a family of two had an income of under \$14,710 and a family of four had an income of under \$22,350.

She said also that 10% of the children served were homeless, 16% had special needs and 90% of the children in the program would receive necessary medical screenings before they left the program.

Kathy Byers, Director of the Undergraduate Social Work Program, said despite what some might think, the social service agencies in this community had never had any 'fluff' in their budgets and certainly had none now. She said what was being done right now was that, at the time of our greatest need, when people were suffering because of the economic crisis that was created by Wall Street and the housing industry et cetera, people who were not a part of creating those crises were being asked to pay the price.

Testimony (Cont'd)

Helen Kane, Monroe County resident, said she wrote to the President to say that if the budget cuts for CAP and Block Grants were passed, many programs would cease to exist immediately. In fact she said, the Circles program would close on March 4th and the local food bank, which was already having trouble keeping up with the many new poor would have to cut back. She concluded by saying if these cuts became part of the budget she could not in good conscious vote for him for a second term.

Nick Romy, Bloomington resident, said he knew the difference between right and wrong and the proposed budget cuts were wrong. He asked that Bloomington citizens in need not be reduced to a dollar amount and innocent people not pay for others' mistakes.

Angela Bowman, Head Start parent, said that it was really shocking to think about the future of this country and the detrimental effect these budget cuts would have on people in all classes especially the lower classes. She said that when she wrote her letter to Congress she couldn't help but mention the direct connection between the lack of education, poverty and crime. She said that it was so sad for this country to think that cutting educational opportunities for children could actually be a solution for a temporary problem.

Vickie Pierce, Director of Community Kitchen, said her agency had seen significant increases in need in the last couple of years, much like that of other agencies serving that population. She said the Kitchen set a record in 2009 and then again in 2010 serving over 211,000 meals, 60% which were served to children. She said there was a trickle down effect in the loss of funds that the budget cuts would bring. She explained that if the Food Bank had less funding, then her agency would receive less food which meant she would have to buy more food which meant there was less money for food and salaries, which ultimately meant a reduction of services.

Tim Felton said the fact that people were speaking out was a positive sign, and then he asked Congressman Todd Young's representative to ask the Congressman why would he turn his back on all of these people?

Christine Combs said that those helped by the social services budget were truly in need, with some making only \$8,000 a year. She said the Circles program was a model program because it empowered its participants.

Megan Hutchison said that research from social justice groups designed to reduce incarceration found that reduced incarceration was the result of early childhood development programs. Therefore, she said, programs such as Head Start were critical in helping children achieve better academically, become successful adults and stay out of the criminal justice system. She said that for the federal government to cut these programs would have not only a short term effect but a long term effect that would cost us in the future.

Seeing that no other citizens wished to speak, Sandberg declared the testimony had ended.

(Continued on next page)

It was moved and seconded that the Council President Sandberg prepare a letter to be sent to Federal officials regarding the effect of the proposed reductions on local services. Prior to distributing the letter she will consult with Council members, the Mayor and City Clerk regarding the manner and contents of this communication.

MOTION: That Council President Sandberg prepare a letter to be sent to Federal officials regarding the effect of the proposed reductions on local services.

The motion was approved by a roll call vote of Ayes: 8, Nays: 0.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

APPROVE:

ATTEST:



Susan Sandberg, PRESIDENT  
Bloomington Common Council

Regina Moore, CLERK  
City of Bloomington