



## **Mental Health Board Proposed Facility Expansion Questions & Answers**

***Q: Will this building project increase our taxes?***

**A:** No, we do not need a separate referendum, nor will increased taxes be necessary to complete this project.

***Q: Will this project result in decreased funding for service providers?***

**A:** No, we are able to complete this project and continue funding providers at current or increased levels.

***Q: Why does MHB need so many staff members?***

**A:** The MHB employs approximately 23 staff positions in administration, compliance, training, and billing/accounting. Staff positions in coordination and linkage services number 27, bringing that to a total of 50 positions. However, 14 of those 50 positions are part time, equaling 8.2 full time positions. The Mental Health Board funds 44 full time positions.

- After Family CARE ends in approximately two years, 10 to 12 position will be cut.
- 24 positions are funded through County tax dollars
- 26 positions are funded through a combination of grant/contract and tax dollars.

Volunteers and student interns are also used in a variety of functions.

In actuality as reported in the FY 08 Annual Report, only seven percent of the McHenry County Mental Health Board budget goes toward administrative costs.

***Q: What types of community groups utilize MHB space?***

**A:** Not-for-profit groups such as the McHenry County Chapter of NAMI and the Illinois Federation of Families rely on MHB space for support and self help meetings and trainings. Additionally, as community needs are identified, MHB incubates new agencies and services, and allows them to grow and establish in the community.

Families ETC is such an organization. It is administered and staffed by family members to support, educate, and strengthen families and caretakers of children and youth with special needs.

Furthermore, provider agencies from throughout the County that have little or no office space need to use MHB facilities for staff trainings. By offering space MHB provides opportunities for groups and agencies to focus their resources on services that benefit residents of McHenry County.

Other groups that utilize space at MHB include: Family Council, Youth Council, AmeriCorps, Recovery Specialist WRAP Trainings, WRAPAROUND trainings, McHenry County Complex Trauma Workshop, and the Behavioral Health Foundation that supports MHB projects.

***Q: How often are MHB facilities used for trainings and community meetings?***

**A:** In 2007, MHB facilities were used for trainings on 35 days;  
In 2008, MHB facilities were used for trainings on 43 days.  
In 2009, as of Nov 13, MHB facilities were used for trainings on 93 days.

Additionally, Family CARE has held 185 community meetings in the past 11 months (10/1/08 – 8/31/09), and there were 252 additional community meetings scheduled through December from other groups, not including ongoing support groups such as NAMI.

Two trainings were hosted at MCC and 11 trainings were hosted at Family Services to accommodate size.

***Q: If MHB has the funds for expanding facilities, why can't those funds be used to support more services?***

**A:** Recovery Zone bond funds can only be used for bricks and mortar purposes and not for services. Additionally, the MHB does not have \$4 million on hand to pay for services. The opportunity to use Recovery Zone Bonds expires in December of 2010. If we miss that opportunity, expansion will have to occur through other funding at a higher cost.

It is important to understand that funding for providers /services will not be reduced by this project. In fact, the financial projection illustrates that a new property tax revenue increase (one to two percent) is to be used to support agencies. It is also important to understand that our MHB funding represents a small percentage of each funded agency's budget.

Additionally, the debt service covers the rental space we would have to commit to if we didn't complete this project.

By analyzing the best use of these dollars, we believe that facility expansion will benefit more people on an annual basis than passing on the limited annual savings to provider agencies.

***Q: With the economy as it is, with dollars for human services being cut, why would you go ahead with plans to spend funds on expansion of facilities at this time?***

**A:** The space at the current Mental Health Board facility on Dakota Street in Crystal Lake is inadequate and in need of life safety enhancements such as fire suppression/sprinkling and automatic doors for handicapped accessibility. Limited space at Dakota necessitated the lease of additional space on Elm Street in the City of McHenry, separating staff by a distance of 10 miles. The lease on the Elm Street property will expire in two years.

Additionally, Recovery Zone Financing is available at costs that are lower than they have been over the past five years, and the bonds must be closed by the end of the year. The slow market right now drives contractors and subcontractors to offer more competitive bids, and the pool of available contractors offers opportunities for better

quality. If we wait, costs will rise and we will lose this opportunity to move on an expansion needed for serving the most vulnerable members of our community. Furthermore, the decision to go forward with an expansion project that has already been approved creates needed jobs and is an investment in our community.

The expanded facility can also accommodate temporary or longer term office space for organizations that may be negatively impacted by economic conditions and would support the growing need for recovery support groups and education and support provided by Family and voluntary organizations.

***Q: What are direct services vs. indirect services?***

**A:** As defined by the Illinois Department of Mental Health, indirect services identify needs, put together a service plan, and identify where services are available. Direct services are provided to carry out treatment plans.

The Illinois Mental Health Board Statutes allow the Mental Health Board to provide direct services for two years. The statute also allows that under certain circumstances the Mental Health Board can provide services for a longer period of time. Additionally, the Mental Health Board could choose to offer a treatment currently not available in the community. But currently, the Mental Health Board offers indirect, coordination services.

***Q: Who governs the Mental Health Board?***

**A:** The Mental Health Board was formed by referendum in 1967 and is administered by a nine-member board of community representatives appointed by the county.

It is mandated under the Illinois Compiled Statutes for Mental Health Authorities to develop plans for programs and services, review and evaluate services and facilities, appropriate funding, and consult with other agencies and associations to provide the most effective services and programs for mental illness, developmental disabilities, substance abuse, and traumatic brain injury.

Additionally, the Mental Health Board can educate the community, coordinate services, provide direct treatment services for two years if no other provider is available, and build facilities.

In this county, the MHB's role of coordination is central to the effectiveness of all our county services and has been like this since the 1980s with the award of the National Institute of Mental Health Grant.

It is impossible to draw accurate comparisons to other entities due to the economic make up of the county, the effectiveness of the local boards to bring in additional resources, and the complexity of the service system.

## **Questions / Answers from the Nov. 30, 2009 Public Meeting**

***Q: Is it true that you intend to build this building with or without this bond?***

**A:** Although we prefer to use Recovery Zones Bond financing, it is a possibility that we would go forward if we could not get bonds through the county.

***Q: How do you justify spending money on a new building when other space may be available to you, and how do you justify the expense when other service agencies, and even the county, has elected to postpone or delay their building expansions due to the tight economy and the funding cuts to service provider agencies?***

**A:** The Mental Health Board made the decision to expand the current facility only after conducting a comprehensive professional analysis of space needs, which included looking at building expansion options vs. the use of existing facilities. The space needs study clearly identified an expansion of the existing facility as the most effective and economical solution.

Additionally, it has been implied that some of our provider agencies may have space that could be made available for Mental Health Board needs. While we agree on the need to work collaboratively and are quite willing to explore future options, we also recognize that many community and consumer groups need space dedicated to their regularly scheduled, ongoing meetings.

The mental healthcare system is undergoing significant transformation. The voices of consumers engaged in self help are becoming stronger in guiding service providers. We need to embrace the principles of Recovery, which include not only treatment but also non traditional services. This means supporting consumers in the development of their own organizations and groups and helping them use technology to reach each other and to learn. This means providing them with space that they can call their own.

The Mental Health Board recognizes that the needs of our community include space dedicated to the support of consumer self help groups, especially in these tight economic conditions. However, the MHB also has the option to limit costs by not building out the entire space.

***Q: Do you anticipate your program to grow in the future in light of this additional space?***

**A:** We have a current need for 20,000 square feet. Expanding the building project to 30,000 square feet is a cost effective way to ensure space dedicated for trainings, support groups, and other consumer activities.

***Q: If more than 90 percent of the Mental Health Board budget goes to client services, how does the Board plan to repay the \$4 million it will take to complete this project?***

A: Our nine-member Board of directors and the MHB fiscal staff have thoroughly analyzed this decision and concur that that this is a prudent decision. We have retired the debt on the current facility ahead of schedule. The funds that were designated to pay that debt will be rerouted to pay for the expansion without taking anything away from provider agencies. Additionally, we will no longer have the current rental fees.

***Q: Wouldn't it be better to redirect dollars designated for expansion to pay for added services?***

A: We still need to consider the cost of current rental space, which reduces available funds. Additionally, we need to consider that the MHB spreads taxpayer funds among 20 funded agencies. Adding space that will be available for community use—including trainings, educational events, support and work groups—will have a much farther reach than spreading those funds thinly among provider agencies.

***Q: Have the added maintenance and operating costs been considered in this facility expansion project?***

A: Those expenses were taken into account when we did our analysis. This project will have a zero effect on our provider agencies.

***Q: In light of the federal and state cuts to services, should not the MHB redirect any available funds to service providers?***

A: The MHB does not have the funds to make up for the losses due to state and federal cuts. In reality, MHB funding to provider agencies is a small, though significant, portion of each agency's budget.

***Q: Given the Family CARE program will end within two years, won't it eliminate positions and also the need for additional space?***

A: Family CARE is not a program. It is an initiative funded through federal dollars to transform the system of care in our county, bringing providers and consumers together to result in services that fit consumer needs. A few positions will go away. Several Family Resource Developer positions will remain. Also remaining will be the need for consistent meeting and administrative space for the consumer groups created through this federal grant.

***Q: Has the MHB ever competed with provider agencies for grant dollars?***

A: Not in the four and a half years of the present administration. Historically, the MHB tries to collaborate with agencies. An example is the most recent attempts to win a SAMHSA grant for the treatment of the homeless.

***Q: Has the MHB ever taken a program away from a provider agency?***

A: No. We have, however, at times decided to continue a program at such times when an agency has decided that it does not want to continue offering a program.

**Q: Who accredits the Mental Health Board?**

A: CARF—the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

### **Points of view regarding facility expansion**

**Pioneer Center:** Agrees to disagree on the decision to move forward with the facility expansion project.

**PADS:** The dollars designated for facility expansion would be better used to fund an additional case manager or counselor. Help is needed now. (The MHB per statues only funds behavioral health support and does not traditionally support shelters.)

**Youth Service Bureau:** Does not accept the MHB’s decision to commit \$4 million of taxpayer money to a bricks and mortar project while funding for so many programs and services is being reduced or eliminated. The Board of the YSB of McHenry County believes that this project represents a want and not a need, and ask the MHB to reconsider.

**County Resident:** Agencies are all hurting. They need every dollar they can get for services. The future can wait. Please postpone the decision to expand.

**Family Service and Community Mental Health Center:** Applauds the MHB for looking to the future needs of the community. Family Service has been actively sharing meeting its space; however we need this space for internal use.

**Parent of special needs child:** It would be fiscally responsible for the MHB to take advantage of bond financing at this time. Applauds “future thinking” of the needs of the county residents.

**NAMI:** Fully supports the decision for expanding a facility that is relied on by so many community consumer groups and offers space for trainings for all provider agencies. “...supports the need and use of these Recovery dollars not for the Mental Health Board but for the community they serve...”

**County resident:** There is a need for immediate dollars to relieve agencies. She urges the MHB to reconsider the decision for expansion.

**Home of the Sparrow:** Supports the MHB expansion project; believes that more meeting space is needed and that the MHB is thinking of future community needs.

**Thresholds:** McHenry County is lucky to have the current MHB leadership, which is a role model for the state, county and other Mental Health Boards. The expansion is needed, and it is unlikely that the opportunity to use the low cost Recovery Zone Bond financing will be available again. Thresholds supports the MHB in its decision to build.

**Parent:** Supports the MHB in its decision to expand the facility. All services and programs of the MHB need to be under one roof, and meeting space for consumer groups is in great demand.

**Consumer:** This expansion is all about consumer needs. Applauds the efforts of those looking at the needs of the community.

### **Closing comments from the Mental Health Board**

**Sandy Lewis, executive director:** I believe that all provider agencies agree that our community needs more resources. The MHB has a record of success in garnering federal dollars for the benefit of all agencies and will continue to work with the service providers in this county to explore available funding.

Looking to the future, we believe that we can afford the facility expansion that is required as well as supporting critical services in the community.



Accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities