

Commissioners Patrick F. Clawson, William R. Brown and Ron Slavens met on the 26th day of September 2011 to hear an appeal filed against a township assistance action.

Commissioner President, Patrick Clawson called the hearing to order.

County Attorney Nick McLeland opened the hearing by reading the appeal request submitted to the Commissioners by Melissa R. Dinger on September 16, 2011. Ms. Dinger was appealing the decision of Deer Creek Township Trustee Doris McLeland, to not provide Dinger the rent assistance requested on September 3, 2011.

Attorney Nick McLeland swore in Melissa Dinger and asked her to state her reasons for the appeal. Dinger stated she lost her job in April and was on unemployment for several months. Before her unemployment started, the Deer Creek Township Trustee had paid half of her rent for one month. She stated she looked for work every day but continued to struggle to make it and got behind. Commissioner Ron Slavens asked if she went to Area V or other agencies for relief; it was his understanding the trustee was to be the last resort. Dinger said she was told there was no other avenue. Her rent is \$350 per month and she was again only asking for half. Commissioner William Brown asked if she was still drawing unemployment; she is now employed. Brown asked what the Area V assistance was; he was not familiar with township assistance. Slavens stated it was a source for rent and gas.

Dinger stated she was within the salary guidelines, but was denied due to an excessive telephone bill. Slavens asked if her son, who was also on the telephone bill, helped her with the bill or rent. Dinger responded he was having a hard time making it himself and she did not want to ask him. McLeland asked where she is working now; she is working for Kirby Risk at \$9/hour. McLeland asked about her cell telephone bill with Verizon; Dinger said she could not cancel her phone without a high cancellation fee which would also affect her son; she has the lowest cell service available for her telephone. McLeland asked about cable TV; she pays \$25/month. McLeland asked if she smoked and how many packs per week. Dinger replied that she smoked 5 packs a week at \$4.75 per pack. McLeland asked if she drank and she replied it was the first part of August the last time she drank. McLeland then asked what her probation fees were per month. She answered that she has to go to 6 AA meetings and then driving school. She was asked how far behind she was in her rent; she is behind the \$175 she was denied, she is able to afford her rent this month. McLeland asked if she had asked any family members for assistance, she did not ask her parents because they are retired.

Attorney Nick McLeland then swore in Doris McLeland, Deer Creek Township Trustee. He began by asking if she was familiar with Melissa Dinger and how. Doris stated she had approved \$175 for May rent that she sent to the landlord. At that time she had income of \$810/month from unemployment. After approving the help for rent, Doris read in the Comet that Dinger had been arrested for a DUI and had \$365.50 in court costs, \$50 probation administration fee, \$50 assigned counsel fee, \$25 initial probation fee and \$10/month for each month she was on probation. Doris felt that if she had not gotten into trouble she would have had enough money to pay her rent. Nick asked Doris if she asked each applicant the same questions and completed the same application; Doris always asks if they have applied for work and where. At the time Dinger was asking for assistance there were openings at Dairy Queen, McDonalds and IPC.

Attorney McLeland asked Doris if she knew Ms. Dinger prior to asking for assistance; she did not. Nick asked if there was any reason to show bias against Ms. Dinger; Doris said there wasn't. Doris then read from her guidelines that stated no assistance could be given until 1 year after a conviction. Doris reiterated that she felt if she had not gotten into trouble she would have had money for rent. Ms. Dinger asked Doris why she didn't tell her that when she denied assistance; Doris replied that she didn't want to humiliate her so she didn't mention it. Dinger asked why she didn't say that she knew about the conviction and asked if it wouldn't have been better to tell her that rather than because of an excessive cell phone bill, and saved the County the time and money to meet today. Attorney McLeland stated the misdemeanor stipulation was for Federal programs.

Commissioner Brown asked what the Commissioners' responsibility was for this process. Attorney McLeland stated it was their position to determine to allow or reject the appeal. Brown also asked if the Commissioners could lessen or increase the appeal; McLeland stated it was just a yes or no decision. Brown then asked the Trustee how stressed the fund was, Doris replied that she tired to be prudent with the County's money and is trying to be careful with taxpayers' money. She felt the past Trustee gave out money whenever asked. Doris stated she did not know that Dinger smoked and did not put it on the application. Doris feels that if she could afford to smoke she could use that money to pay the rent. Doris has worked with lots of landlords and they are OK with taking less until the person gets back on their feet.

Attorney McLeland stated he wanted to make a chronological list and verify correctness of statements :

Unemployed	April 11, 20011
1 st Application	May 20, 2011
Trustee gave assistance for ½ of rent	June 2011
DWI	June 16, 2011
2 nd Application	September 3, 2011

Smokes, has a cell phone, cable TV and testified she does drink, \$510.50 in court costs and fees that she had to pay, now has a job.

Attorney McLeland stated it was now up to the Commissioners. Ron Slavens made a motion to deny the assistance claim of Melissa Dinger, excluding the DWI; she did not apply to Area V first. William Brown stated it was not without compassion that he was looking at this, but looking at the facts, you have to apply to Area V first; Brown seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Melissa Dinger stated that she was not aware of Area V and other available agencies. As a taxpayer she would like for the Trustee to give out the correct information. She accepted their decision.

CARROLL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Patrick F. Clawson, Chairman

William R. Brown, Vice Chairman

Ron Slavens

ATTEST:

Elaine Hathaway, Auditor