

**DAVIDSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Dale Moorefield, Director



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services
Board Meeting Minutes
July 24, 2018**

Board Members Present

Mr. Andy Morris; Mr. Steve Jarvis; Mr. Richard Wagner; Mrs. Jane Murphy

Others in Attendance

**Mr. Dale Moorefield; Ms. Katrina McMasters; Mrs. Elizabeth Huff; Mrs. Susan Craig;
Mrs. Caroline Hedrick; Ms. Sheri Woodyard; Ms. Danielle DeAngelis; Mr. Keith Bidy**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:17 p.m. by Mr. Dale Moorefield. An invocation was offered by Director Moorefield.

Oath of Office

Mrs. Jane Murphy was sworn in for her three-year term on the Board of Social Services as the DSS Board appointment. Mr. Keith Bidy from the County Attorney's office presided over the Oath of Office.

Election of Officers

Attorney Sheri Woodyard officiated over the election process of new officers. A motion to open the floor for nominations for Chairman was requested. Mr. Andy Morris was nominated by Mr. Richard Wagner. Mr. Steve Jarvis motioned for the nominations to close and Mr. Wagner seconded. No further nominations were received and nominations were closed. Mr. Andy Morris was elected Chairman by acclamation. Nominations for Vice Chair were opened by Mr. Morris and Mr. Richard Wagner was nominated by Mr. Andy Morris for Vice Chair. No further nominations were received and the nominations were closed. Mr. Richard Wagner was elected as Vice Chair by acclamation.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Steve Jarvis made a motion to approve the Agenda. Mr. Richard Wagner seconded the motion. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Richard Wagner made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2018 meeting. Mr. Steve Jarvis seconded this motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Address

Ms. Rhea Dugan, Community Employment Case Manager, requested to address the Board regarding her salary. Ms. Dugan has been with the Agency for more than 12 years and enjoys her job, but feels her salary is not representative of her work performance or her experience. She stated that she noticed a job posting that is only cents different from what hers is as an experienced employee. She expressed that she feels pay and lack of advancement is a primary reason for staff leaving when they can go to another county for increased pay and similar benefits. As a case manager, she is attending the meeting to express her concerns and feels that if this is not addressed, then it will continue to be an issue and the Agency will continue to lose staff because of low compensation. In her position she has daily contact with clients, consoles clients, puts in supports to keep families together, processes Food and Nutrition and Medicaid applications if services are not in place, works with childcare so that clients can start the employment services program and makes community referrals. She states she feels some see Income Maintenance Caseworkers as dispensable, but they have contact daily with clients and must have a thorough knowledge of policy to make the NC Fast system work and states experience is needed to conduct jobs well and be effective in working with our residents. Ms. Dugan requests that the Board work on ways to retain experienced staff and recommends merit increases.

Management Report

Mrs. Caroline Hedrick provided the preliminary expenditure report for expenses as of June 30, 2018. 100% of the year has lapsed; however, not all bills have been processed for fiscal year 2017-2018. Overtime expenses continue to accrue; however, overtime is not as excessive as the previous fiscal year. Workers' compensation is over budget due to possible inaccuracies in the code used on budget to calculate the salary percentage budgeted for this line item. Travel and vehicle mileage overages are contributed to increased caseloads. Overall, year to date, the total operating budget was at 98% with approximately \$190,000 unspent compared to 99% for the same period last fiscal year. In the public assistance line items, Special Links was over spent; however, this fund is reimbursed at 100% until state funds are exhausted. Overall, public assistance fund spending was at 81% compared to 93% last fiscal year. Mrs. Hedrick noted that if non-emergency Medicaid transportation and daycare purchase allocations were factored in the same as this year, spending would have been at 86% for fiscal year 2016-2017. Year to date, a total of 93% of the budget was spent. Mr. Wagner requested a detailed listing of spending at fiscal year-end for larger funded line items such as contracts.

Mrs. Hedrick also reported that the Fiscal Compliance Monitoring visit was conducted on July 10, 2018. There was one minor finding with the calculation of a contractor's FTE, which has been corrected. The Agency response has been submitted and the final monitoring report has been closed. Initial fieldwork for the Agency's Single Audit, which is conducted by an independent auditor, Martin and Starnes, took place the week of July 16. This audit will not be finalized until later in the year.

Mr. Dale Moorefield shared the Vacancy Report. As of the report, there are currently 14 vacancies, 6 of which are new positions approved in the FY 2018-2019 budget. The IMC I position is in the interview stage. Two positions in Family Services/Medicaid & Food Stamps were vacated by one person leaving to work for the Parks and Recreation Department and

one retirement. CPS I/A/T positions include 3 positions from the new budget. A job offer has been extended for one of the Foster Care/Adoptions positions. Margaret Graham-Muhammad, currently a social worker in Thomasville, has accepted the new CPS unit supervisor position. Account Tech I and Office Support III positions are posted. A question was asked regarding the progression of income maintenance worker advancement and Mr. Moorefield responded that staff go from a line worker, to lead worker, program integrity investigator, to unit supervisor. For Ms. Dugan who spoke for public address, it would be a lateral move to a lead worker position; however, there would be more responsibility for the same salary. Pay grades are established by County Human Resources.

Mrs. Elizabeth Huff gave an update on the Income Maintenance area. Performance goals remain in the high 90's percentages. Accuracy and timeliness goals ended with an increased percentage. A decrease was seen in SA Medicaid compared to the prior fiscal year; however, 96% of the applications were processed timely. Medicaid applications taken decreased from 10,479 for FY 2016-2017 to 9,465; however, the caseload stayed up due to clients continuing to receive benefits. Fewer Food and Nutrition applications were taken which was a decrease of approximately \$363,000 in benefits for the year. Most interesting in Fraud is that there were 186 fewer claims, but the collection amount increased by over \$161,000, perhaps due to tax intercepts.

Work First applications and caseloads year to date have decreased with 39 fewer cases this fiscal year. Employment services areas experienced a decrease due to work participation requirements, for example, if a client is not working 40 hours per week, they are placed in job training or Career Connections. Some are hard to serve due to their past records. Report data marked with an asterisk is being pulled from Data Warehouse and will be shared once the information is available.

Mrs. Huff reported that childcare data is becoming more available in NC Fast. There are currently 328 children on the waiting list and 1,008 children have been served. Approximately \$442 per child per month is spent for Child Care Subsidy. The spending coefficient is at 95% for fiscal year end, which is right where the State wanted counties to end the year. The 2018-2019 allocation will allow the Agency to continue serving the children we currently serve while removing some from the waiting list.

A report was given on Emergency Financial Programs. No general assistance funds were used for May and June. This fund is all county money and a conservative approach is taken. Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) funds can be used for extreme temperatures, either warm or cold, and also takes medical crisis into consideration. Work First Emergency Assistance funds are used when there is no crisis situation and there is a child in the home under age 18.

Director Moorefield reported on Child Support in Scott Craver's absence. Child support went from meeting all five goals last year to only meeting one goal this year; however, goals were close to being met. During a recent meeting, the State program representative shared that the county's goals were high since the goals have been met in years past and this makes obtaining goals harder to achieve. Approximately \$64,000 less in total collections were taken which is equivalent to a half day in collections. The State gave a shout out to CSE Agent Sandra Cochran for collecting \$13,221 from a single case in which the Absent Parent was paying a lump sum to avoid going to court. The State will set new goals in August. Davidson County performed overall at a rate of 98.04% in regards to quality and the State representative was very complimentary.

Ms. Katrina McMasters reported that CPS ended the year well. An average of 186 reports per month came in last year compared to 228 for June. Reports are broken down as either

neglect or abuse. For June, a record high of 154 cases were closed. Ms. McMasters commended Mr. Jon Wilson for closing 25 cases in June; Ms. Jeannine Cormier for closing 22 cases, and Ms. Aja Waller for closing 19 cases, which was a majority of the cases, closed for their respective units. As of the end of June, 154 cases were open with an average of 197 open cases at one time. For the same time last year, there were 313 open cases and the units were operating inefficiently with the high volume of open cases. Additional growth is expected with the formation of the forensic team, which is anticipated to be operational within a month or two. In-home cases ended with 76 open cases compared to an average of 82 for the prior year. Tremendous growth is expected in this area. Only 4 children were taken into foster care/custody in June and these numbers do not include ones coming from Department of Juvenile Justice. Surrounding counties lean on Davidson County for assists and the number of out of county assists continue to increase.

Mrs. Susan Craig reported that 6 children were taken into custody in June and permanence was found for 8 children. It is remarkable that 39 children were adopted this year; the addition of Danielle DeAngelis, Attorney, on staff has helped contribute to increased adoptions and Mrs. Craig shared her appreciation to Ms. DeAngelis. Mrs. Craig shared how finding foster care can be difficult due to there being multiple sibling groups and attempts to keep a sibling group together. The State LINKS program is for older children and the foster care 18-21 program. There are currently 24 youth receiving LINKS only services. The Agency's current LINKS coordinator does a lot of outreach for this population. Ms. Craig reported that there are 12 children awaiting adoption in the 18-21 category.

Mrs. Craig reported that June was another high month for Adult Services with 42 reports received. For the month of June, 30 APS cases were opened for evaluation with 23 treatment cases; which is double compared to last year. Cases are becoming more complicated due to substance abuse, financial reasons, and family dynamics. There are currently 86 wards in DSS custody and the most complicated wards are being served by the Hope for the Future contract.

Old Business

There was no Old Business.

New Business

Energy Program Outreach Plan

The Energy Programs Outreach Plan and handout of community agencies in Davidson County was shared with the Board. The Energy Programs Outreach Plan must be approved by the local DSS Board and sent to the State by July 31. The plan was provided with no changes. Mrs. Huff shared that the Agency is required to advertise the LIEAP and CIP programs and she described those efforts. CIP is year-round and LIEAP is time limited and only for December 1 – March 31. Mr. Richard Wagner made a motion to accept the plan and Mr. Steve Jarvis seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve the plan as written for submission to the State.

Record Destruction

Additional Child Welfare Services records have been identified for destruction per the records retention policy. Mr. Jarvis made a motion to destroy the 531 CPS records identified and Mr. Wagner seconded the motion. The vote was 4/4; unanimous to destroy these old records per policy.

DSS Staff Retention

Director Moorefield shared that he is concerned with staff retention. Per the Most 16 Impacted Counties meeting Mr. Moorefield attended last week, staff retention is an issue across the state of North Carolina. The County has attempted to combat salary compression over the past few years with an annual salary increase of \$500 per existing employee, plus a cost of living increase annually over the past few years. This year's increase was \$500 plus a 1.5% increase. Referral bonuses and scholarships for schooling have been suggested by Mr. Jarvis for attracting new staff at recent meetings and Mr. Moorefield will look into that, but he is concerned mostly with retaining the best quality current staff in the Agency. Mr. Moorefield shared that the State Social Worker Collaborative is no longer offering funding and instead 13 universities are offering experience through pre-service training working for an agency. While not losing staff to surrounding counties as a rule so far, Mr. Moorefield is concerned with the great difference that Rowan County is offering DSS Staff with experience now. In the past couple of months, two staff have left Davidson DSS to work in Rowan County for significantly more compensation. He recently conducted an informal poll of the surrounding counties that we compete with for talent regarding salaries for the Agency's two most hired positions; Income Maintenance Caseworker II and CPS Social Work staff. Of the surrounding counties, Davidson is ahead of Davie and Guilford County, but behind Forsyth, Randolph, and Rowan; with Rowan County's beginning salary for these two positions being significantly higher. Mr. Moorefield is concerned about not only attracting quality staff, but also retaining the good staff that the Agency currently employs. In order to do this, there are financial ties and Mr. Moorefield is recommending merit increases to retain high performing staff. The Agency holds employee appreciation events such as Joofy, ice cream socials, a picnic, and a Christmas luncheon that employees appreciate, but he is concerned whether it is really making a difference. Historically, staff have been lost due to leaving for jobs other than in social services and due to staff burnout, but there are now great concerns that the Agency may start losing staff to other counties due to a more significant salary difference. Mr. Moorefield shared that Ms. Dugan who addressed the Board during the Public Address had spoken with the HR Director Kathy Cashion regarding her salary and employees such as her with considerable experience and good performance do not see much separation from new employees in the same positions. An example of staff working for over 15 years and only earning \$4,500 above the minimum for their position was shared as a concern. Mr. Moorefield hears that people enjoy working for the Agency and that it is welcoming here, but he also wants us to take care of our high performing employees and staff. It has been announced by Human Resources that a job study will be done soon, and it can help, but there is uncertainty about whether it will address these positions and salary compression. Mr. Moorefield proposed a merit increase for DSS staff with higher percentages for the best performers in the Agency and that our PBB Savings could fund this effort to retain our high quality staff. A handout with data was shared regarding the general financial impact on the DSS budget. Although PBB Savings could be used to pay for the increases, approximately 50 – 60 % of the cost would be reimbursable through the Agency's monthly 1571 reimbursement request. Mr. Moorefield shared that he has worked in a county that offered merit raises in the past and it was good to be able to reward high achievers in a more significant way and not reward low achievement as much or not at all. He asked that the Board consider the possibility of a merit system for our DSS even if the rest of our County departments could not participate. At the same time, he recognizes that this may be an issue for our commissioners, as they must consider all county employees, not just DSS. Director Moorefield reiterated to the Board that we could afford this through our PBB Savings/Reimbursements for salaries of staff and that this was an effective way to retain our best staff, as this would put us in a competitive situation to compete with our neighboring counties for our talented work force. Additional discussion was held regarding some staff earning more than supervisors mostly due to overtime pay, other counties not offering overtime, staff responsibility, demands, morale, reward for doing good work resulting in more

work, continually training new staff, and the fact that some employees are close to being recipients of DSS services due to low salaries. The Board asked that additional information be sought regarding salaries, incentives for attracting new employees, as well as what the top 10 counties in the State are doing. Mr. Moorefield expressed his appreciation of the Board's time and patience in allowing discussions like this for consideration.

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, August 28, 2018, at 4:15 p.m., first floor of Social Services in Lexington, Conference Room D.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Richard Wagner and seconded by Mr. Steve Jarvis. The meeting adjourned at 6:08 pm.

Minutes submitted by Dale Moorefield