

**DAVIDSON COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

*Dale Moorefield, Director*



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services  
Board Meeting Minutes  
November 27, 2018**

**Board Members Present**

**Mr. Andy Morris; Mr. Richard Wagner;  
Ms. Jane Murphy; Mr. Steve Jarvis**

**Others in Attendance**

**Mr. Dale Moorefield; Mr. Scott Craver; Ms. Katrina McMasters; Mrs. Susan Craig;  
Mrs. Elizabeth Huff; Mrs. Caroline Hedrick; Mrs. Lexa Eagle; Ms. Sherri Woodyard;  
Mr. Zeb Hanner; Mrs. Ginger Souther-Dixon; Mrs. Sarah Ramirez**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m. by Mr. Andy Morris. An invocation was offered by Mr. Morris.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. Moorefield requested that the agenda be amended to discuss Old Business (F.1) first as well as discussing New Business (G.2) due to time constraints for Board members and visitors. Mr. Richard Wagner made a motion to approve the amended Agenda. Ms. Jane Murphy seconded the motion. The Amended Agenda was approved unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Murphy made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2018 meeting. Mr. Wagner seconded this motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Public Address**

There was no public address. Mr. Dale Moorefield, DSS Director, took this opportunity to introduce Mr. Zeb Hanner, County Manager, Mrs. Sarah Ramirez and Mrs. Ginger Souther-Dixon, Social Workers in the Permanency Planning area.

## **Management Report**

During our expenditures report, Mrs. Caroline Hedrick shared that 33 percent of the fiscal year is complete. There are a few areas that are overspending; however, these should balance out by year's end. The overtime line item is being overspent as we continue to work with vacancies. Supply expenses are up due to the purchase of unbudgeted items. Vehicle mileage spending is at 36 percent. So far, there has been a 29 percent increase in vehicle mileage for the County owned vehicles and our current spending trend is at 27 percent.

Director Moorefield shared information from the vacancy report. We currently have 12 vacancies. Adult Medicaid has experienced numerous vacancies in the past couple of months with in-house promotions and caseworker staff leaving to go to neighboring county departments where they live. The one going to Rowan County DSS will make \$7K more a year doing the same job. The Medicaid Transportation Coordinator vacancy resulted from our employee moving to Virginia accepting a Transportation job for the military as a civilian. The Community Employment Case Manager position has been reclassified to an Income Maintenance Caseworker II position. There was a discussion regarding the requirements for an IMC II position. Mr. Moorefield also stated that interviewing and posting of positions is ongoing with minimal delays in posting.

Mrs. Elizabeth Huff shared that processing of applications and recertifications continues to be timely. All measures are in line as before. They are still unable to get correct numbers from the State. Applications being taken are hand counted by the supervisors, so this number is accurate on our reports and the amount of benefits paid out is accurate.

Mrs. Huff reported that in the Program Integrity area, 57 new claims were established and collections were just over \$22,000.00, of which \$3,747.47 was reimbursed to the County.

Mrs. Huff shared that the vacant Community Employment Case Manager position vacated by Sharon Davis upon her promotion has been reclassified to an Income Maintenance Caseworker II position. She stated that the position was not needed in Work First at this time due to the decrease in active Work First cases. That leaves two employees to handle 219 cases and conduct intake and review processes for clients.

In the Child Care area, Mrs. Huff stated that we continue to spend our allocation and we are no longer on a waiting list. However, the attrition rate is equal to the number of children coming onto childcare assistance. Our present spending coefficient is at 74 percent and we are serving people as they come in the door.

In the Emergency Assistance area, the Crisis Intervention Program has increased spending due to the temperatures turning colder. Our Agency has also started using Share the Warmth funds. Work First Emergency Assistance is being used for those that may not be eligible for CIP. The Low Income Energy Assistance Program starts on Monday, December 3, 2018. In December, we can serve eligible folks with household members over 60 years of age, or households with disabled members who receive services through the Division of Aging and Adult Services. Questions were asked about using all of the CIP allocation and Mrs. Huff shared that we do not normally use it all, but some of the money is reallocated by the State to other counties in late winter if our spending trend shows we will not use it all.

Mr. Scott Craver shared that Child Support collections are back up above \$1 million monthly. The total number of cases is down slightly and Child Support continues to perform well on the State set goals.

Ms. Katrina McMasters shared that Child Protective Services numbers remain higher than in the past and it appears they will continue to go up. Our Agency did not accept as many referrals in October; however, we continue to get referrals from law enforcement where Domestic Violence is involved but the children were not present. These referrals put the children on our “radar” for possible future involvement. The number of out- of- county assists has jumped up to 39 for the month of October. These assists are usually completed by the on-call person. We remain consistent with the number of reports accepted. The new Forensic Team has had the opportunity to work with the tougher cases. In-home case numbers have increased. We experienced a huge jump in number of children taken into care in October as we took 11 children into care. Older children are coming into care. Our numbers continue to grow. CPS social workers are not as used to going to court; however, with this high number of petitions filed, they are having to write court reports and appear to testify regarding the cases more often. This increase has been a struggle for them, but they have persevered. We had good news to come out of our data profile from the State. We are in a much better position and have received recognition from the CPR regarding our improvement. The backlog of open cases in 2016 was 406 percent (cases open over 45 days); in 2017 that figure dropped to 243 percent; and in 2018, it decreased to 159 percent. We are now within the State average, with the average number of cases per worker being 13.5. With the number of cases we currently have open; the State recommends that we have 22 workers to cover them. We have 18 budgeted positions; however, two of those positions are vacant. There was discussion about the reasons for the increase in numbers. There was also discussion about fatalities in the month of November for children in the County. Our Agency was not involved with either family at the time of the deaths.

Mrs. Susan Craig shared that in the Permanency Planning area 11 children were taken into care through CPS and one young adult came into care in the 18 to 21 year old program. Social Workers are carrying 20 or more cases, which is well over State standard. The number of children in the care of DSS is the highest it has been in many years. We have two new workers, but they just started preservice training this week and cannot carry a caseload until that training is complete. There was discussion about placement issues and the large sibling groups that are coming into care. The Courts can sanction that children be placed in a non-licensed, non-relative placement. Mrs. Craig gave an explanation of placement levels and how workers spend so much time with one child on their caseload when there are issues. We continue to struggle with Cardinal Innovations for placements. November is Adoption Awareness month. .

Mrs. Craig reported that in the Adult Services, a high of 54 reports were received. Of that 54, 34 were accepted for investigation. We currently have 81 wards for which our Agency is the guardian. One of our wards was moved back to family as a family member stepped up and was assigned guardianship of their loved one. A second ward was released when competency was restored and they no longer need a guardian. Questions were asked as to what is thought to be the reason for the increases in the Adult Services numbers. Mrs. Craig attributes it to education of the public, a growing population of elderly and disabled in our county, and substance abuse issues. These trends will likely remain steady.

## **Old Business**

### **Agency Security**

At our last meeting, we discussed how staff is protected inside both DSS locations as well as when making home visits or traveling in the field. Mr. Moorefield was directed by the Board to

check into security officers for the buildings and security options for the field staff. In regards to having security guards on-site, Mr. Moorefield tried to talk with 5 different places. One did not return calls, one is longer doing security, one did not want to travel to our area, one gave him wrong numbers, and the last was Securitas. Securitas is a large company, providing security for Yankee Stadium and the Masters Golf Tournament, as well as smaller venues such as our building. A representative from Securitas came to see Mr. Moorefield last week, walked through our buildings and offices to provide some suggested options and plans for security of our staff and the public. He proposed that we have 3 unarmed security guards; two in Lexington and one in Thomasville that would be in addition to the armed deputy at the Governmental Center. The cost of the guards would be \$150,000 per year, of which approximately 30 percent would be reimbursed to us by the State and Federal funding sources. Armed guards are approximately 6 to 7 dollars more per hour per guard due to increased training and liability. The representative stated that Securitas would always provide backup and scheduling of shifts and their office for providing security here is located in Greensboro. Mr. Moorefield received a 76 - page proposal consideration from this company. Mr. Moorefield shared details of how the guards would conduct their rounds of the buildings. This company also has mobile guarding. We currently have cameras in both of the buildings where staff is located. The current security person posted in the Governmental Center only is a Sheriff Department Deputy that is not visible most of the time at DSS; they are located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in the Tax Department. The Tax Department Head has mentioned that he is not thrilled with the service they have seen with the current deputy. There was discussion about Thomasville only having one guard in place. The reason for this is that fewer visits with foster children and their families occur there and the likelihood of working with disgruntled public is less. Mr. Moorefield checked into additional sheriff deputies being placed in our locations and was informed that it would be approximately \$91,000.00 per year per deputy. Each deputy has to have a fully equipped patrol car that makes it more costly. A Deputy III classification would be about \$2,000 more per year. Mr. Moorefield spoke with Rowan County Social Services and learned that they have a county security guard position in their budget at approximately \$60K per year. The Lexington Library has three part time security officers at pay grade 56, which is about 12 dollars per hour and they do not work with an angered or agitated public as a rule. Our Agency has the potential for more violent and/or aggressive folks due to the nature of the reason for individuals to be here in our office. Because Securitas employees would be unarmed, they would only be able to get someone out of the building and would call for backup from local law enforcement.

There was much discussion about security and the possible need in the building. The Board of County Commissioners would ultimately need to make the final decision and give approval. There was also discussion about coverage for the entire campus in Lexington, which would include the entire Governmental Center, Davidson House and the Health Department building. Mr. Zeb Hanner suggested that a proposal be drawn up and presented to the BOCC so that funding could be established in the new budget for 2019-2020. There was discussion about the possibility of using the Agency's PBB savings as seed money to get this started.

The proposal that was delivered to Mr. Moorefield only included security for first and second floors in Lexington and Thomasville as well as Davidson House

Mr. Moorefield shared information regarding mobile solutions for security that is similar to Life Alert. This type of security has button activation and some have two-way conversation capability. These would be used by field staff and the cost is about \$100 per device to be worn around the neck. These devices have the capability of tracking the person (device) if needed, but the highest concern is for the safety of the employee. There would be a \$19 to \$20 charge per month for each device for monitoring. Another agency offered devices at a

cost of \$7500.00 for 75 workers, with a \$16.99 per month per device fee. There was also discussion about the SOS feature on phones. No one was sure if all cell phones offered that option. The individual devices could also serve as a panic button when a worker feels threatened inside the office. We discussed placing additional cameras in the Thomasville Office as well as the use of off duty law enforcement. We could not use Sheriff's Deputies because they would have to be paid overtime, which would be more expensive. We could, however, possibly use officers from Lexington and Thomasville Police Departments. The possibility of changing the current officer for a more positive replacement was discussed. Several people expressed their preference for someone from law enforcement to be used in a security position for the Agency.

Mr. Hanner stated that any presentation to the BOCC would probably be no earlier than January 3, 2019. The DSS Board will review the proposal from Securitas and follow up with Mr. Moorefield. Ms. Sherri Woodyard would like to check for the possibility of liabilities involved that could hurt the County and/or DSS. Mr. Hanner will check on the cost of walls to take the place of the windows on the first floor of the Governmental Center and for additional security to be placed on more doors to limit access to the public. He also shared that the County is looking at additional lighting for the parking lots on our Campus.

## **New Business**

### **Adoptions Awareness**

Mr. Moorefield shared that November is Adoption Awareness month. He stated that reunification is the first goal for the Agency; but if that is not achievable, the children are freed for adoption and hopefully placed in a loving adoptive home. Mr. Moorefield stated that being a part of the Adoption Committee is one of the most rewarding things he does for the Agency because he is helping children achieve permanence and making the prospective adoptive parents very happy by approving placement and final adoptions.

Mrs. Craig shared that there are three types of adoptions that our Agency conducts. The first is called an Agency adoption. The children in our custody can be adopted by a foster parent or by a relative. The second is Relative Adoptions for children who are not involved with DSS, but the Clerk's office has asked us to conduct home studies and render a decision based on the information obtained. These decisions are not always favorable. The third type of adoption is an Independent Adoption, which is handled much like the Agency Adoption.

Mrs. Sarah Ramirez shared information regarding recruitment for adoptive homes for children who may be having problems with being adopted. Mrs. Ramirez explained how some of the organizations work. One of the goals of the Agency is to try to keep families and siblings together when adopting whenever possible. Mrs. Ramirez shared a success story with the Board.

Mrs. Ginger Souther-Dixon shared that assessments on all independent adoptions must be written. That includes the prospective adoptive parents as well as the children involved. All areas of concern discovered during this process are addressed, i.e. means to support a child, criminal background checks for the prospective parents are completed, and home visits are conducted. Adoption profiles are written on each child that is free for adoption. An Agency history, information on birth parents, such as mental health needs and physical health issues is included in these profiles. These are then sent to the Adoption Committee for consideration. Mrs. Souther-Dixon shared that she recently finalized an adoption for a 16 year old. Before the child was placed in the adoptive home, she bounced from placement to placement, was failing

high school and was on numerous medications for her mental health. She is now on the A/B honor roll and is a good student, as well as being off all medication for mental health issues.

The Board thanked the Social Workers for their efforts. Mr. Morris shared that adoption is very near to his heart, as he was adopted as a child himself.

### **Modification of 2018-2019 MOU with DHHS**

Back in early summer, our Agency as well as all DSS Departments were required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the State. The State has been unable to do what they said they were going to do in the original MOU. They cannot get correct numbers from NC Fast and they have been hampered by two hurricanes hitting the state as well as NC Fast P4 going statewide in 2019. The State is unable to provide correct numbers yet and would struggle monitoring the Departments as required in the MOU at this time. They have issued a modification to the MOU and changed nine of the Performance Measures to Growth Measures that will be identified with the counties in the future based on past performances. In addition, there will be no performance improvement or corrective actions initiated by the State based on this MOU for FY 2018-2019. The point of contact person has changed as well due to the retirement of Mr. Wayne Black; it will now be Assistant Secretary of NC DHHS Michael Becketts. The modification needs to be signed and returned to DHHS December 17, 2018. The Permanency Planning area will have the toughest time meeting the requirements set forth in the MOU, but Mrs. Craig is okay with the MOU modification as written.

Ms. Murphy made a motion to sign and return the MOU to the State by the assigned date. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wagner. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Board Updates**

Mr. Moorefield shared updates on the move to Davidson House. The move has been delayed due to the discovery of mold in the building much worse than was previously thought. The move has now been delayed until January 2019 possibly. The crews have to tear out walls and treat all affected areas prior to constructing the renovated space in the building. Mr. Moorefield reiterated that our Agency is very cramped for space. One of the goals that we hope to accomplish with this move to get our staff better office space and reclaim conference room areas that have been converted into offices and work stations. We also learned that the items that had been stored in the house have been destroyed due to contamination as well.

Mr. Moorefield gave an update on the Pay Study being conducted by Piedmont Triad Regional Council. The purpose of the study is to get positions within the County structure classified, as they should be. Social Services is one of the first departments to go through this. All of the positions in DSS are being reviewed this year with the exception of office support and department heads. These will be conducted in the second and third year of the study. Interviews between PTRC and employees will begin November 30, 2018. The results should be shared with the Department, DSS Board, and Board of County Commissioners in the spring of 2019. The purpose of these studies is to help with recruitment and retention of good staff.

Mr. Moorefield discussed the potential appointment of new members to our DSS Board. The two Commissioners on our DSS Board will be leaving the Board of Commissioners soon. Mr. Barrett will no longer serve as a County Commissioner as of early December and Mr. Jarvis will no longer serve as a County Commissioner when he begins his State Legislative post in January 2019. Mr. Moorefield shared that preference is to have sitting County Commissioners

serve on our DSS Board, as they can best know what is going on with the Department and be strong advocates for us in Board of Commissioner Meetings and discussions.

Mr. Morris expressed his desire for the Board to meet early one of our meeting days (when it gets a little warmer), possibly tour our buildings, and meet some of the employees to see firsthand what is going on with staff.

Mr. Moorefield shared that the County PBB Employee of the Year for 2017-2018 is Lexington Child Support Unit Supervisor, Kim Danch and she will receive an additional \$500.00 in the form of a bonus check in January 2019.

Mrs. Susan Craig let the Board know about the Angel Tree for the wards and explained the process of providing Christmas gifts for one of our wards. She shared that you do not have to buy everything on the list. Two of the Board members took the last two angels from the tree and will provide their Christmas.

Mr. Moorefield thanked the Board for their involvement in our Agency; not just what happens at the meetings. He also thanked them for bringing up the Security issue and their willingness to work with us on this very important issue. He is thankful for the Board's concern for all of the employees.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

Friday, December 14, 2018, at 11:30 a.m., Church of God Ministry Center, 822 West 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Lexington, North Carolina.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Wagner made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Dale Moorefield