

**DAVIDSON COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

*Dale Moorefield, Director*



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services  
Board Meeting Minutes  
July 23, 2019**

**Board Members Present**

**Mr. Andy Morris; Mrs. Jane Murphy; Mrs. Karen Watford;  
Mr. Richard Wagner; Mr. Todd Yates**

**Others in Attendance**

**Mr. Dale Moorefield; Mr. Scott Craver; Ms. Katrina McMasters; Mrs. Susan Craig;  
Ms. Elizabeth Huff; Mrs. Caroline Hedrick; Mrs. Lexa Eagle; Mrs. Sheri Woodyard;  
Ms. Jeannine Cormier; Mr. Keith Bidy**

**Call to Order**

Mr. Andy Morris called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. Mr. Morris offered an invocation.

**Oath of Office**

Mr. Todd Yates was given the Oath of Office for his three-year term on the Board of Social Services as the Board of County Commissioners 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 for the Board of Social Services. A motion to open the floor for nominations for Chairman, Vice-Chairman and CCPT representatives was requested. Mr. Richard Wagner was nominated for DSS Board Chairperson by Mr. Andy Morris. There were no other nominations for chairperson. Mr. Todd Yates nominated Mrs. Karen Watford for vice chairperson. Mr. Wagner was also nominated for CCPT by Ms. Jane Murphy. No further nominations were received and the nominations were closed. Mr. Richard Wagner was elected Chairperson, Mrs. Watford as vice chairperson and Mr. Wagner as CCPT representative by acclamation.

Director Dale Moorefield requested that an addition be made to the Agenda at I.5, Pay Study 2018 Results.

## **Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. Morris made a motion to approve the amended Agenda and Mrs. Watford seconded the motion. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Mrs. Sheri Woodyard requested that the minutes be amended from the June 25, 2019 meeting to add Personnel Matter to the Closed Session heading. A motion to amend the minutes from the June 25, 2019 was made by Mrs. Watford and seconded by Mr. Morris. The amendment was approved unanimously. Mr. Yates made a motion to approve the amended minutes and Mrs. Watford seconded the motions. The minutes were approved unanimously.

## **Public Address**

There was no public address.

## **Management Report**

Mrs. Caroline Hedrick provided the Board with an updated Expenditure Report that reflects overall underspending for FY 2018-2019 and Director Moorefield provided the Board with a detailed Vacancy Report and reported that we will plan to take a yearly look at this in our Annual Personnel Report next month.

Ms. Elizabeth Huff reported that we are at year end in the Income Maintenance area and year to date and comparing to last year, even with turnover, we have maintained plus/minus less than 1% from where we were last year for all of our accuracy, processing times, and recertification processing. SA processing time was increased from last year at 96% to 97% for this year and no applications went into overdue status. With all of the changes that occurred in the Income Maintenance area, we have continued to maintain high levels in completing the required aspects of the jobs. There is a slight decrease in Medicaid applications taken and a slight increase in the number of active Medicaid cases. FNS applications have decreased this year and there is a decrease in the amount of benefits coming back into the County, due to a lower amount of benefits being issued. Even with the decreases in FNS cases and benefits, there was just over \$31 million in benefits that had the potential to remain in Davidson County. We had almost as many Fraud claims this year as last, with being down only 31 from last year. Reimbursement to the County was \$17,000.00 less for the year. There were vacancies in this area as well during the year. Most of the Fraud for FNS benefits is misuse of the benefits. An example was given as to how this is caught and the fact that out of county residents were using the convenience store that was trading EBT benefits for cash at 50 cents per dollar.

In the Work First area, Ms. Huff reported that caseloads have decreased. The number of applications is down as well as inquiries. This is partly because we are down to the hardest to serve and the economy is better and for those that want to work, there is work available. We put 25 adults to work last year and only 15 this year. The participation rate is just over 26 percent for all parent cases and just over 16 percent for two parent cases. An explanation was shared to let the Board know the difference between regular Work First Cases and Child Only Work First cases.

Ms. Huff reported that in the Child Care, we ended the year with total spending at 99 percent. Ms. Huff also explained about the reversion of funds in the Child Care area and the small

amount of underspending shown with all the changes that occurred during the year. We ended the year with 166 children on the waiting list and we still cannot serve off of the waiting list at this time per the State. The estimated figures for fiscal year 19-20 show that we will be Start the year at 84% spending co-efficient. If the State would allow us to serve the waiting list and all children were served, that would potentially put us at 98% spending co-efficient. As soon as the State releases us to bring the children off the waiting list, we will begin serving them. We also know from past experience, that if they waiting list exists for any length of time, only about 1/3 of the children will have a need because the family will already have made other arrangements, will have lost employment or the children may have aged out or returned to school. There was discussion about the reasons for the waiting list and the potential to end up in a reversion situation again for this fiscal year if the waiting list requirement is not lifted.

In the Emergency Assistance area, with the year-end we served about 400 less families than last year. This was approximately \$126,000.00 less in benefits paid out. The issuance of EA benefits depends on the weather and the economy.

Mr. Scott Craver reported that Child Support finished the fiscal year doing well. We were just under the goal for collections. We achieved three out of five goals for the year. The goals have been set for this fiscal year and they are essentially the same as last year. An explanation was given for each goal met and those that were not met as well. New potential rules for the Agency will be that we must prove that the non-custodial parents have the ability to pay. This is the third month in a row of State Shout Outs. Stacy Holbrook, our newest Child Support Agent, had a collection in the amount \$14,586.00 for a worker's compensation payout, which was the 7<sup>th</sup> largest in the State.

Ms. Katrina McMasters reported that CPS has had a phenomenal year. All of the numbers that we wanted to go up are up and all of the numbers that we wanted to decrease went down. June was one of the lowest months for reporting for the year. We are doing well in getting cases closed. The backlog of cases open is now three times less than it was 5 years ago. The number of cases open in June is 168. This is the closest we have ever been to matching State expectations as far as average number of cases per worker. Significant work is being done throughout the division. The number of children being served in the County continues to grow. The number of children served in the Assessment area for fiscal year 18/19 is 3700 as opposed to 2800 in fiscal year 17/18. We have had large sibling groups and substance abuse issues within families have driven these numbers up. There was discussion about what the possible causes of the larger number of kids being affected.

Mrs. Susan Craig shared that we have served a large population this year. We had 200 children in care at the end of June. It has been almost 15 years since this number was at this level. For fiscal year 18/19, we averaged 185 children in care each month. We are seeing many children with mental health needs and substance abuse needs because of their parents. We are having more children in therapeutic settings, and this number continues to increase. We continue working on foster families, with an average of 40 families per month. There is a continuous rotating cycle with homes opening and closing for various reasons. The court system is moving slowly and most of the permanency planning social work staff is in the courtroom up to two days per week. This is due to the large volume of cases and the number of contested cases. A description of court proceedings was shared with the Board. Court days are running long because of the high numbers of cases due to high sibling groups. Cases are being continued which means the workers have to return to court more often.

Mrs. Craig report that in the Adult Services area, Information and Referral should be 125 and total number of clients should be 226 and new total number of clients should be 234. The ward population stayed the same at 89. We carried an average of 85 wards for the year. No new slots have been requested for Hope for the Future. The unit had 101 court appearances over the past year. The numbers of reports received and accepted in June were less and the month was a little quieter. This group is very excited to be moving up to the Davidson House.

### **Old Business**

There was no old business.

### **New Business**

#### **Employee Recognition/Retirement**

Ms. Jeannine Cormier has been with the Agency for 25 years. Mr. Moorefield shared all of the positions in which Ms. Cormier has served over the period of her tenure. She is going to move back to Massachusetts to care for her aging father. Ms. Cormier has been heavily involved in getting the CPS backlog cases down. Ms. McMasters also shared that because Ms. Cormier has been able to get cases closed that were on the backlog, she has been able to maintain a present caseload and seems to be managing the job much better. Ms. McMasters thanked Ms. Cormier for her service.

Ms. Cormier expressed her gratitude for being able to work for Davidson County for so long. She stated there is a great group of folks working for DSS and especially the team she has worked with.

Mr. Wagner thanked Ms. Cormier for her service on behalf of the DSS Board. Mr. Moorefield also commented that Ms. Cormier is always steady and has given her best effort for the Agency. They congratulated her on her retirement.

There was discussion regarding recognition of retiring employees by presentation of plaques or some other means that would be a keepsake. This topic was tabled until one of the next meetings.

#### **Record Destruction**

We have identified 355 CPS records and 146 Foster Care records that can now be destroyed based on the State Record and Retention policy. Mr. Moorefield requested that the Board make a motion to have the aforementioned records destroyed by Shred South.

Mr. Andy Morris made a motion to destroy the aforementioned records. The motion was seconded by Mr. Todd Yates. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **Agency Cell Phones**

The Program Representative for Adult Services made a visit to our Agency and there was lengthy discussion regarding the use of personal cell phones for Agency business. We currently provide a stipend to those who use their cell phones for the work of the Agency. The program rep had concerns that he shared with staff in that these phones could be subpoenaed into court cases as well as an invasion of privacy. We paid out approximately \$42,000 in

stipends last year for 70 employees in the Services and Administrative areas. We receive no reimbursement from the State for the stipend paid. After much discussion with upper management for DSS, surveys conducted with staff and discussion with potential providers, it was decided that Agency cell phones would be a good tool for the Agency now as it offers greater separation and privacy as well as being more cost effective for the county. Mr. Scott Craver led the discussion. It was shared that Assistant County Manager, Casey Smith, has some concerns about the use of Agency phones mainly for concern that other departments will want to follow this process as well. Mr. Craver also shared that he has spoken with the County Attorney, Chuck Frye, and he feels Agency phones would be a better way to go for staff.

Mr. Craver shared two handouts with the Board – Discussion Regarding Agency-Issued Cell Phones and Survey Results Regarding Agency-Issued Cell Phones. The Survey was presented first, with 80 percent of the staff receiving the survey having responded. The survey had only one question on the survey – Would you be in support of Agency issued cell phones? The survey also asked that those responding share comments about how they felt about the phones being issued. Of the 80%, two thirds are in favor of the issuance of Agency cell phones. Some concerns would be alleviated by the issuance of Agency cell phones. The stipends are given now by how much the personal phone is used. The stipend is issued on their paychecks, with taxes being paid on the amount. If we provide the phone and the service, we could claim for reimbursement enhancing cost effectiveness for the county.

Mrs. Hedrick shared the figures regarding the expense for the stipends and let the Board know that we do not receive any reimbursement for these stipends and provided them an explanation of why we do not. We can claim approximately 30% reimbursement for Agency issued cell phones. This expense would be cost allocated over all staff. The figures for the use of Agency issued cell phones was shared as well as the reimbursement as indicated by the current cell phone stipend recipients now. The savings would be approximately \$16,000.00 per year with reimbursement.

Mr. Craver shared that the primary concern of many was giving out their personal numbers. There was discussion about the possibility of having to submit a personal cell phone for court use. There was concern and discussion about the issues with the possibility of staff using the Agency-issued phone for personal use and the problems that could cause for the employee. Our Agency would develop a policy to maintain the phone as a county device and not for personal use. There was discussion about agency use versus personal use and examples were given. The Agency phone could be turned off when not on call or when not at work. It would also give the worker an opportunity to unhook from DSS. There was also discussion of safety features, locater services and safety features that could be used for an emergency to get someone to the worker quickly. There is also the potential to use the Agency-issued cell phone as a hot spot out in the field and a much-reduced cost as it relates to have a data line for each of the tablets that are used by staff. This would have the possibility of making work for the staff involved more fluid and accurate. The Agency preference would be that services staff in the field would get an Agency-issued phone and the stipend would no longer be an option. There was also discussion about Google phone numbers and how that avenue of technology could be utilized. The survey responses were discussed in detail. Examples were given regarding the survey responses.

Mr. Craver shared information from the providers that were considered. Verizon is one of the providers and the information received from them was shared. Controls would be very important with the ability to check all calls and also internet use.

The Board would like to make contact with the County Attorney and get input from him as to the legal implications.

Mr. Yates requested time for him to conduct more research and get input from IT. It was shared that IT Director Joel Hartley was hesitant as having more devices may create more work for IT. However, it would be on Verizon to support the phones.

This issue was tabled until the next meeting at the request of Mr. Yates and Mr. Wagner.

### **Pay Study Results from 2018**

On July 19, 2019, our Board of County Commissioners voted to implement recommendations from the 2018 Pay Study conducted by the Piedmont Triad Regional Council. All positions in our Agency were studied with the exception of office support positions and the Director's position. Nearly all positions studied in our Agency saw an increase in classification and/or pay. The cost for the Agency this year is \$177,475.00 and \$71,000.00 is reimbursable to the County. The BOCC voted 6-0 to implement the plan with PTRC's recommendations. Mr. Moorefield also shared the Job Study information from 2016. Mr. Jim Price was HR director at that time. Mr. Price and management for DSS all agreed that our social work staff had the same decision making requirements and it was decided they would be made equal in pay due to the information provided. Mr. Price was able to justify to County Management that these positions (social work staff in Permanency Planning and Adult Services) should have equal pay. It was described as a Social Worker III work against status. With the appropriate amount of work experience, staff could be put up into a higher pay amount without changing the pay grade. This increase was approved by the County Manager, Zeb Hanner in June 2017. In early June of this year, we began getting information from HR to let us know that this was not to be an ongoing process, but a one time increase to get staff on a more equal pay basis. It is now being considered as a training progression plan and would have to be approved by the BOCC. Mr. Moorefield also gave an explanation of the handouts provided. As it stands now, we cannot continue with this process until the BOCC gives approval. There was discussion about the lack of paperwork. Mr. Moorefield asked the Board how we should move forward to have this corrected to be an ongoing process. If the BOCC approves as an ongoing process, it would then become a permanent way of doing business. Explanation was given for qualifications for the Social Work positions and Mrs. Eagle will provide the Board with a printed copy of that information. There was also discussion about how other counties handle this kind of situation. Mr. Wagner, Mr. Yates and Mrs. Watford will conduct more research and this issue will be tabled as old business.

### **Davidson House**

Mr. Morris made a motion to table the visit to Davidson House until a future meeting due to the constraints of time. Mrs. Karen Watford seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

The Social Services Commission asked that DSS directors share information with their Boards, making them aware of the proposed changes to the Commission's by-laws. The information was given to the Board. Mr. Wagner is slated to be voted on for Region II Director. Representation from this County on this State Board.

Former DSS Board Member, John Byrum, has offered for Senator Ted Budd to speak at the Agency Christmas luncheon. This will be considered during next month's meeting.

Mr. Moorefield asked if the Board would like to have a Ribbon Cutting ceremony for Davidson House and the response was yes. Mr. Moorefield shared this should wait due to our public Works staff needing to complete the outside work prior to any ceremony as the outside area is not favorable for presentation. He also gave a brief update – the certificate of occupancy was received on Friday and there will be a commercial clean up done by the cleaning staff employed by the County. Adult Services staff should be moving the first full week of August.

Mr. Wagner thanked Mr. Morris for his service to the DSS Board and for his continued dedication while a replacement is sought.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

Our next DSS Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 27, 2019, at 4:15 p.m. on the first floor of the Governmental Center in Lexington, Conference Room D.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Morris made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mrs. Karen Watford seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Dale Moorefield