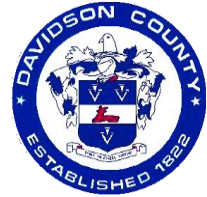


**DAVIDSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Patricia Baker, Director



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services
Board Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2020**

Board Members Present

**Mrs. Karen Watford; Mrs. Jane Murphy;
Mrs. Minnie Dukes; Mr. Todd Yates; Mr. Richard Wagner (by remote access)**

Others in Attendance

Ms. Trish Baker; Ms. Sheri Woodyard; Mrs. Lexa Eagle

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mrs. Karen Watford.

Adoption of Agenda

Mrs. Minnie Dukes made a motion to approve the Agenda for the meeting. Mr. Todd Yates seconded the motion. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mrs. Lexa Eagle called attention to an error in the minutes. On page 4, 6th paragraph, the reference to the salary increase should read \$500 per year plus 1.7 percent, not 1.5 percent. Mr. Yates made a motion to approve the amended minutes of the February 25, 2020 meeting. Mrs. Jane Murphy seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Address

There was no public address.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Trish Baker, DSS Director, shared handouts from the Social Services Commission meeting provided by Mr. Richard Wagner. The Board commented on how much they appreciated having access to the contact information while we deal with COVID-19. They also expressed how good it was to see this contact information in the local newspaper.

Management Report

Written highlights for each area of the Agency were provide to the Board and no verbal management report was given. Mrs. Watford expressed her appreciation for the written

comments. The Board reviewed the reports and asked Ms. Baker if there was anything in the report that was important for them to be made aware. Mr. Wagner noted that Income Maintenance is fully staffed. Mrs. Eagle shared that Permanency Planning is also fully staffed.

Old Business

No Old Business.

New Business

Record Destruction

Ms. Baker shared that the Agency has identified 130 CPS records that meet the record retention criteria for destruction. She asked for the Board's approval for destruction. Mr. Yates made a motion to destroy the records as described. Mrs. Murphy seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

COVID-19 Updates – State and Agency

Ms. Baker shared the press release with the Board. Links to sites to apply and telephone numbers for the office were shared in the press release. Income Maintenance reports a large decrease in traffic in the Agency. She also shared the DSS Director Letter that was sent showing that the Agency is mandated to continue to provide services. Ms. Baker gave an explanation regarding the uses of the 800 number for Child Support Enforcement. There is now an app for Child Support that can be downloaded to make applications, check on status and do other things as well. Child Support is fully staffed and all are working, rotating between the office and teleworking from home. Voluntary Support Agreements are being completed in Child Support due to the fact that the Courts are closed. Other Guidance documents from the State were shared with the Board.

In Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services, the work does not stop and staff have been instructed to ask if anyone in the home is ill, do you have any symptoms. If they are sick, masks are provided for use as well as gloves and the worker will continue the investigation as necessary and mandated. The Clerk is continuing to conduct Guardianship cases and our Agency has received guardianship of one new ward since the crisis began.

In the Child Welfare area, emergency temporary custody orders are the only issues being addressed in our Courts. The process for emergency custody orders was explained to the Board by Mrs. Sheri Woodyard, Attorney for DSS. An explanation was also given in regard to how these changes were decided and implemented. No other court proceedings will be heard until the pandemic has ended. A great number of cases are being continued. The next possible court date would be April 22, 2020 and cases are being scheduled with that date in mind. Cases are being prioritized and the cases with issues are going to be addressed first. Mrs. Woodyard expects there to be difficulties in Court for May and June due to trying to catch up on all the cases. The continuance orders will document the pandemic and the State of Emergency so that if cases come back on for appeal, the Agency will be able to show why certain things were not done timely as required by statutory timeframes and guidelines. The guidance on handling visitation for children we have in care with their parents was shared. Alternatives to face to face visits were discussed. Procedures for suspension of visits were also shared. These changes have not been considered lightly. Ms. Baker let the Board know just how hard Mrs. Woodyard has worked to get this worked out.

A decision was made to not visit facilities unless there is an investigation due to the fact that long term care and family care placements are at high risk. This is for our protection as well as the protection of the residents of the facilities.

There was discussion regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). These questions will be addressed in the Director's Updates.

Director's Updates

DSS has placed an order for masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer through EMS. Ms. Baker has contacted another vendor and we should have some supplies to us next week. Supplies are limited and we do not know how long the supplies will last. Other vendors are being evaluated to provide the needed supplies for keeping staff safe. Mr. Wagner asked that Ms. Baker keep the Board abreast of any need.

Agency protocol for Income Maintenance staff was shared. Clients are being interviewed at the front desk and traffic has been minimal. Chairs were separated in the lobby to help with social distancing. The press release was completed and we have ended the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). We are trying to limit as many visitors to the building as possible but still meet essential needs of the public. We have evaluated all positions and we are assessing teleworking opportunities for those with laptops. We are also looking at a compressed work week for those that do not have internet availability at home. For Income Maintenance staff who only have desk top computers, laptops are in limited supply and we are working to get those available for those who have a specific need to be out of the office i.e. lack of child care or being at high risk themselves. We will also be rotating these laptops between workers and looking at compressed work weeks for them as well.

Pinedale Christian Church brought 209 gift bags for all of our employees to show their appreciation for what we do in this Agency. A freeze has been implemented for hiring new staff at the County level. We continue to have 7 or more vacancies. The State has received a waiver to supplement Food and Nutrition benefits, this will mean that seniors who receive only 16 per month; will have their allotment raised to \$194 per month. These benefits will be staggered. Medicaid cases will not be terminated unless the recipient is moving out of state, has requested termination or has passed away. The Medicaid caseloads are potentially going to increase. We are responding to all situations as quickly as we can and trying to keep staff abreast of all that is happening as well. Staff that have to come into the office have been approved to dress down for the duration of this State of Emergency due to COVID-19. A lot of the staff will be doing some teleworking from home.

Budget Updates

We met with Casey Smith, County Manager, and his team and they felt 4 of the requested new positions could remain in our budget. We are still negotiating some of the line items due the amounts being so critical for carrying out the work of the Department. These funds are necessary for delivery of services to the citizens of the County. The unexpected need for Personal Protective Equipment has increased current expenses for this year and may impact next fiscal year depending on when the crisis ends. There may be some reimbursement for these expenses, but to what degree is not known at this time. We have to cover these expenses because we have to keep our staff safe. Mr. Yates recommended that Ms. Baker contact the DSS Board members if more gloves are needed. He feels there are restaurants that may be willing to donate gloves since they are not using as many with the closure of those venues to the public for dining in. There was discussion regarding the number of people who

are actually going out into the field and would require all of the PPE items available at some of the places they may have to go. This would involve our Services staff, including CPS, APS and Permanency Planning.

There are concerns about the number of children at home because of schools being closed. Thankfully, the number of reports has not increased. There are also concerns about the elderly in facilities. Workers cannot visit to check on them, but our Agency is doing the very best they can for all of the individuals for whom we are responsible. The Board thanked Ms. Baker for her efforts.

The Governor issued Executive Order 120 on Monday, March 23, 2020. He stated that in that Order that local county government is mandated to continue to provide necessary services, which includes DSS. Ms. Baker assured the Board that all work will be covered, even if it takes place from the homes of staff. There will also be a rotation of staff in the office to cover anyone who may present for assistance. There will be a presence of staff every day for every team to respond to urgent matters and take applications for services. The Press release has driven up the number of calls. There were questions about having a Frequently Asked Questions section added to any of our Facebook pages. We are trying to limit the use of Facebook because those pages are not manned all the time and some things may go unanswered. We are publishing information on the main County web page. It was suggested that an FAQ page be added to the County DSS page. We need to continue to get the word out to the public. Lots of information is gleaned from social media by many individuals. Ms. Baker will try to develop an FAQ page for DSS and get it posted as quickly as possible. The Board thanked Ms. Baker for her continued efforts.

Date of Next Meeting

The next DSS Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at 3:30 at the Governmental Center, first floor, Conference Room D, Lexington, North Carolina.

Adjournment

Mr. Yates made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Murphy. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:41 pm.

Minutes submitted by Patricia Baker