

The Northampton County Board of Social Services met via Zoom on February 16, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am. Present were Edith Johnson, Chairwoman, Spencer Murray, Board Member, and Mozella Francis, Director.

On a motion by Mr. Murray, the minutes of the January 19, 2021 meeting were approved with no noted changes. There was no public comment or correspondence presented during this meeting.

The Board was provided a copy of the FY 2021 budget which is significantly under budget due to understaffing at the Agency. Ms. Francis noted that Pass Through and Operations will be returning some funding due to the understaffing. Originally, \$150K was requested which was on course if we were fully staffed. Ms. Francis announced that the county budget is in development and she has presented her budget for consideration. Mr. Murray inquired when we will know what the county will be authorizing for the Agency. Ms. Francis responded that it should be sometime in March and time enough to rethink any line items.

Ms. Francis updated the Board on the Governor's budget noting that the House of Representatives and the Senate are on course with what has been presented. It was noted that the difficulty with recruiting and retaining staff, it is necessary to make adjustments so that Social Services can be more competitive. The House passed to increase the minimum salary of Family Service Workers by 20% and Benefit Programs Specialist by 15%. The House also passed a 3.5% salary increase for Admin staff and a one-time

1.5% bonus. Ms. Francis noted that now the Agency has to work through compression issues. Mr. Murray inquired if there is any way to fix this issue. Ms. Francis responded that she is working on a financial plan however she feels a salary realignment is the only way to address the issue. Mr. Murray requested Ms. Francis to come up with a plan and present it to the board when complete. Ms. Francis agreed and the plan will be presented as soon as the Agency is fully staffed.

Ms. Francis updated the Board on COVID and staff vaccinations for those who chose to receive the vaccine. The first round of vaccines are complete and the second round is scheduled for February 22, 2021. The Agency is continuing with “status quo” in regards to the COVID pandemic.

Ms. Francis briefed the Board on the In-home Family Services - Specialist Budget Allocation. The Family First Program will be in effect on July 1. The State allocated additional funds anticipating the increased workload with the implementation of Family’s First. The Agency is looking to hire two to three new, full-time Family Services Specialist. There is going to be a lot of preparation in the months leading to July 1 in order for the Agency to be ready. The funds the Agency was awarded from the State will not come with a local match this year however, Ms. Francis will request more funding next fiscal year due to the program’s new mandates. Ms. Francis will advise the County’s Finance Director and Administrator of her intention to request additional funding next fiscal year and will present the numbers to the Board going forward.

Ms. Francis provided an update on programs. CPS referrals have increased with an anticipation of increasing even more. The Benefit Programs Department continues working on overdue Medicaid Renewals. There are seven children in Foster Care. Child Care is at full capacity with the exception of mandated slots. This number will change as schools begin to open. The fuel program is running very well despite the funding to the clients being latent, as monies are not issued until the end of December or the beginning of January. It takes longer to receive the initial funding than the client expects and therefore poses an additional hardship.

On a motion by Chairwoman Edith Johnson, the Board went into Closed Session in accordance with Section 2.1-344 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, for the purpose of discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining appointees or employees of any public body.

The Board returned to Open Session.

On a roll call vote certifying to the best of each member's knowledge, only public matters exempted from the public meeting and in the original motion were discussed. The vote was Chairwoman Johnson: and Board Member Murray: yes. Mr. Murray made a motion to accept the foster care report as presented and Chairwoman, Johnson second the motion. Mr. Murray made another motion to approve Ms. Francis moving forward with gathering the financial data needed to for a salary alignment and to present to the Board. Chair Johnson seconded the motion.

The next Board of Director's meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 a.m.

Edith Johnson, Chairman
March 16, 2021

Attested by _____
Mozella F. Francis
Director