

The Northampton County Board of Social Services met via Zoom on May 18, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am. Present were Edith Johnson, Chairwoman, Spencer Murray, Board Member, Mozella Francis, Director, and Chairwoman Johnson introduced the newest Board member, Janice Langley.

On a motion by Mr. Murray, the minutes of the April 21, 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 noting that we are quickly approaching the end of the fiscal year. Social Services Fiscal Year ends at the end of May. Our new FY starts in June. In April, our Administrative spending on 855 increased on purpose as we are coming to close on the FY so we had some additional expenditures as well we hired a few additional workers. On budget line 858 (another administrative budget line) the \$150K was offset from what we gave back. All else is status quo. In June of the new FY we will be able to tap into Federal monies for Adult Services along with our regular budget.

**Ms. Langley inquired about the monies we sent back and if there was any penalty in conjunction? Ms. Francis responded no, there is no penalty but we are highly encouraged to use it all.** However, budget lines 855 and 858 are both used for administrative costs. Budget line 855 is a 15.5% local match whereas budget line 858 carries as a .66% match. We always try to utilize 858 until we expend everything else. We are understaffed so I did not have

to tap into budget line 858 for administrative costs. That is the \$150K that was sent back to the State in March.

**Mr. Murray mentioned that the original local share for this year was \$465K and it looks like you are posting \$464K? Ms. Francis responded that the local match was \$465K and right now we have a balance of \$245,895K but that doesn't include anything for this month. Also noted, the local match has to carry through the month of June. Mr. Murray asked if you going to exceed the \$465K that was originally allocated? Ms. Francis responded no, we will not go over. Mr. Murray: where did you end up on the COVID response funding. Ms. Francis responded at one time we were working with \$75K and we utilized all of the funding that was provided.**

Ms. Francis sent correspondence to County's Finance Director and County Administrator regarding the new rescue funding to consider using for phones. It is expensive to continue utilizing cell phones with the cost of purchasing and refilling them with monthly prepaid cell phones. We can benefit from a VOIP infrastructure to save on the cost of cell phones. **Mr. Murray: Would this \$50-\$75K cost only benefit DSS? Mozella: no this software upgrade for VOIP would be for the entire county. Mr. Murray inquired if he can contact the supervisors about considering VOIP for the county? He continued to express that the Rescue Funds are more flexible than anything else. The county should be able to utilize these funds for VOIP. Madame Chair responded, that would be appropriate to inquire with the supervisors. Ms. Langley also agreed and Mr. Murray will follow up.**

Ms. Francis advised that the 2022 Budget has been passed by the Governor. NCDSS has been allotted monies for the FY 2022 budget. It has included some additional funding for a Family Services Specialist because of the increased case load that is coming down the pike. **Mr. Murray inquired where you stand on speaking with John and Charlie? Mozella: we are fine. I asked for the original requested local funding prior to COVID and was approved for this fiscal year.** The local match requested for this year will get us through this year but we may need to ask for more funding as long as the federal requirements keep changing within the programs. We will be able to pull from federal dollars but the money the state provides will carry the local match.

Ms. Francis provided an update on programs. Child welfare is going to explode. Effective July 1, we can pull down federal dollars for prevention services. Our caseloads will probably increase by 30-35 percent. We have hired additional employees but we are struggling due to the ongoing pandemic and folks not applying for jobs. We also had our first meeting with Family Services Courts to introduce the changes that are on their way and the affects they may have on the courts. This meeting was very effective and there are plans to reconvene for more discussions on the changes.

The Benefits caseloads continue to increase. The State is looking to offer benefit funding to assist with internet access. This has not been approved but is at the conversational stages as well as, looking to increase the benefit year round. Medicaid has some changes coming down the pike which may result in an

increased case load. Childcare has the largest change of all. A lot of parents are not able to go to work because of child care deficit, they rely on family to help take care of the children. The criteria has changed for child care – new criteria (one can receive child care as long as you make up to no more than 85% of the State's median). Usually it is up to the poverty guidelines but looking forward, there a lot of families that will qualify for FREE child care; copays have been waived. Once approved under these current guidelines one has access for a year. The struggle now is to find vendors because currently there are not enough vendors. We are educating the public about child care and the parameters as well, attending job fairs to increase public awareness about programs and changes.

**Mr. Murray inquire if Head Start has started up again or is it coming back? Mozella: Head Start never stopped however they have gone to a hybrid attendance although some students are completely virtual.**

Adult Protective Services has not slowed down. We receive several financial exploitation referrals and continue to have increased UAI referrals.

An outdoor staff retreat was held on May 13, 2021. At the retreat Ms. Francis announced that the Agency will begin with a hybrid crew, two days a week in the office with Friday being a skeleton crew. We have to make sure the community can rely on our service besides paperwork. We will have appointments only and make adjustments as we go forward. There are a few agencies that plan to stay 100% virtual but Mozella stated that working in a rural area, complete virtual working will not work. Mr.

Spencer responded that we need to have a physical place where clients can go. Some clients need assistance in responding to renewals. Face to face communication is key. Ms. Langley agreed with Mr. Spencer and Ms. Francis.

Ms. Francis questioned if the Board would be interested in moving to future in-person Board meetings. There were some concerns however, it was noted that any attendance will be under CDC guidelines and masks will be required while inside the Agency. Madame Chair agreed as long as everyone is vaccinated and the space is conducive with CDC guidelines. Mr. Murray responded that although he and his wife have been vaccinated he will use a mask when he is outside of his environment including the Agency. Ms. Langley is taking extra precautions however, if it happens she has also chosen to remain under mask. **Madam Chair inquired if the board meetings can continue via ZOOM calls? Mozella responded yes, we can utilize the same protocol.** We continue to be under a State of Emergency due to the pandemic, which allows us to work under the code to conduct our meetings virtually. If that changes, we will have to revisit. Ms. Francis noted that 95% of the staff at the Agency have been vaccinated. **We will revisit the in-person Board meetings at the July meeting.**

Ms. Francis was contacted by the Pretrial Services for Northampton/Accomack County about utilizing our Agency building for more efficient ways to see clients in Northampton County. NCDSS is looking to utilize one of the unused offices for them to use as a satellite office instead of Northampton County residents having to travel to Accomack. We work very closely with the Department of Child Support

Enforcement as we share the same Commissioner. DCSE needs a place to meet with customers in Northampton County. The customers will benefit with being able to meet in confidence. We have also discussed setting up a KIOSK within the Agency's lobby so the client is able to make child support payments. **Mr. Murray: Are you set up to take payments for child care? Are there any concerns about receiving cash? Ms. Francis: NO, the KIOSK will enable them to make payments online to DCSE and not involve Social Services staff.**

Ms. Francis reported that the Agency has hired two Family Services Specialists and a Human Services Aid and a Benefits Programs Specialist. Ms. Francis also stated that she is looking to hire two additional Benefit Programs Specialists and another Family Services Specialists which will bring us to a better place, staff wise.

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 next Board of Director's meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 18, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

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Edith Johnson, Chairman  
May 18, 2021

Attested by \_\_\_\_\_  
Mozella F. Francis  
Director