

The Northampton County Board of Social Services met in the Board Room of the Social Services Building on February 20, 2023. The meeting was called to order under Virginia code §2.2-3708.2 at 11:00 am. Present were Chairman, Spencer Murray, Board Member, Janice Langley, Board Member, Ernest Smith, and Mozella Francis, Director.

Ms. Langley moved to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2024, meeting and Mr. Smith seconded the motion. All were in favor. There was no public comment or correspondence.

The Board received a copy of the FY2024 budget and Ms. Francis reviewed some of the budget lines specifically, budget line 855, Administrative/Staff and Operations indicating that March would reflect what a fully staffed budget would like for the Agency. Budget line 811 reflected what was paid out for foster care payments.

Ms. Francis noted that budget line 812 reflects adoption payments which will continue until the foster youth reach age eighteen. Ms. Francis noted that social services hasn't made an adoption payment for more than twenty-three years.

On budget line 833, Adult Service (Companions), some adult funding was sent back to the State because we do not have companion resources available to meet the needs of our clients. Francis noted that even within Adult Services' funding it is a little more challenging to utilize because it is stricter on how the funding may be used. The greatest use is of course providing those

companion services. Securing companion continues to be a priority for the agency.

On budget line 866, Safe and Stable Funding, the funding is broken into thirds: Family Preservation, Family Support, and Family Reunification. We do not have any children to be reunified therefore, we cannot use the allocated funding for reunification. Otherwise, we have expended approximately seventy five percent of the allocated funding for Preservation and Family Support.

Ms. Francis updated the board on the Agency Programs. Within the VIEW program, we are receiving more participation due to the increase of TANF cases. TANF cases that do not have a waiver must be referred to the VIEW program to continue being eligible to receive the TANF benefit.

The Childcare Program has seen an influx of childcare applications. Ms. Francis has asked that staff track to determine what is driving the increase. Ms. Francis advised that she has been well engaged with the State Local Committee along with the Department of Education. Although the Department of Education is awaiting the amount of funding they will receive through the general assembly, the goal is to continue at the level we are sustaining but reinitiate a waiting list starting July 1. Ms. Francis noted that each Agency will receive a target of the maximum number of children allowed under the Childcare Program and once that target is reached, the waitlist will be enforced. Once a child is admitted into the Program, they are approved for 12 months regardless of whether the parent utilizes the childcare benefit or not. One

challenge is that authorized non-participating families use a slot that may prevent another family from utilizing. Staff conduct check ins to encourage families who have not utilized the benefit to close the case so that it is available for others who may really need the benefit more urgently.

Within the SNAP Program, there is a seasonal increase during winter. Ms. Francis anticipates a change in the EBB and Flow due to Spring quickly approaching and customers receiving their income tax refunds. Ms. Francis noted there is also a new population applying due to inflation.

Foster Care remains unchanged. We currently have one child in foster care.

Ms. Francis advised that as of February 9, 2024, 3 of our 4 children have been officially adopted by their respective foster parents.

Adult Protective Services and Adult Services are status quo along with CPS/In-Home.

Ms. Francis advised the board that there are several EPPEs (Agency Employee Evaluations) requiring signature.

Ms. Francis introduced Guardian Safety, a tool that will provide an additional safety layer to the existing safety protocol already in place. The tool is comprised of a key FOB that can be placed inconspicuously on a keyring during a home visit or any other related meeting. The key FOB is monitored

and recorded by voice 24 hours to the security company. The company will dispatch authorities as required should the need arises to protect the worker. The supervisor can also listen in and if the supervisor feels escalation needs to occur, he/she can escalate the call to dispatch. There are other safety options to be configured for backup dispatching available. The Board all felt that this tool was a great idea and that anything that could keep the workers out in the field safer was worth the investment. All family services field staff will receive a key FOB.

Ms. Francis indicated that the Coordinated Enrollment Event that Northampton County DSS hosted on February 10, 2024, was a wonderful networking event. There was a nice turnout of vendors including schools, and childcare providers. Ms. Langley offered to have legal participation in the next event.

Ms. Francis introduced an informal discussion between herself and Jackie Davis, Executive Director of the Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board, and is also affiliated with the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). Ms. Davis. wanted to discuss how Northampton Social Services and VEC could better partner and increase the overall experience of residents in Northampton utilization of both services. Ms. Francis will remain open for future discussions.

On the agenda item, Ms. Francis announced that the Agency is almost fully staffed.

On a motion by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Langley 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 Chairman Murray, yes, Board Member Smith, yes and Board Member, Janice Langley, yes.

The next Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 11:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 p.m.

Attested by

Spencer Murray, Chairman  
February 20, 2024,

Mozella F. Francis  
Director