

**New Hanover County
Board of Social Services
Meeting Minutes
Multi Purpose Room A
9:00a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

The New Hanover County Board of Social Services met in open session on Tuesday, April 7, 2009 at 9:00 in Multi Purpose Room A of the New Hanover County Department of Social Services.

ATTENDING: John Craig, Chairman; Bill Caster, Vice-Chairman; Minerva Glidden; Patrick Riley; Evelyn Bryant

ALSO ATTENDING: LaVaughn Nesmith, Secretary to the Board; Asami Martin, Administrative Support Specialist

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Mr. Craig moved for approval of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caster and passed unanimously.

Mr. Caster led the invocation. Ms. Bryant led the pledge of allegiance.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Craig moved for approval of the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caster and passed unanimously. Ms. Glidden noted a clerical error. Mr. Caster clarified his statement in the minutes under County Budget Expenditures stating the budget looks to be in pretty good shape. He explained he meant the budget looks to be in pretty good shape *compared* to other counties in the state.

INFORMATION AGENDA

New Hires

Asami Martin announced Aliza Cohn-Blumstein, Rosanna Zeh, and Denise Strickland were hired as Children Services Social Workers however all three new hires were attending pre-service training and not available for introduction.

Service Awards

Cora Waddell was recognized for 20 years of service to New Hanover County.

Child Support

Sam Lane introduced the new Program Manager for Child Support, Alyssa Harrell. Mr. Nesmith shared that North Carolina will no longer support Child Support with Information Technology (IT). Christine McNamee is working on a contract amendment stating Young Williams will be responsible for their IT equipment and Social Services will retain the data.

SSDI

Mr. Caster noted the number of Licensed Foster Homes has dropped. Wanda Marino stated many foster homes have adopted their foster children, which then limits the foster homes that are available. The declining economy has negatively affected the number of applicants who would like to foster as well. Foster care checks are not enough to cover expenses of caring for a child. Recruitment is ongoing.

County Budget Expenditures

The agency continues to track line items that are dangerously close to being over budget. DSS was notified by the State that no additional TANF/Domestic Violence funds will be received as had been hoped. Ms. McNamee addressed the Foster Care line item question. The State increased the amount of foster care board rate and also increased the cost for group homes and institutions. The State changed the funding share by increasing the county's portion of the cost. Ms. McNamee stated DSS will be over budget on that line item but, currently feels comfortable that we have sufficient funds in the internal budget to cover costs. Mr. Nesmith reported that NHRMC did not renew their contract for the two Medicaid Caseworkers which will result in a loss of revenue of approximately \$98,000. Nesmith contacted County Finance to make adjustments in the budget proposal. Mr. Caster offered to take the letter terminating the contract to Bobby Greer who sits on the hospital board. Mr. Nesmith agreed.

Director's Report

Mr. Nesmith updated the Board on the restructuring of DSS to meet the growing demands of the public. Consolidation of the Medicaid and Food & Nutrition clerical pods is currently underway. Ms. McNamee has been working with County IT to evaluate and streamline paperwork by using technology to become more efficient. This will enable staff to be better utilized in other areas to meet program needs. Mr. Nesmith explained that the telephone system will have a different, automated menu but reassured the Board that a live person will be available and accessible for those who may have difficulty following the automated menu. The Work First Program was transferred from the Social Work Division to Economic Services Division under Sam Lane. Mr. Lane stated the Food & Nutrition Services Program is taking a thousand applications a month. Economic Stimulus and Recovery Act funds will be available to assist with temporary staff to provide relief for this program.

STRATEGIC ACTION AGENDA

Communication and Outreach Efforts

Ms. Angelina Bernard gave a presentation to the Board of upcoming events and outreach efforts made by DSS. Ms. Bernard stated that due to the shortage of employees, efforts are being made to recruit volunteers to assist with everything from greeting the public, to scanning paperwork and to serve as a courier between the agency and the Government Center.

Program Integrity Update

Kathy Heslin explained the purpose of Program Integrity is to ensure that benefits received by clients are correct and used appropriately. There are four employees on staff to cover the Economic Service Programs. As of March, 2009, \$160,787.50 has been collected due to Program Integrity efforts. The New Hanover County Finance Department is working with DSS collections.

Foster Parent Appreciation Proclamation

Ms. Bryant read the Foster Parent Appreciation Proclamation. Mr. Craig moved to approve the proclamation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caster and passed unanimously.

Next Meeting Objectives

Multiple Response System (MRS) Update

Board Self Evaluation

The Board completed self evaluations.

Additional Items

Ms. Glidden noted that she was pleased with addition of the glossary in the Board Packet.

As there were no other additional items to discuss as provided in G.S. 154A-98 to consider information that is confidential pursuant to G.S. 108A-80 and or G.S. 154A-98, the board by consensus adjourned at 10:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

LaVaughn Nesmith,
Secretary to the Board

John E. Craig,
Chairman

Date approved: _____

LN: scm

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