

**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, June 2, 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 and Patrick Riley

ALSO ATTENDING: LaVaughn Nesmith, Secretary to the Board; Stephanie Monteath, Administrative Support Specialist

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Ms. Glidden moved for approval of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caster and passed unanimously.

Mr. Caster led the invocation. Mr. Riley led the pledge of allegiance.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Mr. Caster moved for approval of the consent agenda. The motion was passed with a unanimous aye.

#### **INFORMATION AGENDA**

##### **Personnel**

Stephanie Monteath introduced Marilyn Costen as the new paralegal.

##### **Service Awards**

Susan Cox-Parker, Angel Major, Charlene McEldridge and Stephanie McGrew were recognized for 5 years of service to New Hanover County. Ruth Massey was recognized for 10 years of service to New Hanover County. Kara Toney was recognized for 15 years of service to New Hanover County.

##### **SSDI**

There were no comments on or questions about the significant service delivery indicators.

##### **County Budget Expenditures**

Mr. Caster asked about TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Domestic Violence funds spending. Ms. McNamee and Ms. Talbutt explained that money can be used for families trying to find stability after leaving an abusive situation. Mr. Nesmith

also noted that TANF/DV funds are used for prevention services, keeping families out of child protective services situations.

### **Director's Executive Report**

Mr. Nesmith said the foster family picnic had a great turnout and everyone had a wonderful time.

Mr. Craig asked about the program integrity cases that were referred to the Sheriff's office. Ms. Heslin shared the program integrity unit started with investigations into Adult Medicaid over issuances due to unreported resources (illegally hidden). These cases were referred to county finance and now county legal and/or the District Attorney's Office. All areas of service will be investigated ending with Food and Nutrition Services as that unit has the largest number of claims. Currently, one and a half million dollars is owed and in the process of being recouped.

Mr. Craig asked about the ARRA stimulus money. Mr. Nesmith shared DSS is working on hiring some temporary staff, hopefully utilizing Work First clients as well as using the funds to enable staff to work over time to process Food and Nutrition Services applications as numbers of people applying for FNS has nearly tripled since last year, while number of staff in that program has decreased.

Mr. Craig asked why the IRS cared about employee's cell phones. Mr. Coudriet explained that the IRS notes cell phones used at work are considered a taxable expense. As such, and with the loss of our great contract giving DSS work phones for 99 cents a month, effective July 1, 2009, the County will pay a reimbursement to employees who are required to have a cell phone as a condition of employment for use of personal cell phones used for work.

### **STRATEGIC ACTION AGENDA**

#### **Child Support Contract Update**

Alyssa Harrell noted that Young Williams is waiting for the certificate of insurance for the County and the performance bond to be able to renew the contract. Mr. Nesmith said there will be no change in cost for the contract whatsoever.

#### **Fatherhood Expo Update**

Angelina Bernard noted there were about 60 people in attendance at this latest Fatherhood Expo. Judge Corpening is already making plans for next year's expo. Judge Blackmore and Judge Gorham were also in attendance. Government T.V. recorded the program. It will be aired regularly. Mr. Nesmith noted the Sheriff's Department, Port City Java, Food Lion and several other agencies acted as sponsors for the event which made for no cost to the County.

### **Family Find Presentation**

Kari Sanders and Christy Thompson gave a presentation on the Family Finding pilot project. DSS staff received direct training from Kevin Campbell who developed the program. The program helps find family members throughout the country which helps Foster children make life long connections. Ms. Sanders explained that it is very important to find connections for children before they “age out” of foster care and often return to the bad situation from which they were taken. It is really important for children to know about their family and where they came from. Ms. Thompson talked about a child in a mental health facility that had 33 placements in 9 years and no family contact. Family Finding helped that child find 8 new family connections. Ms. Thompson noted children with no family connections aging out of foster care have a dramatically higher chance of ending up in jail, homelessness, substance abuse and teen pregnancy. Ms. Sanders explained the pilot program is run by Duke Endowment and covers the salary of the social worker, Christy Thompson and the cost of the Search Engine. All the children in the program are between ages 10 and 17 with no plan for reunification, no permanent placement plan and often no hope. Ultimately, the goal is to find lasting connections for these children and find potential options for permanent placement.

### **Emergency Action Plan for DSS**

Chris McNamee introduced the emergency action plan for DSS. Mr. Brim explained how the employee badges are currently used to enter and exit the secured areas in the building. However, DSS is working on getting proximity cards like the rest of the county employees use. Mr. Brim also gave a description of training given to each employee for evacuation plans, use of the 14 fire extinguishers etc. Department staff participate in unannounced timed fire and tornado drills. The department has 5 security gates and all clients must be escorted through these gates. There are two deputies stationed in the agency that monitor the metal detector and search personal bags to ensure no weapons are brought into the building. There are 20 surveillance cameras located throughout the building which can be burned onto a disc. Mike Winebar (NHC Safety Officer) is offering defibrillator training at the end of the month for which a number of staff have signed up. There are quarterly building inspections by various marshals and the county safety officer. The county offers training on CPR, First Aid and Defusing Aggressive Customers.

Chris McNamee discussed our special role in community disasters, especially hurricanes. The agency provides training to all employees on personal and community preparedness in the event of a disaster. DSS works in the EOC (emergency operations center), IC3 (individual care coordination center) and the Community Shelters as Site Coordinators and Shelter Team Members.

Jerry Brim will be attending a reception this evening to accept an award on behalf of the agency for safety.

### **Next Meeting Objectives**

Child Support Contract

Leading By Results Recommendations  
Adopted Budget Update

**Board Self Evaluation**

The Board completed self evaluations.

**Additional Items**

**Appointment to the Board**

Mr. Caster moved for re-appointment of John Craig to the board. The motion was seconded by Ms. Glidden and passed unanimously.

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 10:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

LaVaughn Nesmith,  
Secretary to the Board

John E. Craig,  
Chairman

Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_

LN: scm

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