

DUPLIN COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

BOARD MINUTES

Special Scheduled Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, August 29, 2019

8:30 AM

The Duplin County Board of Social Services met in a 'Special Scheduled Meeting' on August 29, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. in the Local Agency's Administrative Conference room located at 423 North Main Street in Kenansville N.C. Prior and Public Notice of the meeting was given in accordance with G.S. 143-318.12.

Board members present for today's meeting were Mr. Mike Wallace, Chairman, Mr. Jesse Dowe, Ms. Angela Mainor, Ms. Ila Davis and Mr. Gary Ange. Also present for the meeting were Mrs. Susan Thigpen, Director; and Ms. Angela Miller, Administrative Assistant. The Invocation for today's meeting was given by Susan Thigpen.

No changes or amendments were made to the agenda and there were no public comments received during the Public Comment section of the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded and minutes were approved for the July 25, 2019 Board Meeting.

Old Business

Ms. Susan Thigpen states that she has spoken with other agencies in regards to publishing the Board Minutes and discovered that they have not had any concerns with doing that. The County Attorney has also been contacted and had no issues with publishing the minutes. The decision was made for Board minutes to be published to County website starting with minutes approved in this meeting.

The status of the agency's Corrective Action Plan (CAP) was brought up in the previous meeting. Ms. Susan Thigpen noted that several items on the CAP were previously noted as complete and the last review of cases occurred in December 2018. Much of the CAP was incorporated into the agency's PDP at that time. Due to a number of changes at the state, a six month PDP did not occur but has been scheduled for October 2019. Susan Thigpen and Program Manager, Christy Jones, have reviewed the CAP and have made updates as appropriate and are of the opinion that the activities of the CAP have been adequately met at this time. Susan Thigpen will be following up with NCDSS to request formal removal from corrective action at this time.

New Business

Ms. Susan Thigpen states that within Child Welfare there are some issues that need to be discussed within a closed session. Mr. Jesse Dowe moved that the Board go into Closed Session for the purposes as set forth in G.S. 143-318.11, to prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential information. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gary Ange and passed unanimously. The Board returned to Open Session on a motion by Mr. Jesse Dowe and a second by Ms. Angela Mainor and it passed unanimously.

Budget Report - Expenditures are on track at this time according to reports. There was a keying error for Social Security expenditures at the Budget Office in preparation for the 2019-2020 budget and this was caught after the budget was presented to the County Commissioners but prior to final approval. The County Finance office has indicated that they will be making adjustments each month as needed using lapsed salary or taking funds from other line items.

The removal of wallpaper and painting on the 2nd floor is being finished at this time. We are hoping to get estimates on fixing the front lobby in addition to getting walls painted on the other floors. The agency has estimates of approximately \$210,000.00 to repair the windows and this project will take multiple years based on current funding for repairs and maintenance. Social Services will be working diligently to get estimates in the next few months to ensure that needed repairs and maintenance is completed.

Personnel - For July 2019 we had three new employees and six resignations. There are also three IMC Supervisors retiring effective November 1, 2019 including both Food and Nutrition Services Supervisors and one Children's Medicaid Supervisor. The agency continues to lose employees to other agencies for higher salaries. There are currently five IMC II positions for which we have interviewed and are awaiting approval from Human Resources (HR) and interviews have been scheduled for the PIA IV positions at Reception/Switchboard and Child Welfare. There is also one vacant Social Work Supervisor II position. The County HR Department has been short staffed recently and this is causing huge delays for our agency in getting positions filled after applicants have been selected. The agency is now selecting a "stand by" pool of applicants that have been interviewed so that if our first choice of an employee doesn't work out or resignations are received before the applicant pool is closed out, these applicants can be selected to fill positions quicker.

Ms. Thigpen is conducting exit interviews with all employees and salary has been the primary reason for leaving. Twenty-six employees have resigned or will be retiring from Social Services since January 2019: three of those will be retiring, two left due to personal issues not related to work, and thirteen left to go to agencies for salary increases as high as \$10,000 for jobs at the same classification they were leaving. Board members inquired about the calculations for a 5% raise as requested for the 2019-2020 budget. At the time of the calculation, the increase to the county would have been \$110,000 but this has increased to \$160,000.00 due to some changes related to the county share in the retirement fund.

Child Welfare - In July, there were 77 Assessments, 27 IHS cases, and 41 children in foster care. Thirty-seven new Assessments were assigned. Despite being short-staffed, there was only one overdue case and it is because of delays in getting a CME. Mr. Ange asked that the Board receive the number of cases with court involvement without agency custody each month and this information will be provided in the future.

Ms. Angela Mainor requests that the Director look into hiring an On-Call worker for Child Welfare Services. This would alleviate a lot of stress for all of the social workers since they are not getting paid or compensated for being on-call anymore other than for actual time they are working on a case. Ms. Susan Thigpen stated that we have already been looking at this option but are limited in this since there are no existing workers interested in providing on-call coverage and new workers are not sufficiently trained to provide after-hour coverage on a regular basis. The three Quality Assurance/Trainers are also carrying cases to prevent burnout for veteran workers and assist with caseloads as the agency continues to ensure reduced caseload sizes for newer workers. New workers continue to shadow the two remaining QA/Trainers as opportunities are available so they can provide training and supervisors are also going out with new workers during their first few Assessments. We have a new trauma focused program for staff and foster parents starting in the Fall in partnership with Duke Endowment.

New social workers now have three months of experience after Pre-Service training before going on the on-call rotation list. With the recent loss of a supervisor, the Foster Care Supervisor is now rotating on-call with the other two supervisors. The decision has been made to cross train all supervisors in Assessments, In Home Services, and Permanency Planning since it is really important for supervisors to understand the requirements for all stages of child welfare in the event a supervisor(s) are out.

Director's Update

We are very excited to have a new Paralegal for the agency. Having her on staff will be invaluable for all departments but particularly Children's and Adult Services and Child Support. The new Paralegal has met with the agency's contract attorney to outline her new responsibilities and they will be in regular contact with one another regarding agency needs and cases.

Ms. Susan Thigpen reviewed pending legislation with Board members and noted that there is uncertainty with Medicaid Transformation at this time due to the state having no approved budget. There is also a bill specific to child welfare that would allow foster parents to file a termination of parental rights after a certain period of time for children from birth to 3 years old in order to ensure timely permanence for this vulnerable population. There are statewide concerns about this bill since shared parenting and reunification efforts could be impacted quickly when foster parents are interested in adoption.

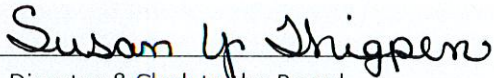
Mr. Gary Ange questioned whether or not NC Fast has been delayed once again. There are still a lot of kinks that need to be worked out of NC Fast but the last counties that rolled out in Intake and Assessments have generally indicated that it is working sufficiently well at this time to make it of value.

Our Permanency Planning Unit participated in a Back-To-School Bash a few weeks ago for foster children. The agency partnered with Sampson County DSS and the Guardian Ad Litem and 11 of Duplin County's foster children attended. The agency provided 26 book bags for children in care and 4 book bags to children currently receiving In Home Services during and following this event. Most of the supplies for the book bags were donated by agency employees.

Child Welfare staff will be viewing a movie called "Resilience" on September 10, 2019. The agency will also be hosting at least one additional viewing in the future for foster parents as well as the community. Social Services has also partnered with the Community Relations Specialist with Eastpointe in obtaining additional materials on trauma and resiliency for agency staff and community partners.

Motion was made and seconded to adjourn meeting and motion passed. Mike Wallace adjourned the meeting until September 24, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. This meeting will be a special scheduled board meeting due to conflicting schedules of the board members.


Mr. Mike Wallace, Chairman


Director & Clerk to the Board

The foregoing minutes were adopted on September / 24 / 2019