

DUPLIN COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BOARD MINUTES
Regular Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, February 27, 2020
8:30 AM

The Duplin County Board of Social Services met in a regular scheduled meeting on February 27, 2020 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, and Ms. Ila Davis. Mr. Gary Ange participated by phone. Also present for the meeting were Ms. Susan Thigpen, DSS Director and Angela Miller, DSS Administrative Assistant. The invocation for today's meeting was given by Ms. Susan Thigpen.

No changes or amendments were added to the agenda and there were no public comments received during the Public Comments section of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded and minutes were approved for the January 23,2020 meeting.

Old Business

The county's HR Department was preparing to send out the agency surveys whenever the county system was attacked with malware. Email accounts have not been re-established for employees at this time so the survey cannot go out until then. Board members agree with waiting until emails have been restored and the agency has returned to business as normal prior to sending out the surveys in order to best assess strategies for retention.

New Business

County operations have been impacted significantly since a malware attack was identified on February 3, 2020. This will be evident throughout the reports of agency functions and further detail will be provided in the Director's Update.

Budget Report – Expenditures appear to remain on track on this time; however, the general ledger has not been updated since late 2019 due to the county switching over to the MUNIS system so it is impossible to know precisely how the agency is doing with expenditures. There is no reason to believe we are overspending on any line item based on our previous spending patterns.

The agency is working diligently to ensure that we are utilizing the budgeted funds for our building repairs for 2019-2020. Our agency was able to get estimates to cover replacement of all windows over a four (4) year period, with replacement starting in this budget year but will need approval from the County Commissioners to use the same vendor over multiple years.

Income Maintenance and Child Support – Our agency is continuing to take paper applications for Medicaid and Food & Nutrition Services due to the malware issue. We have devised a plan to split staff

with one group seeing clients and taking paper applications and a second group keying applications and recertifications.

Child Support took the longest to resume functioning following the malware attack due to the security measures required for Child Support systems. Employees were able to begin entering/updating information early the following week. Verification will be needed from the state and federal government that all potential risks for data breaches have been addressed prior to returning to our agency computers for child support.

The agency continues to work diligently to remove children from the waiting list for subsidized childcare and we are currently at 106 % of our spending coefficient. Our state consultant has indicated that our spending appears to be on target and there is no reason to believe we will overspend by the end of the fiscal year since funds can be reallocated if needed.

Personnel – There has been a resignation and a retirement for February 2020. There are currently six vacancies in child welfare as well as some in Economic Benefits and the agency has been unable to fill positions throughout the month of February due to the malware and county HR's inability to process new employees. There have been no new applications for the Social Worker IV positions in more than a month. The agency continues to work diligently to recruit internally whenever possible. The agency will also be participating in a couple of job fairs over the next few months as well as exploring the possibility of partnering with NC Works to employ applicants over age 55. The agency will also reach out to colleges within the state with social work programs or other related degrees to increase the applicant pool.

Child Welfare - The agency continues to reduce the amount of backlog for QA/Trainers. One currently has 4 cases remaining in backlog while the other has 22. The director, program manager and supervisor met with each to develop a plan in order to complete all cases no later than February 29th and neither identified any barriers to doing this. The agency is exploring the possibility of modifying the third QA/Trainer position to an on-call position for evening to alleviate some of the stress and overtime for existing social workers who currently rotate this responsibility on a daily basis. There were no potential applicants to fill this position in the last interviews and existing staff have not expressed much interest in this position but the agency will continue to work diligently to fill this position. It is likely that there will be an increase in the number of assessments going over 45 days in the next month or so due to the challenges faced by workers and supervisors without access to existing documentation and maintenance of case responsibilities due to the malware issue.

Director's Update

Brenda Whitehead, who is retiring after working with the agency for more than 26 years, was given a certificate during today's meeting in honor of her time with the county. Ms. Whitehead has worked tirelessly in supporting our foster and adoptive parents over the years as well as providing independent living services to the youth currently or previously in care. Ms. Whitehead also coordinated the Adoption Promotion Banquets that have been held yearly.

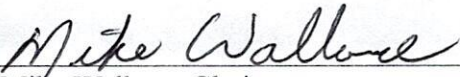
As a result of malware in the county-wide computer system, the agency lost all computer and phone capacity on February 3, 2020. The agency was able to obtain laptops from NC FAST in order to continue with the delivery of mandated services and had all programs working within a couple of days except

child support. At this time, we are unsure of when our system will be fully restored. Additional equipment will be needed before the agency will be able to connect to the county's new system.

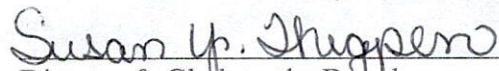
We are in the process of getting child welfare back on their Surface Pros after they have been wiped for any viruses and they are able to use their phones as mobile hot spots. Other units are having to work at tables in the hallways due to internet capacity from hot spots. Director Thigpen has spoken with directors from other counties who have also experienced malware for any additional recommendations. It will take a significant amount of time for the agency to recreate documents and spreadsheets that have been used historically to track caseloads, manage case responsibilities, and assess performance measures.

Our agency quickly implemented cell phone numbers due to the outage of our internet-based phone line system that we had. Cell phones were utilized for the front desk as well as Child and Adult Protective Services. These numbers were posted to social media. Phone service has been restored at this time.

Motion was made, seconded and passed to adjourn the meeting until our next regular scheduled meeting on Thursday, March 26, 2020 at 8:30.



Mr. Mike Wallace, Chairman



Director & Clerk to the Board

The foregoing minutes were adopted on: April 23, 2020 2020

