

The Accomack County Board of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, November 17, 2009, at 9:30 A.M. Present were Mr. R. Dodd Obenshain, Chairman; Ms. Kay W. Lewis; Ms. Betty Wood; and Mrs. Mary E. Parker, Secretary.

Mr. Obenshain called the meeting to order. He stated the Board did not have a Quorum; therefore, he would only go over the informational items. Ms. Lewis gave the Invocation.

Mr. Obenshain proceeded to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of October 20, 2009.** Mr. Obenshain stated the Board could not approve the Minutes until the November meeting due to the lack of a Quorum.

Mr. Obenshain continued to **Item 4 – Introduction of New Employee – Estrella Gutierrez – Benefit Programs Specialist I.** Mrs. Parker stated Ms. Gutierrez was unavailable as she was attending training in Virginia Beach.

Mr. Obenshain proceeded to **Item 5 – Walk through of the Energy Assistance Program Unit.** Mrs. Linda C. Rew, Secretary I, stated she was given the supervisory responsibility for the Energy Assistance Programs as well as the Front Desk Clerical Unit effective September 1, 2009. She gave a tour of the room and introduced the Energy Assistance staff. She stated the Energy Assistance Program commenced on Tuesday, October 13, 2009, and was scheduled to end of Friday, November 13, 2009; however, due to the inclement weather the deadline for filing applications was extended to Monday, November 16, 2009. The CRISIS program commenced on November 2, 2009 and will end on Monday, March 15, 2010. The CRISIS Fuel will commence on January 4, 2010 and also end on Monday, March 15, 2010.

Mrs. Rew stated she and the staff attended Energy Assistance training at the Eastern Regional Office in Virginia Beach on October 6, 2009. They also attended CRISIS training on October 8, 2009.

Mrs. Rew stated she had done something a little different this year. She decided to put an Energy Assistance worker at the Front Desk area commencing October 13, 2009. This would enable all clients with applications to be seen immediately by an Energy Assistance worker and have their applications reviewed. This was also a benefit to the Front Desk Clerical Unit as they could give their full attention to clients with other needs. If a client had a problem completing the application, the Energy Assistance worker would assist them.

All applications collected at the front area, as well as those received by mail, were given to a worker who logged them into a ledger. The applications were then put in a designated spot so all Energy Assistance staff would have access and be able to process them. Sometimes letters have to be written in order to obtain documents; i.e., pay stubs, etc.

At the present time Energy Assistance staff are processing CRISIS applications. The CRISIS program provides the following services: (A) Repair or replacement of unsafe or inoperable heating equipment; (B) Supplemental heating equipment or maintenance; (C) Security deposits to have heat turned on/back on; (D) Pay for emergency shelter; (E) Purchase a space heater; (F) Purchase primary home heating fuel; and (G) Pay primary heat utility bill.

Mrs. Rew stated staff often receive irate phone calls because clients have not received notification whether their applications have been approved or denied. The workers are very patient and inform clients the State has a deadline date for processing the applications.

This year workers have referred approximately twenty-five fraud claims to our Fraud Investigator Jack Thomas. In turn, Mr. Thomas goes to the residence of the client and obtains information relative to the case. In most instances there is fraud.

Mrs. Rew explained if a client does not agree with a denial, he or she has the right to appeal the decisions. She further explained she had a Cooling Assistance Appeal shortly after her supervisory duties began and we received notification on November 16, 2009 we won the Appeal.

Mrs. Rew ended the presentation by stating the Heating and Cooling Programs are of great assistance to the needy individuals in our community. She further stated she wanted to commend her five workers for working diligently in processing all applications in a timely manner.

On behalf of the Board Mr. Obenshain thanked Mrs. Rew for the Energy Assistance Program presentation.

When Board Members returned to the Board Conference Room, Ms. Major was in attendance and apologized for being late. Mr. Obenshain wanted the record to show Ms. Major was now in attendance and the Board had a Quorum.

Mr. Obenshain inquired whether there was any way we could cut back on paper documents in the Energy Assistance room. Mrs. Parker stated E-Z Filer is all we have at the present time. Some Energy Assistance files are scanned into E-Z Filer, but not as much as the other programs. Mr. Obenshain inquired whether we have any plans in the future to deal with the paperwork. Mrs. Parker stated the State keeps talking about it but they have not done anything. They are having a lot of problems with Northrup-Grumman. They have just created a CIO group, which will be comprised of an IT person from each State Department. This Council will review all IT matters prior to the State jumping into something. There is always the hope the State will do what they should do as far as electronic records; however, there is no money. Northrup-Grumman had no concept of the functions of a local administered State supervised social services system.

Since there was now a Quorum, Mr. Obenshain went back to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of October 20, 2009**. On motion by Ms. Wood, seconded by Ms. Lewis, the Minutes of October 20, 2009 were approved as written. Ms. Major abstained from the vote as she was not present at the October 20, 2009 meeting.

Mr. Obenshain proceeded to **Item 6 – Fraud Update**. Ms. Lewis stated she noticed on Fraud Investigator Jack Thomas's Fraud Report for October 2009 there were entries for savings in the Fuel Program. She had not noticed this savings in the reports from last year. Ms. Lewis stated it was good to hear at the

Energy Assistance presentation by Mrs. Rew that a number of cases have already been turned over to Mr. Thomas for possible fraud. Mrs. Parker stated when Mr. Thomas determines a client has committed fraud, this frees up money to assist someone who needs assistance.

Mr. Obenshain continued to **Item 7 – Director's Update**. **Community Relations**: Mrs. Parker did not attend any meetings.

Regular Meetings: On November 9, 2009 Mrs. Parker attended a CPMT meeting. On November 16, 2009 Mrs. Parker attended the Food Bank Advisory Council meeting. They discussed projects to do in order to generate money. Mrs. Parker stated the Art Auction held to raise money for the Food Bank made

less money than in previous years. They do not want to run something into the ground if people are not interested in that type of venue. They will try it one more year. Mrs. Parker stated the Christmas Home Tour in Onancock will benefit the Food Bank. The Advisory Council will be at the tour greeting people and selling tickets. She believed this will be held in Onancock during the middle part of December.

Regional/State Meetings: On October 27, 2009 Social Work Supervisor Libby Beasley, Social Worker III Sylvia Stanley and Mrs. Parker attended the Virginia Enhanced Maintenance Assessment Tool (VEMAT) training at the Eastern Regional Office in Virginia Beach. This is the tool that Mrs. Beasley and Ms. Stanley would use to determine whether foster parents – based on needs of the child – should be paid a higher rate than our normal rate. They are looking at using Federal funds in order to do this. If the foster parents do not like the rate, Mrs. Parker has the ultimate decision. She looks at what the issues of the child are, the strengths of the foster parents, if they have had training, etc. Then she determines whether it is a fair rate. If she feels we should offer a different amount than determined, Mrs. Parker can do it. The Child Welfare Unit is very small and the more things that get added to their duties make their jobs much harder. There is no concept at the State level of what has to be done. There are literally three people in that Unit responsible for the foster care program. They have to visit the children once a month plus do service plans, be in Court etc. This will be something extra added to their responsibilities. The Family Engagement Model will be added. Burn out is a concern for all staff.

Mr. Obenshain inquired whether it might be a good idea to sit down with Delegate Lynwood Lewis and make him aware of what is happening and see whether the Legislature could put something in place. Mrs. Parker stated since we started the monthly visits staff has been doing their best to do them. Prior to this being taken on by DSS, Governor Kaine refused to sign an order that would require monthly visits because it is an unfunded mandate. There will be a Federal requirement within a year for monthly visits, but the State jumped the gun for some reason. The economic downturn leaves us without funds to hire additional staff and the Legislature is not in a position to do anything about it.

Ms. Lewis stated if they require social workers to have license that will be overwhelming. Mrs. Parker stated there has been no buy-in from State institutions that are accredited and can provide the curriculum. All you have are Norfolk State, VCU and Radford. You cannot get anyone to talk about it. We tried to make it happen here; however, the co-hort program at Norfolk State no longer exists. The licensed social workers in the State – not VADSS - are trying to impose licensure. They would only give you 2-1/2 or 3 years to get your Master's Degree and become licensed. This only puts money in the hands of the group that requires the licenses. It only shows you passed the test – it does not say you are qualified to do the job.

Mr. Obenshain continued to **Item 8 – E-Z Filer Update**. Mrs. Parker did not attend; however, Northampton DSS Director Richard Sterrett did attend. We will continue having the attorney represent our agencies. Once a year these people will come up with something new to throw at us and then come back the next year. Mrs. Parker stated we do not know who owns E-Z Filer.

Mr. Obenshain continued to **Item 9 – Adoption Awareness Month**. Mrs. Parker stated we have a Certificate of Recognition from Governor Kaine proclaiming November is Adoption Awareness Month.

Mr. Obenshain proceeded to **Item 10 – Financial Statement – Administrative Office Manager Shirley Harmon**. We have just completed the month of October, which was the fifth month of the Fiscal Year. Our Total Expenditures were \$287,694.80. Our Total Local Adjustment was \$211,104.93 and our Total Local Balance to Date is \$471,636.07. Mrs. Harmon stated we also got a Local Budget Call, which has to be presented to the County prior to December 16, 2009.

Prior to going into Closed Session Mr. Obenshain inquired what was normally done for employees for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. He stated employees are burned out and are not receiving a raise again this year. Mrs. Parker stated in the past we have hired someone to cook a turkey and everyone brought a covered dish. However, this year we have not decided on anything to date. Mrs. Parker stated we would probably do something.

On motion by Ms. Major, seconded by Ms. Lewis, the Board went into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing Personnel (Termination, Employment and Leave Without Pay), as permitted by Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3712.

On motion by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Ms. Lewis, the Board returned to Open Session. On motion by Ms. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Major, the Board confirmed the matters discussed in Closed Session. Mr. Obenshain polled the Board to confirm the matters discussed in Closed Session (Ms. Wood – yes; Ms. Major – yes; Ms. Lewis – yes). On motion by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Ms. Major, the Board was polled and approved the following:

- I. Personnel:
 - A. Termination:
 - 1. Estrella Gutierrez – Emergency Benefit Programs Specialist II – Effective 10/31/09
 - B. Employment:
 - 1. Estrella Gutierrez, Benefit Programs Specialist II - Effective 11/01/09
 - C. Leave Without Pay:
 - 1. Kathy Hasty, Office Associate II – 11/6-13/09 – 45.25 Hrs.

Mr. Obenshain stated the next Regular Meeting will be held December 15, 2009.

On motion by Ms. Major, seconded by Ms. Lewis, the meeting adjourned at 10:40 A.M.

APPROVED: _____

ATTEST: _____