

The Accomack County Board of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, February 19, 2019, at 9:30 A.M. Present were Ms. Laura B. Gordy, Chairman; Ms. Reneta Major, Vice-Chairman; Mr. Robert Marshall; and Mrs. Vicki J. Weakley, Secretary. Ms. Gordy stated Mrs. Mackie was ill and would not be attending. Mr. Sparkman had stated at the January 15, 2019 meeting that he would be unable to attend the present meeting. Ms. Major called Mr. Crockett who stated he was on his way and would be present.

Ms. Gordy called the meeting to order. Mr. Martin gave the Invocation.

Ms. Gordy proceeded to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of January 15, 2019**. On motion by Ms. Major, seconded by Mr. Martin, the Minutes of January 15, 2019 were approved as written. The motion carried. Ms. Gordy abstained as she was not present at the January 15, 2019 meeting.

Ms. Gordy continued to **Item 4 – Introduction of Ana Jurado and Tierra Payton – Benefit Program Specialist II's**. Mrs. Weakley stated Ms. Payton had been promoted from the clerical unit to Benefit Program Specialist II and this was Anna Jurado's first day on the job for the Benefit Program Specialist II position. On behalf of the Board Members Ms. Gordy welcomed them. Mrs. Weakley stated Ms. Payton would be remaining in the clerical unit for the remainder of the week and move to the Adult Benefits Unit on Monday, December 25, 2019. Mrs. Weakley further stated an advertisement had been done for Ms. Payton's position in the clerical unit.

Ms. Gordy proceeded to **Item 5 – Fraud Report**. Ms. Gordy inquired whether there were any questions about the report. She stated it is a little different than previous reports. Ms. Major stated she is pulling the reports from the Virginia Case Management System (VaCMS). Mrs. Weakley stated when the previous Fraud Investigator Jack Thomas was doing the reports, he did them by hand as VaCMS was just beginning to come into effect and fraud was one of the last things to go into it. Ms. Gordy stated when you read Mrs. Bailey's reports, you know exactly what she has been doing as it is a full report. Ms. Major stated it breaks it down into the various programs too.

Ms. Gordy stated she thought Mr. Crockett would want to hear Mrs. Weakley's Director's Report so she would wait on him. Mrs. Weakley stated while waiting she could speak about Item 3 on the **Director's Notes** – PSSF grant (Promoting Safe and Stable Families) grant. She further stated normally they give us nine months to write the grant; however, this time they gave us about six weeks. One of the things we are doing is Community Needs Assessment. We are trying to get as many people as possible to complete the form. The last time this was done Mrs. Weakley stated she was not at the agency and at that time they had a lot of focus groups and committee meetings. We are scheduling one but with the short time they have given us, she has not had the time to gather information. She has been passing these out to as many people as possible for completion. Mrs. Weakley gave one to each Board Member for completion.

At this time Mr. Crockett arrived at the meeting and apologized for being late. Ms. Gordy informed Mr. Crockett we were on **Item 6 – Director's Report** of the Board Agenda. Ms. Gordy asked Mr. Crockett had many Board Members have to be present at a Board meeting to have a quorum. Mr. Crockett stated we have six Board Members so we need four present to conduct a meeting. Ms. Major stated we probably needed to go back to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of January 15, 2019** as we did not have a quorum for the motion.

Ms. Gordy stated to Mr. Crockett she was going back to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of January 15, 2019** as we did not have a quorum present for the

motion. On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Martin, the Minutes of January 15, 2019 were approved as written. The motion carried.

Mrs. Weakley stated she would then return to **Item 6 – Director’s Report**. She stated she had attended the following meetings: 1) Fatality Review Team which was quite interesting; 2) Active Shooter training at ACDSS; 3) Shelter Operating Procedures and how to update the manner in which we handle the shelters; 4) Two Orientation Manual meetings on how to set up a new Orientation Manual for new employees to review; 5) VLSSE Board meeting which was quite interesting as the focus across the State was on JLARC report and a lot of concern about JLARC did not state any positives or whether we had improved in the last couple of years. When we are placing children with relatives we are not approving the relatives as foster parents but are just checking them out to make sure they are okay before the children go to the home. JLARC is disputing the fact we are placing the children with relatives and not foster parents. There is a big focus on that and how the Families First, which goes into effect in October 2019, will fix the JLARC reporting. No one knows anything about the Families First program yet.

Mrs. Weakley continued by stating there is a large focus on Medicaid Expansion. There are not as many cases as they believed to be approved and now the State is doing some things to push some cases through and it is causing distress for benefit workers; i.e., new workers typically will take a case up to the point of approval and have to wait until a senior worker or supervisor reviews same to be sure it is correct. The State is going into the system three random days per week and approving them before the supervisor has time to do so. We have expressed concern that those cases might not be correct as new workers are learning. They are not going to change it so we have to get the worker to go to the supervisor, tell him/her that the case is ready and have the supervisor review it before the State does an automatic approval.

Ms. Major asked whether the State would override the decision of the senior worker or supervisor. Mrs. Weakley stated she did not think they did. Typically across the State supervisors may say for example wait until the end of the day and set aside a couple of hours to go through and approve everything instead of having to start and stop the process. The State could go in on Wednesday at noon and approve everything and then the supervisor would look and it had been approved. It is very difficult to go back into the system if new workers if made a mistake or did something incorrectly. The Feds are doing a certain amount of approving applications coming online. The State has informed us it does not matter if the Feds approved it incorrectly because it is not our responsibility until it comes out for renewal. However, once a person goes into the system and for example, makes an address change and recognizes the case was approved inappropriately, the system will say it is our mistake and it will fall on us. There has been a lot of discussion on this as we do not need additional errors that are not ours. They are telling us under no circumstances are we to go in and close cases even though we know they were approved in error. It is fine if we do not have to go in and make changes as the system will hold it as the Feds approved the record. If a client calls for us to change the address, the system will then show it is our case. The reviewers will go in and see we made the change and will show it is our case commencing that date.

Mrs. Weakley further stated there is a bill to increase minimum salaries for Benefit Program Specialists and Family Service Specialists. Benefit Program Specialists would receive \$35,000 and Family Service Specialists would receive \$40,000 for beginning salaries. As part of that they would also raise the minimum salaries for directors for localities that have smaller agencies. The reason for this is the salary for Family Service Specialists would be higher than the director’s salary. Mr.

Crockett stated that cannot happen. Mrs. Weakley stated that is why they attached the director piece to be sure directors' salaries would be higher than the beginning salary of a Family Service Specialist.

Mr. Crockett inquired about the current salary for new benefit workers. Mrs. Harmon stated it is \$27,366. Mr. Crockett then stated new workers would start at \$35,000. Mrs. Weakley stated Family Service Specialists would jump from \$29,000 to \$40,000. Ms. Major stated that is a major jump and Mr. Crockett stated we were talking about a 33% raise. One reason for the State to do this is because a lot of new workers receive training and then go elsewhere for employment. People in smaller localities are only able to pay minimum and a lot of them are close to larger localities who can pay higher salaries. So, when a new worker is hired they can drive approximately 15 minutes to a larger locality and receive a huge jump in salary.

Mrs. Weakley stated she felt the State made a foolish decision when the National Association of Social Workers several years ago wanted title protection so not just anyone could be called a social worker. The State did not want to deal with paying higher salaries so they opted to not allow our social workers to be called social workers even though most of the work we do is way more difficult than work performed by private social workers. Plus, we do not have the option of saying we are not going to serve someone. If our agency is called for a child abuse case, we cannot say that family is too difficult and we are not going to do that; whereas, private social workers can do that. Many of the students coming out of college were trained as social workers and a lot of them were able to get jobs at social services. They would probably stay for three or four years and then go to a private agency. It has become more difficult for social service agencies to get qualified workers. It is a little different for us on the Shore as we are isolated. We still have some problems with it but we have a little more enthusiasm. We have workers from Maryland who are interested in our positions; however, when they are informed we cannot pay them the salary they are currently making, they lose interest.

Mr. Crockett then stated he was surprised there is enough money to support this huge raise. It is not just the salary for those coming in but also workers who have been there for five years and they are not up to \$40,000 where does the State get the money? Mrs. Weakley stated she had not asked that question. Ms. Major also inquired about the funding for the raises. Mr. Crockett stated it would not come from local funds and that was for sure. Mrs. Weakley stated from what she has learned from the legislative people who spoke to them at the meeting, there is a lot of support for this to go through. There was a time when social workers and family service specialists were paid equivalent to teachers. At some point the State decided they could separate us and the teachers' salaries would continue to increase and they would get 5% raises and we would get 2% or nothing. Teachers' salaries have continued to increase even though they are not what they should be and ours have not. The case is being made now that family service specialists are first responders; however, they are not treated the same.

At this time Mr. Crockett inquired whether this was a proposal DSS that was going to be made to the General Assembly. Mrs. Weakley stated it was and it was likely it would be approved. Mr. Crockett stated this would definitely cause a morale problem because a worker who had been there for five years and making \$40,000 would see a new worker coming onboard and making the same salary.

Mrs. Weakley stated she had been in the system since 1980 and they would get a raise and they would raise the minimum salary – it was constant. The base salary for family support specialists today is \$27,000.

Mrs. Weakley continued by stating the next presentation at the meeting was APHSA (American Public Human Services Association). They reiterated some of the legislative stuff again and talked a lot about the children's cabinet which Governor Northam's wife is overseeing. They discussed how it might impact us. One of the bills they mentioned was moving child care from DSS to the Department of Education. Ms. Major then stated normally Mr. Chris Holland, Superintendent of Accomack County Public Schools, and Ms. Beth Onley, Director of Finance for Accomack County Schools, have a format they use. She had asked whether moving the child care from DSS to Department of Education was in our future. She stated they mentioned they had been approached as well. Ms. Onley stated they might be partnering with centers and family home people to capture this. Ms. Major stated everyone would be fighting for dollars. We have Head Start, Pre-K with the school system and child care providers. For a long time the State has not been proactive with that because they have not demanded providers have certain criteria. As long as you were 18, passed that health and safety checklist it was simple. Now they want providers to have a more professional setting and some providers are nurturers. To rush them into more structure and have a curriculum they will be out the door. This is going to be challenging for the Shore. Mrs. Weakley stated this is across the State and places are just shutting down. Ms. Major said the State is not looking at it as being licensed. Providers need to become licensed and it will be difficult. The licensing people who come out to approve homes are the same people. Mrs. Weakley stated they have downgraded it to a study for a year. She further stated 90% of clients for child care are also getting some type of assistance from DSS agencies. Splitting it and going to the Department of Education for child care is doing away with the one stop idea.

Ms. Major wondered since adult service workers are under the Department of Aging even though they are housed at DSS, could it be possible child care could be housed under DSS but under Department of Education? Mrs. Weakley stated they would probably look at this with their study.

Mrs. Weakley continued her Director's Report by stating she had attended the CPMT (Community Policy and Management Team) meeting; the Healthy Communities meeting; four truancy meetings; and on the previous Friday she attended the Excellence in Leadership meeting, which was Part II of the State's Leadership Program.

Mrs. Weakley stated on February 12, 2019 we had the QA (Quality Assurance) team come and look at the child welfare records prior to the Federal review. One of our newer workers had a case pulled and once again learned the importance of documentation. She is going back and redoing some things. We also had a couple of issues with documents that need to be in the foster care record and benefits record. We had them in one and not the other. They reviewed 16 cases and there were no major issues.

Mrs. Weakley mentioned to Mr. Crockett the PSSF Grant (Promoting Safe and Stable Families) which she had discussed with the Board Members prior to his arrival. They ordinarily give us nine months to complete the survey; however, they gave us six weeks to complete the survey this time. She handed one to each of the Board Members who were present for completion.

At this time Ms. Major inquired how the new CSA Coordinator Rudy Zavala was doing. Mrs. Weakley stated he is enthusiastic and he was preparing earlier to

leave for Juvenile Court Services to do training so he could make sure they are doing their records correctly when we are getting audited.

Ms. Gordy proceeded to **Item 7 - Agency Profile Update**. Mrs. Weakley stated on Page 5 it shows we received 369 CPS referrals on children. That was actually down from 396 for the previous year. The number under APS was 166 and the prior year was 139. We are figuring this figure will continue to increase as we have a large number of retiree population on the Shore.

Ms. Gordy continued to **Item 8 – February is Benefits Appreciation Month**. Mrs. Weakley what we do is have all benefit workers go out to lunch. They normally select the Island House but last year some went to Market Street Grill.

Ms. Gordy proceeded to **Item 9 – Bridge Out of Poverty**. Mrs. Weakley stated this is part of the Healthy Communities group. We have come to the conclusion we cannot do anything about change until we do something about poverty on the Shore. She further stated on our agency profile 18% of folks in Accomack County live in poverty. It is down by 2% . The previous year it was 20% and 32% of our children in the previous year were in poverty. It is currently 28%; however, Mrs. Weakley believes it will increase as the Feds have readjusted where the poverty line is. She is anticipating by next year the folks above the line will be back under the line. She gave a report to the Bridge Out of Poverty group and at that time stated she was going to read it to our Board. She stated James Mischner had stated the two counties on the Eastern Shore are the most neglected orphans in America. She further stated Northampton County is pretty much equivalent to us as 19% are in poverty compared to 18% in Accomack County; 29% of their children compared to 28% of our children in Accomack.

Ms. Gordy continued to **Item 10 – Financial Report – Administrative Office Manager Shirley Harmon**. Mrs. Harmon stated for the month of January our Total Expenditures were \$339,192.36. Our Year-To-Date Total Local Adjustment was \$348,493.94 and our Total Local Balance to Date is \$467,805.06. Mr. Crockett stated we were in a good position as our budget was 66% and we have only spent 56%.

On motion by Mr. Martin, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the Board went into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing Adoption Assistance Agreement Case #001-053953006); Approval of Custody (Case # 001-045892006); Family Service

Specialist III Gail Godwin's Retirement; and Director's Consult (Evaluation and Other), as permitted by the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2.3712.

On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Martin, the Board returned to Open Session (Mr. Martin – yes; Ms. Major – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; and Ms. Gordy – yes).

On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Martin, the Board approved the Adoption Assistance Agreement - Case #001-053953006. (Mr. Martin – yes; Ms. Major – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; and Ms. Gordy – yes).

On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Ms. Major, the Board approved the Approval of Custody – Case #001-045892006. (Mr. Martin – yes; Ms. Major – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; and Ms. Gordy – yes).

At that time Ms. Major asked Mrs. Weakley when her Evaluation was due. Ms. Major believed it was March 16, 2019; however, Mrs. Weakley stated as long as it was dated the month of March it was fine. Ms. Major stated they had compiled the information from the Board Members relative to Mrs. Weakley's Evaluation;

however, our Chair Ms. Gordy would like to have everything in writing. She will need to speak with Mrs. Weakley about it and if possible, they would like to present the final Evaluation to her at the March meeting. Mrs. Weakley stated that was fine.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 19, 2019, at 9:30 A.M.

On motion by Ms. Major, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

APPROVED: Laura B. Gordy

ATTEST: Vicki J. Weakley