

The Accomack County Board of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, July 19, 2016, at 9:30 A.M. Present were Ms. Reneta Major; Mrs. Nicolette Hickman; Ms. Laura B. Gordy; Mr. John Sparkman; Mr. Robert Crockett; Mrs. Mary E. Parker, Secretary and Vicki J. Weakley, Assistant Director.

Mrs. Parker called the meeting to order in the absence of a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. Ms. Major gave the Invocation.

Mrs. Parker proceeded to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of June 21, 2016**. On motion by Ms. Major, seconded by Ms. Gordy, the Minutes of the June 21, 2016 meeting were approved as written. Mr. Crockett abstained from the motion as he was not present at the June 21, 2016 meeting.

Mrs. Parker continued to **Item 4 – Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**. On motion by Ms. Gordy, seconded by Mr. Crockett, Ms. Major was nominated to serve as Chairman. On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mrs. Hickman, the election of Chairman was closed.

On motion by Mr. Sparkman, seconded by Mr. Crockett, Ms. Gordy was nominated to serve as Vice-Chairman. On motion by Ms. Major, seconded by Mrs. Hickman, the election of Vice-Chairman was closed.

As the new Chairman Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 5 – Welcome – New Member – The Honorable Robert D. Crockett**. Ms. Major stated the Board wanted to formally welcome our newest member to ACDSS – The Honorable Robert D. Crockett. Mr. Crockett stated he looked forward to serving as a Board Member and he would do whatever he could.

Ms. Major stated she wanted to thank the Board for nominating her to serve as Chairman. Ms. Gordy thanked the Board for her nomination as Vice-Chairman.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 6 – Fraud Update – Fraud Investigator II Jack Thomas**. Ms. Major introduced our Fraud Investigator II Jack Thomas to the Board. Mr. Thomas stated he provides a report to the Director for presentation to the Board each month. He further stated he receives referrals from Benefit staff who suspect something is not accurate or a client is being untruthful. He looks at it, discusses it with the worker and then determines if it should be pursued. He also gets anonymous tips from citizens in the County who give fraud referrals.

He also does PARIS matches; i.e., runs social security numbers with the surrounding states to determine whether a client is getting duplicate benefits. He also gets referrals from the Sheriff's Office as well as State Police. Some months he does not get many referrals. It usually picks up in colder weather due to the fuel applications.

Mr. Thomas stated with fraud claims he looks at people who fail to report earned income and then he determines whether it was done intentionally or not. That would fall under fraud. Household composition happens when people are out of the home and they fail to report it; i.e., the more people who are in the home means more benefits for them. He has one now he is getting ready to prosecute. She has been getting benefits for two children who haven't been in her home for almost three years. She has gotten around \$9,000 in benefits which she should not have received. He enters the earned income and then determines whether they received more benefits than they should have and if they did, that is how he comes up with an overpayment or fraud claim for the month.

He stated if he investigates the claim and he determines it was not intentional, it is classified as a household error. For the month of June the amount of household error claims was \$438.00.

Cash payments received - in addition to doing the investigation, going to Court, etc. he is also responsible for collections. When he meets with someone and determines whether it is fraud or an overpayment, he sits down and prepares a repayment agreement and sets out the amount due each month. He tracks it each month and if no payment is received, he will send out a friendly reminder stating you must have forgotten to pay.

Recoupments received for the month of June - \$1644.00. He stated this is his favorite as it is less work. If he does this and an overpayment appears and the

case is open to SNAP OR TANF, he will do a repayment agreement and set it up where we take it out of their benefit. However, if it was like an error it is 10% we take out of their benefit but if it were intentional or a program violation, we take out 20% towards repayment.

Tax Intercept – Mr. Thomas stated for those who had executed a repayment agreement or anyone who did not pay monthly per the agreement, he puts them into the system for tax intercept. A lot of people pay taxes and get refunds. He does these around the end of November or first of December so he can get them just in time for the rapid refund. Once he puts them in the intercept program, they stay in the system for the entire year. If they do anything like winning a lottery, it will be in the system and we are able to get the amount due.

Mr. Thomas stated the amount shown for savings is when a worker receives a new application or a reapplication, senses something is wrong and sees a red flag like a lot of debt and no income. The worker does a front end referral before he/she approves the case. He has to go out and investigate and respond within a seven day period. If he goes out and finds it is definite fraud, the worker will deny the case which results in a savings to our agency.

Allotment reductions – If Mr. Thomas does an intentional program violation on whatever they are receiving if the case is closed; i.e., \$300 per month, and he disqualifies them for 12 months, that is a savings. The first offense is 12 months, the second offense is 24 months and the third offense is permanent.

Mr. Thomas proceeded to Fuel/CRISIS Programs. We do not have anything yet because we have not hit the winter season. Sometimes two people in the same household will apply for fuel assistance; i.e., one applies for payment of an electric bill and the other applies for kerosene. Only one person per household is eligible to apply for benefits. Mr. Thomas stated if they apply for kerosene or wood that would be in the form of a check. At that point Mrs. Parker stated the checks come out at Christmastime.

Mr. Thomas stated they have started doing matches in Richmond. If we do not catch it here, VaCMS might help as they run social security numbers to see if duplicate benefits were done at the same address.

Cooling Program – Mr. Thomas stated he had some stats on that. In the Heating and Cooling Programs we have limited funds. Starting with the Cooling season in 2012 Mr. Thomas felt it was senseless for clients receiving assistance through the Cooling program to go and pick up an air conditioner from the vendor, when we could go and purchase it and install it for the client. He began to feel possibly they did not want us to see something at their location. That year we did just pickups. If people put in for self-pickups, we wondered what they might be

hiding. He was not sure how many referrals were made that year; however, 45 were denied as they already had air conditioning units in their homes. We saved \$15,750 that year.

In 2013 – based on 2012 – we discovered there was dishonesty in the program. He went to every home that applied for an air conditioner to see if there were any in the home. He received 126 referrals from the Energy Assistance workers and 98 already had air conditioners. Of course, these were denied and we had a savings of \$47,850.

In 2014 Mr. Thomas received 84 referrals and 56 already had air conditioners for a savings of \$21,100. In 2015 we had 61 referrals and 30 already had air conditioners for a savings of \$14,900.

Mrs. Parker stated we have had some stories in the Eastern Shore Post which have been a deterrent from fraudulent behavior. Mr. Thomas stated the Post has been good with reporting our cases. In several court cases the reporter would ask specifics about the case after it was over. The Eastern Shore News does not. Most of our clientele reads the E.S. Post.

Mr. Crockett asked Mr. Thomas at what point does he determine a case should be referred to the Commonwealth's Attorney? Mr. Thomas stated he has an agreement with Commonwealth's Attorney Gary Agar; however, he is leaving and Mr. Thomas is sorry as he has done a great job for our agency. Mr. Agar had heard about the intentional program violation and at first, he said if you can do that just do it; i.e., if we can just work it out here. However, it does not act as a deterrent. We need to get it out to the public that we will prosecute anyone who commits fraud. Mr. Thomas stated they normally look at a case if it is "so in your face" or deliberate. It depends on what they say about the situation. If it is not a lot of money and if he feels they will pay it back, he will not refer for prosecution. It is normally at Mr. Thomas' discretion. Mr. Thomas stated it appeared that cooling applications were down this year. At this time Linda C. Rew, Supervisor of the Energy Assistance Program, stated we had received 425 to date. Mr. Thomas stated he believed previous years were a lot higher so he felt the word had gotten around about his investigating clients who requested air conditioners.

Ms. Major thanked Mr. Thomas for the tremendous job he does for us. She further stated Northampton County DSS had called on him numerous times as they currently do not have a fraud investigator. She further stated Mr. Thomas had gone to NCDSS numerous times and tried to share some of his expertise with them.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 7 – Director's Update. Community Relations:** On June 22, 2016 Mrs. Parker met with the Members Helping Members board at ANEC. Their Board invited Mrs. Parker and Director of NCDSS Mozella Frances to the meeting. They discussed ways to help more people or what they should be doing. Currently we are not spending as much as we did this time last year. NCDSS has spent all of their funds. We get two-thirds of the allocation; however, we do not handle the money as ANEC is responsible for the funding. We determine whether or not the client meets the criteria for the program services and if they do, we notify ANEC of the amount that should be paid and the amount is automatically transferred there. There was not a large turnout of members present at the meeting.

Regular Meetings: Mrs. Parker stated she attended a regular CPMT meeting on July 7, 2016 and an Emergency CPMT meeting on July 14, 2016. She explained when we have an Emergency CPMT meeting that means there is a child in need

of service. In this particular case Judge Gordon ordered the child be placed in a residential facility by the following Tuesday.

Regional/State Meetings: None

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 8 – Financial Statement – Administrative Office Manager Shirley Harmon**. For the month of June, the first month of our new Fiscal Year, our Total Local Expenditures were \$351,795.22. Our Year-To-Date Total Local Adjustment was \$43,130.99 and our Total Local Balance to Date was \$712,716.01.

Ms. Major inquired whether any Board Member had any questions as we are starting a new FY. Mrs. Parker stated at the bottom of the page it showed what our expenses and revenues were for the past several years. Mrs. Harmon stated it shows us what the expenses were for each of the years. Mr. Sparkman stated it had doubled since 2014.

Ms. Major stated we need a CSA Coordinator and she wanted to know if there had been any conversation about it. Mr. Crockett stated he had read the previous month's Minutes where the subject was discussed. Ms. Major stated she is a strong advocate for this position. Mrs. Parker stated the Eastern Shore CPMT has never had a CSA Coordinator because the State would only give \$12,500 to each agency for administrative costs. If you put the two sums together that is not enough to pay an individual with the skill level required. Mrs. Parker stated the County had previously considered filling the position; however, it was never done as there was a feeling both Counties were not serious about filling it.

Mrs. Parker stated Director of NCDSS Richard Sterrett had chaired CPMT prior to his retirement. She took it over but it is a fulltime job because the State wants that program run just like we run the programs we have for the agencies. They want caseloads set up and monitored in a certain way. We were doing the best we could, but we were not doing everything the State wanted us to do. Mrs. Parker stated she hopes both Counties will now feel the need to do that.

Mr. Crockett inquired what that position would do. Mrs. Parker stated the job duties and responsibilities include administering, reporting and monitoring Children's Services Act activities at the state and local level. This includes ensuring compliance with applicable rules and regulations as specified in the Code of Virginia, maintaining records and files, monitoring expenditures for compliance with all state and local policies, and preparing and disseminating reports.

Mr. Crockett asked if the position would work for both Accomack and Northampton Counties. Mrs. Parker stated it would. Mr. Crockett stated one suggestion he would have would be to determine a budget for that position and Mrs. Parker already had \$25,000. He said if he was in Mrs. Parker's seat or Northampton County DSS's seat, or possibly both, he would say it would cost \$60,000 as the budget line. We have \$25,000 so we will need another \$35,000. Both agencies could come up with half of the difference. At this point Mrs. Parker stated no, we are not going to underwrite the cost of that because it is not just our agencies. Mr. Crockett stated he was trying to tell her how it would be easier to sell. Mrs. Parker stated it might be easier to sell but we cannot take the funds the State gives us for one thing and use it for something else.

Mr. Crockett then stated you were going to have Board Members who would say we have a County Administrator who needs a Deputy County Administrator. He further stated we have the Public Works Department, the DPS and the County Administrator's Office – all of them can make the same argument Mrs. Parker is currently making. Mrs. Parker stated that might be true; however, we are not

allowed to take funds that are given to us for one purpose by the State and use them for something else. Mr. Crockett stated he understands some State funds are restricted. His only suggestion is if there is any way some funds can be freed up to use for something else – at least try to do it or explore it. Mrs. Parker stated then why would not DJJ and other agencies? Mr. Crockett stated that is part of finding the money – you go to the other agencies which would be benefited by this and ask if they can free up some money so she can then go to both County Board of Supervisors and say, it is going to cost \$35,000 to be shared like this; i.e., “x amount from the Counties and we can do this part ourselves.” He said he was offering advice on how to sell it. He further stated that would be the first question he would ask if Mrs. Parker came before the Accomack County Board of Supervisors. Mrs. Parker stated he had already asked it so she would be prepared for the question. He stated if her response was what she had just given him – NO – then his vote is No because she was not trying.

Mrs. Parker stated that is not accurate. The VDSS Division of Finance monitors our monthly expenditures and if we are above a certain percentage we are required to provide an explanation and documentation of all of our monthly expenditures. Mr. Crockett inquired how many agencies the CSA Coordinator would benefit. Mrs. Parker stated it would benefit the Department of Juvenile Justice, Accomack and Northampton County schools, The Eastern Shore Community Services Board, and Accomack and Northampton DSS. Mr. Crockett stated you have at least four agencies that could come up with \$17,500 together if the salary were \$60,000 and that is his suggestion.

Mr. Sparkman stated we have two Board of Supervisor members on our Board. Mr. Crockett stated we have three on our Board. Then, Mr. Sparkman stated they needed to come up with the money. Mr. Crockett said you have to be able to sell it and come to the Board of Supervisors offering something. If there were an abundance of money that would be different; however, we are already restricted as far as help we can give people in County system. When you have the County Administrator saying you need this, the Department of Public Works saying we need this, the Sheriff’s Office, etc., we have to try and balance all of this. It is not just the Department of Social Services. Mrs. Parker stated she was aware of that. Mr. Crockett stated he was just trying to offer some advice to make it easier to sell the position.

Ms. Major thanked Mr. Crockett. She further stated she thanked him for his input and it was a serious matter. She further stated she wanted to visit this subject because at some point the Counties are going to have to obtain a CSA Coordinator in her opinion. A lot of funds come with the CSA and a lot of money that the County has to impart. She understood his comment of looking at the other agencies involved; however, the Counties need to look at this.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 9 – Restructuring of Responsibilities – Family Services Unit. Assistant Director Vicki J. Weakley.** Mrs. Weakley stated up to this point we have had one Family Services Specialist who is responsible for all of the childcare program which is concerning as there is no backup if that person is out of the office or on extended leave. Two Family Services Specialists are responsible for Adult Services and Adult Protective Services. The Family Services Specialist who is responsible for childcare also is in the Adult Protective Services rotation. We have two Self Sufficiency Specialists with responsibility for the VIEW program which assists TANF clients in finding employment. She stated the need for adult services is growing as our population ages and we are receiving more and more calls. She further stated the population needing TANF and VIEW is shrinking, which is good.

We are in the process of moving the Childcare responsibilities to the Self Sufficiency Specialists so there will be two people with responsibility for VIEW and

Childcare and moving the Childcare Family services Specialist to fulltime Adult Services. That will be giving them some backup. Hopefully this will help us do more with recruiting companion services because we only have seven or eight people doing companion services. No one has had the extra time to recruit additional companion service providers to provide light housekeeping and chores for elderly folks and meal preparation for people who need assistance with their meals; however, they are not at the point of having to enter a nursing home. It pays around \$8.00 per hour and that makes recruitment a little difficult as well. Hopefully, we can do some additional things we have not been able to do. This will give us backups and give some additional relief in the Adult Services Unit as it continues to grow. 000 pertaining to this complied with the law. Mrs. Parker stated it did. On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Ms. Gordy, the destruction of purged files – Child Welfare Unit – was approved.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 11 – Save the Date – October 19, 2016 – Local Board Member Training**. Mrs. Parker stated training is done once a year at the Eastern Regional Office in Virginia Beach and is normally all day. It will be held 9:30 A.M. until 1 P.M. Mrs. Parker further stated based on this training it will be determined whether more specific training is needed at a future date. Mrs. Parker asked everyone to put it on their calendars and attend and meet the new Eastern Regional Director Jo Ann Wilson-Harfst. Ms. Major stated it makes you more aware of the duties of a Board Member. She encouraged the new members to attend if possible. Mrs. Parker requested everyone to let her know whether they planned to attend.

On motion by Ms. Gordy, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the Board went into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing Personnel (Resignation), as permitted by the Code of Virginia Section 2.2-3712.

On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mrs. Hickman, the Board returned to Open Session. On motion by Ms. Gordy, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the Board confirmed the matters discussed in Closed Session (Ms. Hickman – yes; Ms. Gordy – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; Mr. Sparkman – yes):

- I. Personnel:
 - A. Retirement:
 - 1. Abigail Allen, Family Services Specialist III, Eff. 06/01/16

Ms. Major stated the next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 16, 2016.

Ms. Major inquired whether Mrs. Parker planned to do anything for Dodd Obenshain and Kay W. Lewis since they were no longer members of our Board. Mrs. Parker stated she would do a Resolution for each. On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mrs. Hickman, the Board approved the preparation of Resolutions for Mr. Obenshain and Ms. Lewis.

APPROVED: Reneta Major

ATTEST: Mary E. Parker