

**CLARKE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
311 EAST MAIN STREET
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DATE: OCTOBER 9, 2024
TO: SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEMBERS
FROM: JENNIFER PARKER, DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: AGENDA FOR BOARD MEETING

The Clarke County Board of Social Services will meet at the Clarke County Government Center on second floor in Room AB on **Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at 9:30 am.**

The agenda follows:

- 1) Open Session
 - a. Adoption of Agenda
 - b. Approval of minutes for September 18, 2024, meeting
 - c. Next meeting date November 20, 2024
 - d. Review expenditures
 - e. Public Comment
 - f. Director's Update
- 2) Adjournment

If you are unable to attend the Board meeting, please call or email to let Jennifer know. Thank you!

Board Minutes
Clarke County Social Services Board

September 18, 2024

In Attendance

Members Present

Barbara Byrd-Member
Anne Cushman-Member
Doug Lawrence-Member by phone
Robin York-Vice Chair
Laura Dabinett-Member

Staff Present

Jennifer Parker
Johanna Arauz Ponce de Leon
Sarita Emmons
Iyana Thomas
Hannah Lockhart

Public

Bill Johnston

Call to Order

At 9:37 am, Chairman York called the meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda

Anne Cushman moved to adopt the amended agenda to add the change of meeting date of October 9th by request of the Director. The motion carried by the following vote:

Barbara Byrd- Aye
Anne Cushman- Aye
Laura Dabinett-Aye
Doug Lawrence-Aye
Robin York-Aye

Approval of Minutes

Anne Cushman moved to approve the minutes of August 21, 2024, as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Barbara Byrd- Aye
Anne Cushman- Aye
Laura Dabinett-Aye
Doug Lawrence-Aye
Robin York-Aye

Public Comment

Mr. Bill Johnston introduced himself to the Local Board of Social Services and expressed his interest in potentially joining the board. He reported he was present for today's meeting to observe and learn more about the Board and the Department of Social Services.

Benefits Update

Caseloads have increased since June. Childcare is at 13, SNAP is at 462, TANF 12, and Medicaid is currently at 1,439. Intake has increased in July and August and the trend is continuing into September. Fuel Assistance opens October 11th. Katie Myers was promoted to Benefit Programs Supervisor effective September 6th and is in leadership training this week. The benefits unit is currently staffed with the Supervisor and one benefit programs specialist III. The staffing situation is critical. The Department is currently recruiting for a benefit programs specialist III after the resignation of the benefit programs specialist I & II earlier this month.

Services Update-Adult, Child, & Family

June and July were busy months for Adult Protective services with 25 reports and 11 valid reports. August had 5 reports and 3 were valid. In the past quarter, there have been 8 long term care screenings completed and we continue with 39 guardianship cases. Peter Van Eck is the new adult services worker and has adjusted well.

Child Protective Services reports have remained steady throughout the last quarter at 12 each for June and July and 14 for August. There were 14 total valid reports, with 6 investigations and 8 family assessments. Five children were removed this quarter, but 4 were reunited with family and one remains in care with a goal of return home.

Foster care has 7 cases with 5 children with the goal of return home, 1 child with the goal of adoption, and 1 child with the goal of relative placement. The Department currently has 7 adoption subsidy cases.

Our In-Home/Family Support caseload was 4 cases in June 5 in July, and 5 in August with one opening and one case closing.

The Services team has welcomed Iyana Thomas to foster care and Hannah Lockhart to Child Protective Services. Both have begun their training and shadowing their respective program areas.

Advisory Board and Administrative Board

Director provided additional information regarding the benefits of an administrative board. The benefits discussed included increased public visibility, transparency and accountability, the ability to hear and receive public concerns, and provide oversight to ensure public projects and programs remain on target. In addition, the Director explained administrative board members typically have an interest in the programs and services of the Department to help further mission and vision of the agency. Members have a desire or passion to serve in the human or social services arena and have a passion for helping the community and/or public. The Director advised the Board additional follow up was also provided through the Virginia League for Social Services Executives forum and one additional comment regarding changing to an advisory board was provided as "Eliminated the pressure of management and opened the door for guidance, recommendations, and great discussions for the community."

After a discussion, Anne Cushman motioned to approve a vote in support of an Advisory Board and Laura Dabinett seconded the motion.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Barbara Byrd-Aye
Anne Cushman-Aye
Laura Dabinett-Aye
Doug Lawrence-Aye
Robin York-Aye

The Director explained she would present the recommendation to the County Administrator to move forward with the Board of Supervisors.

Director's Update

Director briefed Board members on the critical staffing issues facing the Department. Director gave a brief update on continued vacancies. Director proposed investing in tenured employees. Director recommended the Board approve the requisition of a Family Services Manager position. This recruitment would be effective in November and the position would be effective December. For the remainder of FY25, the Family Services Supervisor position would remain vacant until budgeting could be evaluated for FY26. Having the Family Services Manager would also be part of the transition plan for the Director's eventual retirement in 3-5 years.

To better support the Benefit Programs Unit, a seasoned Benefit Programs Specialist III will be hired. In addition, the Self-Sufficiency I position will be filled to manage the TANF, VIEW, and Childcare caseload. This caseload will also include the SNAP and Medicaid cases attached to the TANF. This worker will also process the Energy Assistance program. To fund this position, we will eliminate the Benefit Programs II position, and temporarily suspend one of the Human Services Assistant III positions until the FY26 budget process is completed.

The front desk has been increasingly busy with the uptick in applications and walk-in customer service needs. With the holiday program coming the customer service at the front reception area will increase. Currently, we have the Program Coordinator assisting with backup coverage, but in October she will no longer be available to assist. There is a need for a part time Office Associate II to assist with covering the full-time front desk employee when she is out, away from her desk, or the reception area is very busy. The Director proposed a part-time position of 25-29 hours per week.

The Director explained that based on the current budget review, the FY25 budget can accommodate the proposed changes and filling any additional vacancies would have to be evaluated after mid-year or after FY26 budget process is completed. The Director explained the continued competition of surrounding competing salary and benefit packages are problematic in keeping and attracting new staff.

Adjournment

The Board was polled, and no other matters were needed for discussion. No other subjects in the room. Motion by Doug Lawrence seconded by Barbara Byrd, the Board by voice vote, voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:47 am. to reconvene on October 09, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. at the Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, Berryville, Virginia 22611.

Jennifer Parker, Director _____

Robin York, Vice-Chairman _____