

Macon County Social Services Board

April 15, 2020

Minutes

Call to Order

Patrick Betancourt called the regular meeting of the Macon County Social Services Board to order. Members in attendance were: Lisa Leatherman, Anne Hyder, Evelyn Southard, Patrick Betancourt, Secretary to the Board, Cathy Makinson, Business Officer designated to record minutes and HR Planner/Evaluator, Page McCurry. Location of meeting was changed to the MPP annex to allow social distancing during this Covid 19 event.

Minutes

Deferred February minutes were approved on motion by Anne Hyder and second by Evelyn Southard.

Financials

Business Officer, Cathy presented the Budget for FY 20-21 which had already been submitted to County Admin. DSS budget highlights had been sent to the DSS Board for review and questions in March as the meeting was cancelled due to Covid 19 and county budget deadline was due March 13, 2020. Highlights to the budget are attached to the minutes with an overall budget request of \$1,930,506, a \$28,971 increase from FY 19-20. Increase included an increase to attorney and other contracts, required retirement increase on all staff, one anticipated retirement and an increase in non-reimbursable costs in foster care. Senior Services will not show as positive due to the reduction in donations, private pay and the close of congregate and Adult Day Care. Motion to approve budget was made by Lisa Leatherman, second by Evelyn Southard, budget approved.

Old Business

No Old Business to report as emphasis was given to DSS response to Covid 19.

New Business

Early on during the onset of the pandemic, Patrick held discussion with IT support Nina Parrot and Supervisors to see what it would take for DSS workers to be able to telework from home including who had internet access and computer at home. Decision was made that employees would need to use a laptop or take their own desktop home for a number of confidential and liability issues. At the beginning of March, discussion was begun as to how DSS could close agency lobby to the public but still have access to information and applications. DSS can't theoretically close for a month because some of the benefits are entitlement with Medicaid and FNS being mandated services. IT had enough computer equipment to send employees home with their desktop and have a different computer at their DSS cubicle. Then it was evaluated to see who could set up their computer at home and had internet access and how we could ensure confidentiality. Teleworking did begin on April 2 in phases, with the initial 25 employees dropping to 18 currently working from home. Patrick provided a copy of the Teleworking Agreement for the Board to understand what was being required of these staff as far as accountability and confidentiality. Strategy was then developed to move on-site staff to spaced out cubicles to provide more distancing.

Next discussion had to do with restricting access to the DSS lobby. It was determined to set up a table between the two sets of doors at the front entrance. Applications in English and Spanish as well as program specific information were made available. Two posters explained the information as well as the process to apply, including the epass option, the child support portal and utilizing the drop box in the front parking lot which would be checked 4 times/day. A video doorbell that remotes into an ipad at the front reception was installed to assist customers with questions. DSS is required by law to process the apps even if they only have minimal information completed. Pilot can help provide additional information on clients who submit incomplete applications. Poster does request a good address and good phone number to contact applicants. Epass had been working relatively well until recently when it became flooded with FNS applications. It is an antiquated on-line process for general public to use but is quite cumbersome and requires individual to be issued a NCID to be able to submit the

application. The lobby is now closed and people seem to be adapting to the new process. There is definitely an increase in FNS apps which trends with the unemployment rate. State has extended current FNS benefits as well as next month, so most workers are now busy processing applications.

Child Welfare reports a significant drop in reports due to school being closed. The challenge for Social Workers is going to the home to assess and not going into the home. Frustration continues as the request for PPE for staff conducting visits is knocked down on the designated tier level. CPS is on the low tier to receive equipment. Patrick stated that Social Workers who have to put hands on a child without equipment are not any less exposed than workers that are testing/treating. Initially the State message was, don't even bother to request the PPE. However, the very next day an email came to instruct those requests be entered in the Web EOC for PPE, with the understanding that there is a shortage and agencies may not receive any. DSS did receive a shipment of disposable masks this week and are made available to field based staff as the priority.

Asked about employee morale, Patrick responded that initially it was good because of wanting to do right and serve the public. Ongoing, it becomes more challenging. Senior Services adapted early and quickly as the Center was closed and congregate meals were shifted to drive through, averaging 700 meals/week. Some Transit drivers with shortened routes are helping with delivering home meals.

Closed Session

Lisa Leatherman made a motion to go into Closed Session to discuss personnel information as allowed under G.S. 143-318.11. Evelyn Southard seconded, and motion carried.

Next Meeting

Next meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 8:30am in the Administrative Conference Room at the Human Services Building.

APPROVED BY:

Chairman | Date

Secretary | Date