

December 16, 2015

The regular meeting of the Camden County Board of Social Services was held on Wednesday, December 16, 2015 at 12:00 p.m. in the office of the Board at 600 Market Street, Camden, New Jersey, with James H. Rhodes, Chair, presiding. The following members were present:

Susan Michielli, Vice Chair; Dr. Leonard Krivy, PhD, Secretary/Treasurer (via teleconference); Gwen DeVera, Ginny Betteridge

Also present were: Shawn Sheekey, Director; Martin F. McKernan Jr., Esquire, Board Counsel; Sharon Faber, Esquire; MaryEllen Sittner, Personnel Officer; Mary Ann Pagano, Fiscal Officer; Greg Smith, Sr. Management Assistant; Sharon Hall, Sr. Management Assistant

Public Attendance: Michelle Acevedo, Communications Workers of America – Local 1084 (CWA) Legislative Chair, CWA members: Darnell Hardee, Allegra Reed, Michael Batts, Dorothy Cooper, Peter Mason, Diane Dixon and Gina Lipscomb

At 12:00 P.M., a quorum being present, Mr. Rhodes called the meeting to order, and announced that in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the Courier Post Newspaper and the Philadelphia Inquirer were notified of the Board Meeting; notice of the agenda was posted in a prominent location at 600 Market Street and the County Clerk was notified.

Mr. Rhodes requested approval of the following items:

- Minutes of the October Board Meeting.
- The listed expenditures from both Clearing and Administration Accounts.
- The payment of salaries and traveling expenses for November and December.
- Requisition from the County Treasurer for administration expenses for December and January.
- To move funds, to be requisitioned from the State and County Treasurers less monies on hand for assistance payments for the months of December and January.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to approve.

Ms. Betteridge moved to approve. Dr. Krivy seconded the motion, and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion was adopted.

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Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to open the meeting for public participation. Ms. Betteridge moved to open the Public Participation portion of the Open Session, seconded by Dr. Krivy.

Ms. Acevedo requested to read a message to the Board on behalf CWA and George Jackson, CWA President, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Jackson's message voiced his disappointment about going 24 months now without a contract. It stated that he has met with Mr. McKernan several times over the course of the past 24 months. In one of their more recent meetings they were looking at a negotiated agreement but the "rug was pulled out from under them". A proposal and offer was made which was considered an unrealistic approach which would severely impact too many union members. The message stated that the union has not been asked back to the table since then to come together and agree on a contract resolution. The message stated that the union was told when the agency switched from the State Health Benefits Plan that the switch would be saving the agency money which in turn would be used directly towards a contract. Additionally, the message states that the union was told and led to believe that the Medicaid monies received would also be used towards a contract. Yet, they are here, without a contract, after nearly two years. Mr. Jackson's message also mentioned that he has the numbers to prove that the money is available in that there is a surplus in the agency's operating account and he asks, "Why do we not have a contract today? Mr. Jackson's message mentioned that he has repeatedly heard the statement that the agency must get in line with the County but numerous County agencies have had their contracts negotiated and agreed upon at what appears to be at an increase of 2% for each contracted year. The CWA is not unreasonable and does not seek more than other County agencies – what is being sought is fairness. The agency is presently functioning with far less professional staffing than it has in years. Far more employees have retired in the last 10 years that have not been replaced. As the economy plummeted, the need for help and assistance from the public has grown which ultimately means a rise in the agency's caseload. Mr. Jackson's message states that he cannot recall a time in the last 20 years that this long of a time period has gone by without a contract and he asks, "Can anyone help me and my fellow members in getting these questions answered?"

Mr. Peter Mason stated that he was asked by Mr. Jackson to make a statement regarding a survey done by the membership and to provide the polled results on behalf of the membership's feelings. Mr. Mason provided the Board with a listing of the concerns voiced which included: Health care changes, switching of carriers, they weren't paying for health care and now they are, they have given up their longevity, smaller workforce with a much larger caseload, things are getting outsourced, not getting paid for sick time anymore when they used to, they buy their own desk calendars and appointment books, and the toilet paper is only one-ply now. Cleaning crews have been downsized and office areas are not getting basic vacuuming done, workers are doing multiple jobs (when someone retires no one is replacing them so workers are assuming those job responsibilities with no pay adjustment – there is a savings there), shared work such as guards doing clerical work by taking information, workers are seeing more hostile clients because of the lines and they can't get through to anyone on the phones. When they do get through, it is uncertain who they should talk to for simple actions like changing their phone number for an upcoming phone interview appointment. Mr. Mason stated that the members want to know, "Where's the beef, where's the money". They were told if they gave these things up it would help the organization save money. And now they are being asked to give up other things. The question is if those things didn't help, when we need to negotiate, we didn't save money – then why did they have to give them up, and number two, the things that are being asked to be given up in future negotiations (giving up steps, or this or that) but it's still not going to save any money. The membership is angry. They feel like they are being micro-managed, there is no more 2-hour Christmas parties, your shoes have to be the right color. What means more to the workers is the bottom line that the customers are being served and all the micro-managing, including not looking

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exactly right, isn't so important. Mr. Mason stated that the workers feel misused, not appreciated, watched, and that the so-called safety cameras that were brought in, instead of being for safety is more to put another eye on them - to 'crack the whip' on the workers.

Mr. Rhodes asked if there were any additional members of the public wishing to address the Board. Seeing as there was no one additional, Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to close the Public Participation portion of the Open Session. Ms. Betteridge moved to close the Public Portion of the Open Session of the meeting. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously adopted.

The Open Session of the meeting continued.

**UPDATE STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES ..... Shawn Sheekey, Director**

Mr. Sheekey stated that all Board members would find a synopsis of informational transmittals, procedural bulletins, general assistance procedural bulletins and Division of Family Development instructions in their packet. If there were any questions on any of the material, Mr. Sheekey stated that he or his staff would be happy to comment on them.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to approve the Director's Update on the State and Federal Policies.

Ms. Betteridge moved to approved. Ms. Michielli seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was take and the motion was unanimously adopted.

**Resolution 221-2015 – Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a Grant Agreement with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Involving the Universal Service Fund ..... Sharon Faber, Esquire**

Provides for the execution of entering into a grant agreement with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs involving the receipt of approximately \$17,993.00 to be used to carry out a project to code and verify FAMIS documents for the period of July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016 and further authorizes the appropriate officials names, titles and signatures as authorized persons to sign said agreement on behalf of the Board.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to approve Resolution 221-2015.

Ms. Betteridge moved to approve. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no other discussion on the motion a vote was taken and unanimously adopted.

**Resolution 223-2015 – Authorizing the Execution of a Grant Agreement with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Involving the Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program ..... Sharon Faber, Esquire**

Provides for the execution of entering into a grant agreement with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs involving the receipt of \$24,848.00 by the Board to be used for administrative funding for the Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program for the period of October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016 and further authorizes the appropriate officials names, titles and signatures as authorized persons to sign said agreement on behalf of the Board.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to approve Resolution 223-2015.

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Ms. Michielli moved to approve. Ms. Betteridge seconded the motion and there being no other discussion on the motion a vote was taken and unanimously adopted.

**Resolution 224-2015 – Authorizing the Appointment of Special Legal Counsel to Represent the Camden County Board of Social Services in Child Support Matters ..... Sharon Faber, Esquire**

In response to publicly advertised Request for Proposals the Board has received and reviewed the proposals submitted. The evaluation committee for this Request for Proposals has recommended that and hereby appoints the Law Firms of Mattleman, Weinroth & Miller, P.C., Zane and Lozuke, and Angelini, Viniar & Freedman L.L.P. be appointed as Special Legal Counsel to handle child support matters on behalf of the Camden County Board of Social Services at an hourly rate of \$97.00 per hour for a one year term commencing January 1, 2016 and ending December 31, 2016.

The annual limitation on the Law Firm of Mattleman, Weinroth & Miller, P.C., Zane and Lozuke, and Angelini, Viniar & Freedman L.L.P. shall be \$30,000.00 each.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to approve Resolution 224-2015.

Ms. Michielli moved to approve. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no other discussion on the motion a vote was taken and unanimously adopted.

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT..... Shawn Sheekey, Director**

Mr. Sheekey stated that the agency has been very focused on the SNAP timeliness over the last year given the focus of the Feds. The required timeliness rate for each County is now 95% and at the last DFD meeting it was reported that the state-wide average for SNAP timeless was 97% for 30 day cases and 98% for the 7-day expedited cases. Camden County is still lagging behind the state for timeliness. The agency’s timeliness rate for last week was 89% for 30 day cases and 93% for 7-day expedited. All in all the agency is getting close, but after a phone conference with state officials, it has been agreed that the state will come in, possibly sometime in January, and take a look and help with the case bank in terms of mail being matched up with cases as it is felt this is part of the problem the agency is under the required benchmark for timeliness. Mr. Sheekey stated that two years ago, before case banking, the agency was at lower than 20% timeliness. People were not getting their benefits timely at all.

Mr. Sheekey stated that one item came out of the County Welfare Directors’ Association meeting that he will table until January regarding a discussion with Civil Service on a Human Service Specialist Trainee title. There is a recognition that it is difficult when HSS workers come in to try to gain all the knowledge needed in terms of conducting an interview such as knowing the rules and regulations of all the programs. This trainee title would extend the training period to a 12-month period. This will need to be discussed further with the Board and with the union once some pending questions are answered as to whether this is a direction the agency would want to take.

Mr. Sheekey stated that weekly generic transition meetings continue to take place. There is a focus on the case bank and the mail that clients send or the verifications that they bring in multiple times that is still not getting matched up with their case folder. This is driving traffic into the agency. In order to continue triage efforts in the lobby, in conjunction with opening earlier at 8:00 a.m. to begin signing in clients, the agency has deployed wireless tablets. The CRM system is now on these wireless tablets and one or two people are working the lines in order to check people in, schedule people for appointments, and do a very cursory review of what may be bringing someone

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into the agency. Because these tablets do not access the State systems, people with more complex problems will still need to proceed to the Navigator Desk for further assistance.

Mr. Sheekey stated that Freeholder Rodriguez has asked that he provide an outline of the agency's goals for 2016. Some of these items include further research of the use of kiosks as self-service to apply for benefits rather than having to see a worker, customer service training, simple first name tags so clients know with who they are dealing, the revamp of the agency's dress code as Friday's have become very lax in terms of workers attire. People are wearing t-shirts and some people look quite sloppy. People should not look so sloppy coming to work in a professional organization. The focus is having staff adhere to the current dress code and with management enforcing the policy. The last item which has been discussed but seems to keep taking a back seat is the placement of flat screens in the lobby that continually send information and process instructions out for the clients.

Mr. Sheekey stated that the agency has had a tough two years with going through a lot of organizational changes. It has not been easy on the clients or the employees. The proof is in the pudding in that the statistics show that the agency is getting benefits out quicker than ever. As part of that though, it is important to not lose the customer service piece and next year there will be a focus on improving customer service.

Dr. Krivy asked that the Dress Code policies be sent to him.

There was some discussion regarding the lines in the lobby and what has worked and what processes are being used in order to reduce the length of line and the time clients wait in line. Mr. Rhodes noted that there has been significant improvement over the last few months. Mr. Rhodes mentioned that the County is updating its entire website so there will be communication with them in terms of potential on line tools where somebody can take care of something from their computer, and not have to come in, such as receiving confirmation that something has been taken care of. As technology is used and deployed there will be less need for people to make physical visits to the agency.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to approve the Director's Report.

Dr. Krivy moved to approve. Ms. Betteridge seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously adopted.

**FISCAL REPORT..... Mary Ann Pagano, Fiscal Officer**

Ms. Pagano stated that each Board member has received in his or her packet copies of Fiscal Reports for the months of October and November 2015. Ms. Pagano stated that expenditures are within the prorated budget.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to accept the Fiscal Reports for October and November 2015 as presented in the packet.

Ms. Betteridge moved to approve. Ms. Michielli seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously adopted.

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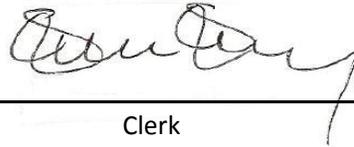
**OLD BUSINESS PUBLIC SESSION**

There was none.

**NEW BUSINESS PUBLIC SESSION**

There was none.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to close the Open Session and move to the Closed Executive Session to discuss personnel and legal matters. Ms. Betteridge moved to discuss such matters in closed session. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion, and there being no discussion on the motion a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously adopted.



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Clerk