

February 16, 2022

The regular meeting of the Camden County Board of Social Services was held virtually on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 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:

Via Teleconference: Vice Chairperson, Virginia G. Betteridge, Sharrae Morman, Secretary/Treasurer; Gwen DeVera

Also present were: Christine Hentisz, Director; Ivory Marrero, Deputy Director; Edward Hill, Esquire; Christine Colbert, Principal Personnel Technician (via teleconference) Joan Quinton, Confidential Aide to Commissioner Carmen G. Rodriguez (via teleconference); Nicole Jefferson, Administrative Clerk; Rich Behm, IT Director; Fred Anderson, System Analyst Supervisor

Public Attendance via WebEx: Audrey Watkins-Kizee, Simone Moore, Jeanette Norcross, Tamyra Bevans, Kellie Coyle, Sharondah Duckett, Lizzie Jones, Shiree Clark, Nicole Barringer, Cecily Velez, Precious Diggs, Shemeika Wilson, Krystal Harris, Yoresmi Medina-Lopez, Chimere Lake, Cerina Muse, Anita Tucker, other various call-in numbers

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 January Board Meeting.
- The listed expenditures from both Clearing and Administration Accounts.
- The payment of salaries and traveling expenses for February.
- Requisition from the County Treasurer for administration expenses for March.
- Movement of funds to be requisitioned from the State and County Treasurers less monies on hand for assistance payments for the month of March.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to approve.

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

**OPEN SESSION
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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 Ms. DeVera and the motion was unanimously adopted.

Mr. Rhodes asked if there were any members of the public wishing to address the Board.

Simone Moore inquired why weren't employees sent home due to the plumbing issue that occurred on Monday, February 14th? Simone went on to say, that majority of our employees are females, some take medication which causes them to frequently use the bathroom. She stated the bathrooms stalls that were made available inside of City Hall were constantly occupied or were not working, which caused many employees to use the union hall's restrooms.

Ms. Hentisz replied that many challenges and concerns arose on Monday, February 14th, in which she, along with Deputy Director Marrero, continuously worked along with the County in addressing and resolving them. Ms. Hentisz was informed that several bathrooms were made available in City Hall for employees to use. Any staff members that contacted HR or the Director's Office directly, due to personal medical issues will be handled and addressed individually by HR. As the day continued, and more bathrooms were made available, the decision was made for staff to remain onsite.

Ms. Moore inquired at what time were additional bathrooms made available? She stated a security guard informed her the fully occupied bathrooms located within City Hall were the only bathrooms available. Ms. Moore stated she then had to utilize the bathrooms at her union hall.

Ms. Hentisz replied that Deputy Director Marrero and Corwin Candelario, CWA's Health & Safety Liaison, as well as Pritchard employees, assisted in directing CCBSS employees to other bathroom facilities that were made available in City Hall. Ms. Hentisz went on to say, the initial notice that the bathroom facilities at CCBSS were available for use came in at around 2:30 p.m. Subsequently, the Director's Office began to receive reports of brown water coming from the sink faucets, which then the decision was made to close the bathroom facilities again to allow the pipes to be flushed out.

Sharondah Duckett stated staff did not receive an 'all clear' to utilize the bathrooms until the morning of Tuesday, February 15th. Ms. Duckett stated on that morning, the third-floor women's bathroom continued to have brown water coming from the sink faucets. Ms. Duckett went on to say, staff who have medical conditions and/or take medication that causes them to frequent the bathroom, were not readily informed that should they need to leave the Agency, those staff would not be required to use benefit time. Ms. Duckett felt that there was a lack of communication and guidance from administration and the union leaderships to staff. Ms. Duckett continued that a staff member was splashed with toilet water at around 8:30 a.m. Monday morning and reported this to HR shortly thereafter.

Ms. Hentisz apologized if any staff were missed in the communication between the Director's Office and HR regarding staff with medical concerns. Ms. Hentisz stated that she and her management team were in constant communication with union leadership throughout the entire day.

Ms. Kellie Coyle stated she also was not directed or informed of other bathroom facilities made available in City Hall. Ms. Coyle stated many emails are sent out to staff about expectations, however there were no emails sent with information about additional bathrooms available within City Hall. Ms. Coyle also inquired about the other conditions of the building. There are constant issues with the escalators not working, some staff have been stuck on the elevators for an extended period, and overall, the building is becoming a hazardous and uncomfortable place to work in. Ms. Coyle inquired are there strategic back up plans in place if another situation like this arises? Also, are there any other locations that the Agency can be relocated to and if so, what is the estimated timeline?

Mr. Rhodes stated that the unfortunate situation that occurred on Monday is being reviewed so that it

**OPEN SESSION
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

could be avoided in the future. Mr. Rhodes also sincerely apologized on behalf of the Board for the inconvenience that staff endured. Administration and the HR Department are currently reviewing each individual instance and will be addressed timely.

Mr. Rhodes went on to say, the Board and the County are actively discussing a possible relocation for CCBSS. The relocating of CCBSS from 600 Market Street, is a complex endeavor that will affect clients and employees the same. Mr. Rhodes assured that this a top priority and has the attention of the County and he appreciates everyone’s patience. As soon as there are any updates all staff will be promptly notified.

Ms. Coyle also inquired to the Director is she will be resuming her all staff meetings any time soon? Ms. Hentisz replied that she is currently trying to work out a way to hold these meetings again safely in person. Ms. Hentisz truly enjoyed having those meetings and is looking forward in starting those back up again.

Mr. Rhodes thanked all for the questions and comments and inquired if there was anyone else that wished to address the Board. Hearing and seeing that there was no one, 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. 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 POLICIESChristine Hentisz, Director

Ms. Hentisz 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, Ms. Hentisz stated that she or her staff would be happy to answer.

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

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

DIRECTOR’S REPORT..... Christine Hentisz, Director

Ms. Hentisz reported on the current program changes from DFD (Division of Family Development) and DMAHS (Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services).

Ms. Hentisz stated the major update from DFD is planning on how to smoothly transition the welfare agencies programs and processes due to several COVID waivers ending. During the past two years, recertification periods were extended and were unable to be closed. Although staff did a great job completing many re-certifications, there are still quite a few that need to be completed. Some of the larger counties, including Camden County, have been an issued a three-month extension waiver. All IRF (Interim Reporting Forms) and re-certifications that are scheduled to be closed beginning on April 1st, will close and will need to be re-

DIRECTOR’S REPORT (continued)..... Christine Hentisz, Director

certified and/or processed prior to that date. Ms. Hentisz stated that the Agency is anticipating a huge influx of clients during this time and staff are currently working on recertifying these cases as quickly as possible. The current housing waivers are still in place. Clients within the work activity programs, are beginning to be referred to the County OneStop building so that they may comply, although clients will not be sanctioned if they do not comply.

Next, Ms. Hentisz updated the Board on the Afghan refugees that were placed at Fort Dix a few months ago. There are currently about 2000 refugees that still need to be placed. The Agency is continuing to assist the State with any families that wish to reside in Camden County as well as providing information on applying for social service benefits.

Ms. Hentisz provided an update regarding the new requirement of certain employees to be fingerprinted and complete a background check. At the beginning of February, a few administrators were of the first to complete the background check and fingerprinting and all went well with little to no issues reported. Ms. Hentisz stated over the next couple of weeks, more staff will be notified of this new requirement and will be scheduled to complete their background checks. Ms. Hentisz stated this requirement will need to be completed by July 2022. The State informed that if an employee does not pass the background check, then they would need to be reassigned to a different position that does not require that high level clearance.

DMAHS current extension of the non-closure of Medicaid cases during the Public Health Emergency (PHE) continues to be set in place. The State informed once the federal government ends the PHE, the welfare agencies will be given an additional six months until the closing of Medicaid cases will be reactivated. The State is working on how this change will be handled and will continue to provide updates as they come. Fortunately, the Agency’s Medicaid department has done a tremendous job of keeping the redeterminations current, which alleviates any issues for the Agency on having to process a backlog of cases.

Ms. Hentisz provided an update to the Board of the Agency’s continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of Monday, February 14th, all staff have returned working full-time on site. The Agency’s lobby is still closed; however, the lobby should be reopening in the next couple of weeks. Clients who need to pick up an EBT card, mail, or homeless assistance are still being assisted. Also, additional KN95 masks will be distributed to staff in the next few days.

Lastly, Ms. Hentisz reported that she continues to be involved in discussions and meetings with other directors within the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) regarding common issues with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) being delayed in promotions due to COVID-19. Ms. Hentisz stated she will provide more updates to the Board in the months to come.

Mr. Rhodes thanked Ms. Hentisz for her Director’s Report.

Mr. Rhodes asked if there were any questions or comments for the Director.

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

Ms. Betteridge moved to approve. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion approving the Report was unanimously accepted.

OPEN SESSION

FISCAL REPORT.....Christine Hentisz, Director

Ms. Hentisz stated that each Board member had received copies of the Fiscal Report in their packet for the month of January 2022.

Ms. Hentisz stated that if anyone had any questions, she would be happy to address them.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to accept the Fiscal Report for January 2022 as presented in the packet.

Ms. Betteridge moved to accept. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the Report was unanimously accepted.

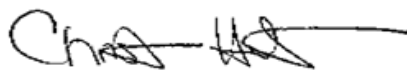
OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

Mr. Rhodes requested a motion to close the Open Session of the meeting 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 approved.



Clerk