

The Accomack County Board of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, at 9:30 A.M. Present in person were Ms. C. Reneta Major, Chairman; Mrs. Elsie B. Mackie, Vice-Chairman; Mr. Donald L. Hart, Jr.; Mr. Robert D. Crockett; Mr. Robert B. Martin; and Mrs. Vicki J. Weakley, Secretary.

Ms. Major called the meeting to order and welcomed the Board Members. Mr. Hart gave the Invocation.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of May 18, 2021**. On motion by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mrs. Mackie, the Minutes are approved as written. Hearing no discussion, the motion carried.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 4 – Fraud Report**. No questions or concerns were raised. Ms. Major commended Fraud Investigator, Francis Bailey, for including the statistics as asked by Mrs. Mackie at the last meeting.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 5 – Director’s Notes**. Mrs. Weakley stated that, since the last Board meeting, she attended the Poverty Committee meeting, State training on Statutes and Regulations, a Families First meeting (Families First goes into effect July 1, 2021. The State is changing the way we do Prevention. There are a lot of extra requirements and time frames to comply with. Families First is expected to use evidence based practices and there are only three available in the state and one available on the Shore. The requirements to put a child in a residential facility have become stricter and we are only allowed to use Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP’s) that had to go through a whole new set of licensing and regulations to qualify. At last count, only thirteen had been approved in the state. Community Police and Management Team (CPMT) and the Children’s Services Act (CSA) are still allowed to use other facilities, but we anticipate that to change soon and they will only be allowed to use QRTPs as well. Mrs. Mackie inquired if the State has given a timeline for facilities to get all the licenses in place. Mrs. Weakley state that, at last count, there were eighteen that were in the process of the licensing. When they sent the list, ten of them were graphed in school, but they are just in different locations. It is the same company with multiple locations. When counting different facilities, it was more like only five or six. This agency does not have that many children residentially so it is not going to affect us as much. It will affect us if we get a child with particularly difficult behaviors and need to find a qualified facility. We have not hired for the Families First position yet; however the ad is running now. Originally, we had planned to move someone already in the Family Services Unit into that position. Unfortunately, that did not go as planned.) Supervisor’s Meeting, Benefits ME review (We learned that we had a number of things that were out-of-date including the posters displayed in the lobby. We have ordered those posters to be ready for when we open back up. We also learned that, during COVID, the State did not remind us, as they have in the past, of some of the annual trainings that are required. Our Administrative Coordinator, Dawn Parks, will be tracking the mandated trainings so we remain in compliance in the event the State does not send the reminders going forward.) VCU interview on needed services in our area, Meeting with Northampton Director to coordinate upcoming changes (This meeting included Families First because Mrs. Francis, Northampton County DSS Director, and I feel strongly that while the State will allow us to do things differently, we need to do them consistently in both Northampton and Accomack Counties. Mrs. Francis and Mrs. Weakley have another meeting scheduled for next week to try to further coordinate that plan.) WorkNet training (We started WorkNet training which is a program that Mrs. Weakley used to run as a grant program in Lynchburg. It was originally designed for people who were living in shelters and geared towards getting those people employed and being self-sufficient. It also helps them become able to navigate the whole hiring process and get them to provide good answers as to why they were unemployed for such a long period of time or how they dealt with whatever barriers they had that were interfering with them becoming unemployed. Previously, it was more of a group setting for a period of around four weeks. The program has been altered and is no longer a grant program. After the trainings have been completed, for a period of six months, the trainers will have a consultation period and meet with participants virtually on a regular basis so that we can discuss difficult cases and things that may be interfering with people becoming employed. Hopefully, we will be able to make some changes for the good in the Vital Information for

Education and Work (VIEW), the employment program. The State has also reverted back expecting us to offer employment services to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) population. Accomack County DSS had waivers in place so that single adults did not lose their benefits in three months if they were not looking for employment. The State had taken those waivers away and then COVID hit. Beginning July 1, 2021, the State expects us to start providing services for that population. We have five sessions of this training. The second one is this afternoon and then hopefully we will be off and running. We invited Northampton County DSS to participate with us to, hopefully, have success all across the Shore.), Regional Director's meeting (It appears that most of the regional offices are not going to open any time soon and will remain virtual and working from home. There has been some discussion in the State about it remaining this way permanently and releasing all of their building leases. Mr. Crockett asked for more detail on that and how it would affect Accomack County DSS. Mrs. Weakley stated that it affects us in training. The State is doing all virtual training now and if they give up the buildings there will be no place for us to go to be trained. With virtual trainings, it would seem that a training could accommodate additional persons in the session, but that is not what is happening and it makes it very difficult to get staff the needed training. The State believes this is working well; however, Directors are telling them differently.), and the Professional Development Committee meeting.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 6 – COVID Update**. Mrs. Weakley stated that we have moved our opening date to July 1, 2021. The expectation is that staff will be in the office four days a week and work virtually one day a week if they are not on probation. We did not advertise about the changes in benefits beginning in July because the State has extended the benefits until "at least through September." We do not know if that will actually happen at the end of September. Directors have sent letters to Dr. Daniel Carey, Secretary of Health and Human Resources and Governor Ralph Northam asking that the State advertise and educate people when the deadline will occur terminating those extra benefits. Through the increase in benefits, people, particularly the elderly population, have received some advantages that they did not qualified for before. We would like to see that continue because most of them went from receiving \$16.00 a month for SNAP to \$294.00 a month for SNAP. They have made statements that it is the first time that they have felt like they could afford food. According to the letter from the State, a request has been made and they are hoping to see continued changes for seniors. Because of there being no changes at this time for benefits, we decided there was no reason to postpone opening the agency. Waivers are still in place. Interviews do not have to be held for benefits. We believe many people have become comfortable doing their business over the phone or virtually so we may not see an influx of people coming through the doors. Ms. Major inquired if we were just going to open to appointments only. Mrs. Weakley stated that we have been open to the public by appointment only and we have only had one or two that actually came to the office during this whole time. We will be fully open to the public on July 1, 2021. In addition, as of July 1, 2021, we are no longer allowed to earn comp time. Members in unison stated that it will be hard to get work done if workers cannot be allowed to earn comp time. Mrs. Weakley stated that fire fighters and law enforcement are exempt. When originally proposed, government agencies were supposed to be exempt from that policy. Mr. Crockett stated that no one saw that coming. It surprised everyone. Ms. Major asked if any benefit money was available that could be used. Mrs. Weakley stated that there was some overtime money that the State offered for benefits; however, we did not take it because we did not need it at the time and no one was interested. Workers were fine receiving comp time if they needed to work over the 40-hour workweek and there was not enough money for every agency in the state. Therefore, we felt like we did not need it and of course, we did not see this coming. Since then, they have not offered it again.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 7 – 3rd Quarter Dashboard**. Mrs. Weakley stated that the Board will see a little bit more red on the dashboard than she would like there to be; however, we are doing the best we can. We have had five benefit workers resign/retire and we are having a difficult time finding new hires. We had two vacancies in Family Services. Three people applied for the position. One withdrew because she became employed by Northampton County DSS, one was not qualified, and the third person was hired. This still left us with a vacancy. Amongst that, we still have to get Families First up and running by July 1, 2021. Ms. Major added that there is a lot for people to learn

coming in and it can be very difficult. It is a good thing that the State raised the minimum salaries. Mrs. Weakley confirmed that the minimum salaries were raised effective July 1st. The expectations are making it difficult to keep employees. Benefit staff cannot earn comp time to cover cases from the vacant positions, but they are doing the best they can to keep up. To clarify, for us, being off by one case on the dashboard can statistically put us over what the State will allow. Under these circumstances, with this number of vacancies, we may have to get used to being in the red for a little while until we can become solid again. Mr. Hart inquired if the State was giving the agency any more money. Mrs. Weakley replied, no. Mrs. Mackie stated that workers are going to burn out and more people may leave because they cannot do the workload of two.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 11 – Financial Statement – Administrative Office Manager – Wendy Linton**. Mrs. Linton stated the Local Budget was \$816,299.00. The Year-To-Date Local Expenditures were \$571,807.25 and the Total Local Balance-To-Date is \$244,491.75. Mr. Crockett commended Mrs. Linton on a job well done.

Mr. Hart asked be recognized by the Chairman. Mr. Hart asked if the Board had ever met any other time than in the morning. Ms. Major and Mrs. Mackie confirmed through their appointments and known predecessors, the meetings have always been held in the morning. Mr. Hart stated that because of that, this would have to be his last meeting. He has accepted a position that will not allow him to be present for the meetings. He expressed his enjoyment of serving with the members of the Board and the aspects of the conversations and decisions made. His resignation will be effective as of June 30, 2021. The Board in unison expressed to Mr. Hart that his presence would be missed with congratulations on his new position and his success for the future. Mr. Hart stated that he will be announcing his resignation to the Board of Supervisor's the next evening and said they may be able to appoint someone that night, but he was unsure.

Closed Session - On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mrs. Mackie, the Board went into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing Employee Separation – Anna Spence and Ashley Esquivel and Director's Consult as permitted by the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2.3712.

On motion by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the Board returned from Closed Session and confirmed the only items discussed were the ones listed on the Board Members' Agenda. Ms. Major called a vote (Mrs. Mackie – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; Mr. Martin – yes; Mr. Hart – yes and Ms. Major – yes).

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at 9:30 A.M.

On motion by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the meeting adjourned at 10:42 A.M.

APPROVED: **Cassandra Reneta Major** _____

ATTEST: **Vicki Weakley** _____