

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
March 2, 2021**

PRESENT: William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson
Erin N. Delaney, Secretary Treasurer (Arrived Late)
Elaine K. Meyerson, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Tracy S. Zur, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Thomas J. Sullivan, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., County Adjuster
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member
Alexandra Harwin, Esq., Board Member
Susan Silverstein, Board Member
John L. Schettino, Esq., General Counsel
Adina Yacoub, Director
Michele M. Darmochwal, Administrative Secretary

ABSENT: Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was held on March 2, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. by way of Webex video/audio teleconference.

PUBLIC SESSION:

John L. Schettino, Esq. called the meeting to order and read the notice required by the Open Public Meetings Act as follows:

"Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of the meeting scheduled for March 2, 2021 has been provided in the following manner:

1. By a prominent posting of the schedule of meetings for 2021, including a notice of the scheduled time, scheduled date, and location of this meeting at the Bergen County Administrative Building, One Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack, New Jersey.
2. The mailing of this notice of the time, date, and location of this meeting to "The Record", which was published on February 21, 2021 and to the Herald News, which was published on February 21, 2021.

3. By filing of the notice of the time, date, and location of this meeting with the Bergen County Clerk, said filing having taken place on February 17, 2021.
A quorum being achieved, the Board met in Public Session.

PUBLIC SESSION:

Chairman William E. Connelly chaired the meeting.

Flag Salute

Chairman William E. Connelly led those present in a salute to the flag.

Roll Call

A Roll Call was taken for Open Session:

MEMBERS	TITLE	PRESENT	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X	
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON		X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER		X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X	
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X	
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X	
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X	
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X	
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X	
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X	

Open Public Comment Period

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to open the meeting for public comment. A motion to open the Open Public Comment Period, for a three-minute limit with the option of speaking again, was offered by Alexandra Harwin, Esq., seconded by Elaine K. Meyerson, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

As there were no members of the public that wished to address the Board, Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to close the Open Public Comment Period of the Open Session. A motion to close the Open Public Comment Period was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, seconded by Susan Silverstein, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

Adoption of Minutes:

(a) Open Session Minutes of February 2, 2021

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of February 2, 2021 was offered by Elaine K. Meyerson, seconded by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER			X	
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER			X	
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

Treasurer's Report:

(a) Bills List:

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to approve the Bill's List. A motion to approve the Bill's List was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, seconded by Erin N. Delaney, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			

JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

(b) Schedule of Vouchers:

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to approve the Schedule of Vouchers. A motion to approve the Schedule of Vouchers was offered by Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan, seconded by Elaine K. Meyerson, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

Administration Report:

(a) Monthly Reports – Statistical & Financial:

A snapshot of caseload and expenditures was included in each of the Board Member’s packet.

Adina Yacoub reported that the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) caseload decreased from 241 to 240 and is down by 1 case from last month and compared to one year ago it went down by 1 case, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload increased from 20,852 to 21,342 and is up by 490 cases from last month and compared to one year ago it went up by 3,640 cases, GA (General Assistance) caseload decreased from 483 to 475 and is down by 8 cases and compared to one year ago it went up by 43 cases, and Medicaid individuals decreased from 37,080 to 36,859 and is down by 221 individuals.

In February, the agency received a total of 1,375 cash and SNAP applications. The agency also received 991 Medicaid applications for a total of 2,366. In January, we received 1,675 cash and SNAP applications, as well as, 1,258 Medicaid applications totaling 2,933.

In February, staff processed 3,166 new applications compared to the January count of 3,555. In February, staff processed 8,686 actions compared to January when we processed 9,491 actions. We continue to remain timely with our processing of TANF, General Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid applications.

In the month of February, our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 48 individuals/families in motels. We have five (5) families in HEARTS emergency shelter, 13 HEARTS TANF for a total of 18 families in bridge housing. We have 8 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We received 106 homeless hotline referrals from 211. We have 130 Temporary Rental Assistance cases, and received 57 Emergency Assistance applications. We have 250 active DDD cases.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

The following actions were initiated or occurred in February 2021. We did a match between all our clients who receive ABD Medicaid and whoever is not currently on NJ SNAP was mailed an application for SNAP. We mailed 3,712 SNAP applications and 494 were returned; about 13%. Out of 494 returned: 278 were approved, 142 were denied, and 74 are pending. We started to mail SNAP applications to those who are on Family Care with us and not currently on SNAP. Our Burial Assistance Program offers burial assistance to individuals who are active on Medicaid and don't have the funds for a proper burial. In February 2021 we had 11 inquiries, 29 approved cases, and 5 denied cases. We paid out \$111,936 in assistance and recovered \$4,951 from those who had PNA. (personal needs allowance accounts) The HEARTS program is work in progress. We continue to issue guidance and protocols for participants as well as the other partners we work with. We had several calls with the Housing Authority and the County of Bergen. The HEARTS team met with Family Promise and DCP&P and we continue to receive referrals from different entities in the County. The HEARTS team will set up meetings with Family Promise and Legal Aid. We are in communication with CWA #1031 and CWA #1089 regarding contract negotiations. Our first negotiation session with CWA #1089 is scheduled to be held on March 9, 2021.

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. asked if there are any policies contemplated or being formulated with respect to vaccinations and employees.

Adina Yacoub explained that she has been in contact with different people to find out how she could get her staff vaccinated. In regard to personnel in the shelter, she took matters into her own hands and made arrangements to get them vaccinated. The Bergen County Board of Social Services staff is coded 1B.

Chairman William E. Connelly asked Adina Yacoub if she knew how many employees have been vaccinated.

Adina Yacoub explained that we do not know.

Adina Yacoub reported that as of March 1, 2021 all employees are expected to return to the office at least 50% of the time as it was on November 20, 2020. She talked about it's worth an email to see how many staff are vaccinated. She discussed that it is the minority and unfortunately not the majority because it is very difficult to get an appointment.

The Chairman asked can we voluntarily ask the staff to get the vaccine and can we mandate it.

Adina Yacoub discussed that she heard the employer can mandate it.

John E Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq. mentioned that he knows this discussion was had but doesn't believe a determination has yet been made because there are not enough vaccinations for all county employees.

Elaine K. Meyerson added that she believes March 29th will open for homeless shelters and more social service staff.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur added that the biggest challenge right now is that there is a 60,000 person wait list for Bergen New Bridge Medical Center. Although the mandate has been discussed, it is not currently required for County employees.

It was suggested that the Board get a legal opinion from Labor Counsel prior to the next Board Meeting regarding whether vaccines can be mandated because it is a safety issue for employees and clients when they are going to interact in person to the extent that is going to be happening.

Elaine K. Meyerson addressed the Chairman and mentioned as a Board we have to know how we want to pursue this.

John L. Schettino, Esq. advised that you are allowed to mandate this. He discussed that the Board is permitted to mandate this for other than religious or medical reasons. It is not a matter of can you, it's a matter if the Board should be mandating this especially if the County is not mandating this. In the past, it has always been advisable to follow the County's lead in terms of requirements for employees.

Getting back to Adina Yacoub's monthly report, Elaine K. Meyerson asked about the Burial Assistance Program and if we have a certain budget or if it is per person reimbursed by Medicaid.

Adina Yacoub discussed that it is an amount that Medicaid sets per person. The Bergen County Board of Social Services pays the funeral home; not the individual but we do get reimbursed.

Elaine K. Meyerson asked what is the biggest issue in regard to the HEARTS program.

Adina Yacoub explained that it is logistics. Some of the participants have been there for two years. They got used to lax rules and regulations, and the Bergen County Board of Social Services' staff is holding them accountable. We have discharged a few families. Everyone must know the rules and regulations.

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. asked Adina Yacoub how she thought a policy requiring vaccines by employees would be received.

Adina Yacoub explained that she does not know, but she has received emails from staff expressing that they really want to get an appointment.

Chairman's Report

Chairman William E. Connelly mentioned that one year ago we met in person. He wished everyone well and asked everyone to continue to be safe.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. reported from February 1 to February 28, 2021 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$2,545.94 and the year-to-date 2021 is \$27,091.31. No new cases were referred to the Prosecutor's office during the month of February.

(b) Audit & Budget Committee

Adina Yacoub reported that the agency is waiting for a budget hearing date with the County.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur discussed that Budget Hearings usually start the last week in March or the first week in April concluding some time in mid to late April.

(c) Building & Grounds Committee

No report.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

(a) Next Board Meeting Date

The next Board Meeting is scheduled to be held on **Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.** by way of Webex.

Action Items:

Resolutions:

(a) 2021.3.02 (1) – Resolution Approving Additions, Elimination, and/or Changes to Positions within the Bergen County Board of Social Services

- (b) 2021.3.02 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of Employment for Multiple Openings
- (c) 2021.3.02 (3) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Part-Time Clerk 1
- (d) 2021.3.02 (4) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Technician, Management Information Systems
- (e) 2021.3.02 (5) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal Full-Time Senior Building Maintenance Worker
- (f) 2021.3.02 (6) – Resolution Authorizing Application for Grant from the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs in Connection with the LIHEAP CWA Administration Program
- (g) 2021.3.02 (7) – Resolution Authorizing Application for Grant from the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs in Connection with the Universal Service Fund CWA Administration 2021 Program
- (h) 2021.3.02 (8) – Resolution Approving Director Evaluation
- (i) 2021.3.02 (9) – Resolution Approving Director Salary Increase
- (j) 2021.3.02 (10) – Resolution Approving 60 Month Lease Agreement with Xerox
- (k) 2021.3.02 (11) – Resolution Providing for a Meeting Not Open to the Public in Accordance with the Provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12

A motion to table Resolutions (h) and (i) was offered by John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., seconded by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

A motion to approve Resolutions (a) – (g) and (j) was offered by John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., seconded by Yris Encarnacion, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			

ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

A motion to approve Resolutions (k) 2021.3.02 (11) Providing for a Meeting Not Open to the Public in Accordance with the Provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A and to go into Closed Session was offered by Susan Silverstein, seconded by Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

The Board went into Closed Session at approximately 5:09 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

The Board went into Closed Session to discuss personnel matters, litigation, and contracts. The minutes from the Closed Session will be available to the public once the items have been resolved or no longer require the minutes to be held and not distributed to the public. The Board will be in Closed Session for approximately 15 minutes at which time the Board will reopen the meeting and perhaps take further public action in matters dealing with the Bergen County Board of Social Services. The public will be invited back once the meeting reopens in Open Session.

OPEN SESSION:

The Board reconvened in Open Session at approximately 5:21p.m.

Adina Yacoub was present.

Elaine K. Meyerson discussed that the Board is going to take action on approving Adina Yacoub’s evaluation and salary increase by way of resolution at this afternoon’s meeting. She advised that the Board was very happy with her evaluation and thanked her for her efforts. She has taken on many leadership positions throughout the County and State. She is the Vice President of the Human Services Advisory Council in the County and holds a leadership role with the County Welfare Directors’ Association in the State in addition to her responsibilities at the agency. Elaine K. Meyerson discussed with all the constraints over the last year, the Board is impressed and appreciates all her hard work, as well as, her staff’s hard work.

A motion to approve Resolutions (h) and (i) was offered by Elaine K. Meyerson, seconded by Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

There were no closed session minutes of February 2, 2021.

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. With no further business to conclude, a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:25 p.m. was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, seconded by Yris Encarnacion, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ERIN N. DELANEY	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
JOHN E. TEN HOEVE, JR., ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			

Respectfully submitted,



Adina Yacoub
Director