

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
April 6, 2021**

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

ABSENT: Thomas J. Sullivan, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was held on April 6, 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 April 6, 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 March 19, 2021 and to the Herald News, which was published on March 19, 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 March 22, 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 Susan Silverstein, 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			

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 John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., seconded by Randi Duffie, 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 March 2, 2021

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of March 2, 2021 was offered by Elaine K. Meyerson, seconded by John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., 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 Erin N. Delaney, 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			

(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 Randi Duffie, seconded by John E Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., 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 240 to 239 and is down by 1 case from last month and compared to one year ago it went down by 5 cases, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload increased from 21,342 to 21,652 and is up by 310 cases from last month and compared to one year ago it went up by 3,985 cases, GA (General Assistance) caseload decreased from 475 to 454 and is down by 21 cases and compared to one year ago it went up by 28 cases, and Medicaid individuals decreased from 36,859 to 36,231 and is down by 628 individuals.

In March, the agency received a total of 1,294 cash and SNAP applications. The agency also received 1,233 Medicaid applications for a total of 2,527. Last month, we received 1,375 cash and SNAP applications and 991 Medicaid applications totaling 2,366.

In March, staff processed 3,268 new applications compared to the February count of 3,166. In March, staff processed 9,541 actions compared to February when we processed 8,686 actions. We continue to remain timely with our processing of TANF, General Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid applications.

In the month of March, our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 54 individuals/families in motels. We have 19 families in the HEARTS Program. We have 9 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We received 66 homeless hotline referrals from 211. We have 117 Temporary Rental Assistance cases, and received 74 Emergency Assistance applications. We have 251 active DDD cases. Our APS Unit received 97 referrals, 74 were deemed inappropriate, 3 were accepted, and 11 are pending. We have 33 open APS cases.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Adina Yacoub reported that the following actions were initiated or occurred in March 2021. In regard to the ABD/SNAP Match update staff mailed 3,712 SNAP applications and 527 were returned; about 14%. Out of 527 returned: 346 were approved, 156 were denied, and 25 are pending. 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 March 2021 we had 18 inquiries, 30 approved cases, and 4 denied cases. We paid out \$93,258 in assistance and recovered \$6,283 from those who had PNA. (personal needs allowance accounts) The HEARTS program project is ongoing, and we are making progress with streamlining the process with a better communication system with the Bergen County Housing Authority, as well as, the security staff. Two out of the three employees stationed at the shelter were fully vaccinated. We are working on getting the families living there vaccinated as well. In March, Hearts staff met with NENJLS (legal services) so they could be of assistance to the families at the HEARTS. HEARTS also is partnering with Office for Children, Center for Hope and Safety, and Family Promise to offer resources for our HEARTS families. We are in communication with CWA #1031 and CWA #1089 regarding contract negotiations. We had our first negotiation session with CWA #1089 on March 9, 2021 and the next session is scheduled for April 15, 2021. There are active and ongoing negotiations between our labor attorney and CWA #1031 attorney. In the month of March our agency experienced an increase in positive COVID-19 cases, which necessitated the closure of our office for one week to mitigate the potential spread. Some staff were able to work from home and others were not but we were able to function. Adina Yacoub credited Michael J. Sluka, Esq. for contacting a doctor to come to the agency and test staff. To his credit, we were able to secure the doctor and a lab to perform weekly onsite COVID testing for those staff who work in the office. Thankfully, for the past two weeks everyone tested negative. Adina Yacoub thanked the County for agreeing to vaccinate our staff. We scheduled 39 employees and hope to schedule more in the future as additional staff is ready to be vaccinated. In addition, at least 40 employees scheduled their own appointments and are now fully vaccinated. The Division of Family Development contracted with DCA to offer SSI cases an opportunity to receive SRAP (State Rental Assistance Program). We referred 37 clients to ICM (intensive case management) for rental assistance for six months while going through the process of being assisted by SRAP.

Chairman's Report

Chairman William E. Connelly reported that Adina Yacoub has been in touch with him in regard to the uptick in COVID cases at the Bergen County Board of Social Services. There has been an increase in cases throughout the State of New Jersey. Due to the uptick in cases, the agency closed the office for one week to mitigate the spread. As Adina Yacoub previously reported, the

agency secured a doctor and a lab to perform weekly onsite COVID testing for all staff who worked in the office. Thankfully, for the past two weeks everyone tested negative. The Chairman talked about COVID taking a toll on our staff and administrators. He recognized and commended Adina Yacoub, Michele Darmochwal, Scott Modery, and Scott Stahlmann who were present for stepping up to the plate, coming into the office, and going beyond the call of duty this past year.

In response to Randi Duffie's question whether the employees are mandated to get the vaccine or if they have a choice, Adina Yacoub explained that the agency could mandate the vaccine, with the exception of religious reasons or health reasons, but right now the agency is not mandating the vaccine. Elaine K. Meyerson mentioned that a policy should be through the Board rather than Adina Yacoub making that decision.

Adina Yacoub discussed when we test staff every week if they have been vaccinated and two weeks have passed they are not mandated to be tested. It is optional. Staff submit their vaccination card to Personnel to prove that they have been vaccinated. This applies to staff working in the office. We do not know the status of the staff who are working from home.

John L. Schettino, Esq. discussed that administration received a complaint, similar to the complaint that we received in the past, regarding the safety precautions taken with respect to COVID-19. The Director submitted a response detailing all the specifics as to all the actions that have been taken by the Board with respect to maintaining the protocols, enforcing the CDC guidelines, and all the safety precautions taken within the building. The response was well written and addressed all the issues. To date, the Board has not yet received a response from the State.

John L. Schettino, Esq. discussed with respect to the comment regarding employees verifying if they got vaccinated, it is his opinion that we will not be able to do that until the Board implements a policy requiring employees to be vaccinated. He suggested that the Board follow the County's lead with respect to their policy if they are going to require a vaccine. He mentioned that you cannot require it unless the vaccine is readily available. Until it is readily available, he suggested that the Board not yet make it a requirement.

John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq. discussed that it would only apply to people who are coming into the office and working. The County still has a policy of having employees come in more than 20% of the time that they are working and when possible having them work on a remote basis for 80% of the time. He thinks that policy is going to continue for a little while yet. He expressed it is pointless to mandate a vaccine for people that are rarely coming to work or not coming to work at all.

In regard to Adina Yacoub's report, Susan Silverstein discussed that the State does not pay what a normal funeral costs. There is a maximum of \$2,246 for a funeral and the funeral homes are required to take that amount. She mentioned that the cemetery only gets \$524.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. reported from March 1 to March 31, 2021 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$10,702.66 and the year-to-date 2021 is \$37,943.97. No new cases were referred to the Prosecutor's office during the month of March.

Audit & Budget Committee

Scott Modery reported that the agency's final budget has been submitted to the State and is making its way through its approvals through the State. To date, the County has not yet contacted us in regard to a County budget hearing date.

(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, May 4, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.** by way of Webex.

Action Items:

Resolutions:

- (a) 2021.4.06 (1) – Resolution Approving Additions, Elimination, and/or Changes to Positions within the Bergen County Board of Social Services
- (b) 2021.4.06 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of Employment for Multiple Openings
- (c) 2021.4.06 (3) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Full-Time Building Maintenance Worker to Full-Time Senior Building Maintenance Worker
- (d) 2021.4.06 (4) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for Two (2) External Part-Time Clerks 1
- (e) 2021.4.06 (5) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Employment for One (1) Internal Part-Time Clerk 1 to Full-Time Clerk 1
- (f) 2021.4.06 (6) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal Provisional Full-Time Social Work Supervisor Bilingual/Spanish
- (g) 2021.4.06 (7) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One (1) External Temporary Full-Time Records Support Technician 1
- (h) 2021.4.06 (8) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for Two (2) Internal Full-Time Social Service Technicians

- (i) 2021.4.06 (9) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours for Two (2) Internal Part-Time Human Services Aides to Two (2) Full-Time Human Services Aides
- (j) 2021.4.06 (10)– Resolution Approving Social Services Annex for Emergency Management Plan
- (k) 2021.4.06 (11)- Resolution Approving Memorandum of Understanding with New Jersey Department of Human Services
- (l) 2021.4.06 (12) - 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 approve Resolutions (a) – (k) was offered by Erin N. Delaney., 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			

The Board did not take action on Resolution (l) to go into Closed Session since it was determined that there was no need to go into Closed Session.

The Board continued in Open Session.

Elaine K. Meyerson asked Chairman William E. Connelly if the Board could have the conversation about whether or not the Board wants to come back and meet in person in the Board Room.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur discussed that the County was supposed to come back this week for the Closed Session portion of the meeting. The public portion of the meeting would continue to be virtual. They ended up not meeting this week in person because when they upgraded the ventilation system they disconnected their recording technology. They are getting close to meeting again in person at least partially.

Randi Duffie suggested taking our lead from the County. She suggested taking it slow since meeting virtually is working.

This item will be discussed again next month.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur mentioned that community spread is still going in the wrong direction.

Adoption of Minutes:

(a) Closed Session Minutes of March 2, 2021

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Closed Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Closed Session minutes of March 2, 2021 was offered by John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., 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			

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 5:21 p.m. 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			

Respectfully submitted,



Adina Yacoub
Director