

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
May 4, 2021**

PRESENT: William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson
Erin N. Delaney, Secretary Treasurer
Elaine K. Meyerson, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Tracy S. Zur, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Thomas J. Sullivan, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member (Late)
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 May 4, 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 May 4, 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 April 24, 2021 and to the Herald News, which was published on April 24, 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 April 21, 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 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			

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 Yris Encarnacion, 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			

Adoption of Minutes:

(a) Open Session Minutes of April 6, 2021

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of April 6, 2021 was offered by Susan Silverstein, 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			

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 John E Ten Hoeve, Jr., 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			

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 increased from 239 to 240 and is up by 1 case from last month and compared to one year ago it went down by 18 cases, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload increased from 21,652 to 22,001 and is up by 349 cases from last month and compared to one year ago it went up by 3,689 cases, GA (General Assistance) caseload decreased from 454 to 444 and is down by 10 cases and compared to one year ago it went down by 35 cases, and Medicaid individuals decreased from 36,231 to 35,507 and is down by 724 individuals.

In April, the agency received a total of 1,393 cash and SNAP applications. The agency also received 1,082 Medicaid applications for a total of 2,475. Last month, we received 1,294 cash and SNAP applications and 1,233 Medicaid applications totaling 2,527. A letter from the Department of Labor went out to those collecting unemployment advising them of their potential eligibility of SNAP since the Federal portion of their unemployment is not counted toward eligibility. As a result, we received 503 applications in four days compared to an average of 26 a day.

In April, staff processed 2,715 new applications compared to the March count of 3,628. In April, staff processed 8,436 actions compared to March when we processed 9,541 actions. We continue to remain timely with our processing of TANF, General Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid applications. For the month of April, the agency ranked number one in the State with our Medicaid redetermination timeliness. Adina Yacoub recognized the Administrator of that department, Yvonne Jordan, her supervisors, and the staff for their good work and dedication.

In the month of March, our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 54 individuals/families in motels. We have 20 families in the HEARTS Program. We have 11 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We received 12 homeless hotline referrals from 211. We have 116 Temporary Rental Assistance cases and received 74 Emergency Assistance applications. We have 256 active DDD cases. Our Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 103 referrals, 80 were deemed inappropriate, 5 were accepted, and 18 are pending. We have 34 active APS cases.

Adina Yacoub reported that the Director of the Bergen County Housing, Health & Human Services Center contacted her and relayed that they plan to reopen the center on May 17, 2021. Bergen County Board of Social Services' staff have always been outstationed there. We are trying to coordinate that. Some of the families that we have in motels right now they will take back at the shelter so there is a lot of coordination happening between the center and the Bergen County Board of Social Services.

In regard to the HEARTS program, Elaine K. Meyerson asked about the 19/20 population that we have out of the 30 apartments. She mentioned that Adina Yacoub keeps saying that we are still working out the kinks. She asked why do we have so many people in motels.

Adina Yacoub explained that we are still working out some of the kinks and some of the families are not a good fit for the 40 Passaic Street shelter. She also explained that there is a lot things happening at the shelter such as changing windows, furniture, etc. so it is good that we are not at full capacity during this adjustment period. Maria Aberasturi is training new staff there too.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Adina Yacoub reported that the following actions were initiated or occurred in April 2021. ABD/FC/SNAP Match update: For ABD clients staff mailed 3,712 SNAP applications and 555 were returned; about 15%. Out of 555 returned: 377 were approved, 164 were denied, and 14 are pending. Last month, our new applications decreased so we started to mail 300 SNAP applications per week for those who are on NJ FamilyCare and not receiving SNAP benefits. We mailed 1,045 applications. So far, 43 were returned but it is too early to measure the outcome. Adina Yacoub discussed that she is part of the Food Security Task Force and one of their goals is to increase participation for Bergen County residents in 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 April 2021 we had 16 inquiries, 35 approved cases, and 3 denied cases. We paid out \$106,179 in assistance and recovered \$8,952 from those who had PNA (personal needs allowance accounts). FEMA is offering \$9,000 in burial assistance for families that we cannot help, which is a lot more than what we give. Adina Yacoub recognized Maria Aberasturi for her work with the HEARTS program. Because we lost a supervisor for that program, she has been there working two to three times per week training staff and setting a foundation for the new supervisor to take over. There are ongoing negotiations between our negotiating committee and CWA Local #1089 and CWA Local #1031. Administration had a session with CWA Local #1089 on April 15, 2021 and the next session will be on May 20, 2021. There is ongoing communication between the CWA Local #1031 attorney and our labor attorney. Since we had an increase in COVID-19 cases in March 2021,

we have been testing staff every Friday. Over the last consecutive six weeks everyone tested negative. Adina Yacoub reached out to the Bergen County Department of Health and they recommended two weeks ago that we could stop testing. She waited an additional two weeks because the employees that were sent for vaccinations at the County, she wanted to wait two weeks after the second vaccination. We will no longer test onsite. We will ask any additional staff to be tested first before coming to work in the office. New hires will also be tested, and we are going to recommend that they get vaccinated. Adina Yacoub checked with the Department of Health and they are no longer recommending any testing due to our results. We currently have 111 employees who are fully vaccinated, which is 50% of our staff. We forwarded the email from the County to all staff inviting people for the walk-in vaccination at Bergen New Bridge Medical Center. The Division of Family Development informed us that they received a grant from the Feds, which will allow them to build a nutritional database where they will connect SNAP clients with WIC clients and vice versa. On May 3, 2021 an Administrator and Deputy Director from the Passaic County Board of Social Services visited the agency and met with Adina Yacoub and Yvonne Jordan to discuss how we run our units. Their Director told them how great we are. They were very pleased with our structure and case banking model, and we were happy to host them. In April, we offered all our supervisors training by way of Biz Library that we paid for through CRF money. We are rolling out additional training in May and June.

Yris Encarnacion congratulated and thanked Adina Yacoub and her team for all their hard work. She mentioned that it is great to be recognized by other Counties on how well we are doing in Bergen County.

John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq. asked Adina Yacoub if she plans on continuing to test staff that have not shown vaccination cards after a period of time. Although there is no official plan in place he thinks the County is going to institute a requirement that all employees who are coming to work get vaccinated unless they have a medical or religious exemption.

Erin N. Delaney mentioned maybe the employees will be willing to get vaccinated with the Governor's incentive program called "Shot and a Beer" and get a free beer or shot during the month of May at a participating brewery for getting vaccinated if you are 21 or older and live in New Jersey.

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. asked Adina Yacoub if there is anything that we as an agency can be doing to furnish information or resources to clients about vaccine access. She mentioned for many people it can be confusing to determine when, where, and how to get the vaccine.

Adina Yacoub discussed that our IT person put the flyer that we received from the County on our website about the walk-up vaccination at the Bergen New Bridge Medical Center so it is available to everyone.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur discussed that she has been working with Michele Diiorgi regarding mobile vaccinations in areas where there are food pantries and will be available nearby on

food distribution dates so people could just walk in and get vaccinated. As soon as those days become available she will share that information with Adina Yacoub so that she can add this information to the agency's website.

Chairman William E. Connelly asked Commissioner Tracy S. Zur if the County has a way to monitor which communities are vaccinated.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur discussed the towns that are under 50% are: Fairview, Garfield, Allendale, Woodridge, and Wallington. She also discussed Lodi, Hackensack, South Hackensack, and Cliffside Park are slightly under 50% and East Rutherford, Edgewater, and Elmwood Park are at 50%.

John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq. discussed there seems to be a significant segment of the population that just does not want to get the vaccination. Most of what he read seems to indicate that it is not a communication issue.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur discussed that she thinks there are communities where transportation has been an issue and if we bring it into their communities that have a mass transit reliant population or non-car based population those communities will benefit and those numbers will change.

Yris Encarnacion discussed that last week South Hackensack mailed out a bilingual letter to all the residents to see if anyone wants to get a vaccination. The borough will provide transportation. The feedback is not as much as they thought. It was mentioned that a lot of the younger population does not want to get vaccinated.

Chairman William E. Connelly discussed that his borough has a sign by their duckpond which has sites and times where individuals can get the vaccine. The Mayor of his borough also sent out a letter to every resident in town regarding how and where to get vaccinated.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur stressed the importance of talking about this and destigmatizing this and making sure we are encouraging this vaccination.

For the record, Commissioner Tom J. Sullivan arrived at approximately 5:08 p.m.

In regard to the importance of speaking about this and reinforcing getting vaccinated, Alexandra Harwin, Esq. discussed whether there is an opportunity while on the phone to ask customers if they need any information or resources to assist them in getting vaccinated.

Adina Yacoub discussed that there is a lot of phone interaction between staff and the customers and that is something that we could suggest to them and give them the Bergen New Bridge Medical Center website.

Once available, Commissioner Tracy S. Zur will forward those mobile testing dates to the team.

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. mentioned to Adina Yacoub that it might be worth developing a one or two sentence script for the end of a phone call advising everyone over the age of “x” is eligible for the vaccine in New Jersey which is free, effective, and safe. She suggested something very brief but conveys key information that could be helpful.

Adina Yacoub mentioned that the agency could manage that.

Chairman’s Report

Chairman William E. Connelly discussed if and when the Board will meet in person again. Erin N. Delaney discussed that sometimes the Clerks put out surveys in Bergen County. The last survey measured what towns are still virtual and what towns are still in person. Out of 28 towns that replied, only 8 are in person. Commissioner Tracy S. Zur discussed that the County was going to meet in person for their work session but due to an issue with their technical system which required an upgrade that did not happen. She guessed that they will meet in some capacity in a month or two. Chairman William E. Connelly announced that the Board will meet again virtually by way of Webex on June 1, 2021. The Board prefers to follow the County’s lead so this item will be discussed again next month.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. reported from April 1 to April 30, 2021 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$25,398.63 and the year-to-date 2021 is \$63,342.60. No new cases were referred to the Prosecutor’s office during the month of April.

(b) Audit & Budget Committee

No report.

(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, June 1, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.** by way of Webex.

Action Items:

Resolutions:

- (a) 2021.5.04 (1) – Resolution Approving Additions, Elimination, and/or Changes to Positions within the Bergen County Board of Social Services
- (b) 2021.5.04 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of Employment for Multiple Openings
- (c) 2021.5.04 (3) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Part-Time Clerk 1
- (d) 2021.5.04 (4) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Part-Time Clerk 1
- (e) 2021.5.04 (5) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours of Employment from Part Time to Full Time for One Clerk 1
- (f) 2021.5.04 (6) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Full-Time Social Worker Bilingual Spanish to Provisional Full-Time Social Work Supervisor Bilingual Spanish
- (g) 2021.5.04 (7) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Temporary Full-Time Records Support Technician 1
- (h) 2021.5.04 (8) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Full-Time Human Services Aide to Provisional Full-Time Social Service Technician
- (i) 2021.5.04 (9) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Full-Time Human Services Aide to Provisional Full-Time Social Service Technician
- (j) 2021.5.04 (10) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from Part Time to Full Time for One Human Services Aide
- (k) 2021.5.04 (11) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from Part Time to Full Time for One Human Services Aide
- (l) 2021.5.04 (12) – Resolution Approving Confidential Employees Salary Increase
- (m) 2021.5.04 (13) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours for One Internal Part-Time Clerk 1 to Full-Time Clerk 1
- (n) 2021.5.04 (14) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One External Part-Time Clerk 1
- (o) 2021.5.04 (15) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for Four Internal and/or External Part-Time Human Services Aides
- (p) 2021.5.04 (16) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal Provisional Full-Time Senior Accountant
- (q) 2021.5.04 (17) – Resolution Authorizing Lease of 2020 Ford Utility Interceptor
- (r) 2021.5.04 (18) – 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) – (q) was offered by John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq., 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			

The Board did not take action on Resolution (r) 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.

There were no Closed Session Minutes from April 6, 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 5:15 p.m. was offered by John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., 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			

Respectfully submitted,



Adina Yacoub
Director