

**Minutes of the Meeting  
of the  
Bergen County Board of Social Services  
February 1, 2022**

**PRESENT:** William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson  
Randi Duffie, Vice-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 (Arrived 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:** None

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was held on February 1, 2022 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 February 1, 2022 has been provided in the following manner:

1. By a prominent posting of the schedule of meetings for 2022, 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 January 26, 2022 and to the Herald News, which was published on January 26, 2022.

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 January 20, 2022.  
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 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			

**Gina Kennedy, BCBS Employee**

Gina Kennedy introduced herself. Ms. Kennedy works in the Emergency Assistance Department and has been employed by the agency for 29 years. She read the agency's vision

statement, “The Bergen County Board of Social Services and its staff will be viewed by the public as the premier county agency committed to improve, sustain, and protect the health, welfare, and self-sufficiency of all county residents, enhancing every individual’s ability to contribute to family and community”. She read the agency’s mission statement, “The Bergen County Board of Social Services working within the guidelines of federal and state statute’s helps individuals and families meet their basic needs so they can live in dignity and achieve their highest potential”. She read the following into the record: “As employees of this agency, staff have an obligation to meet the challenges we face. Over the past few years, those challenges have become monumental. Our agency was shuttered at the beginning of the pandemic while the number of new applications soared. Staff worked from home using their own devices, their own utilities, often at makeshift workstations while most employees tried to juggle work life from home life at work. Staff did what they needed to do. Staff did their jobs. Staff worked harder to meet increased demands for social services during the biggest economic turndown of their lifetime. The agency continues to serve the community efficiently due to the high productivity of its workers. It is their unique expertise that is the sole reason the benefits end up on those cards. Staff are artists in social services. Staff are wizards in FAMIS, MES, DIMS, DOVE, SAVE, and more. Staff have worked very hard to learn and understand the programs with their ever-changing regulations. Staff know these programs inside and out. They know these antiquated systems better than they know their own grandmothers. They are experts in the field. You will not be able to find anyone to fill their roles and the experience they bring every day to this agency. Inflation is their next challenge and it is not a challenge they can work their way through. Every day their paychecks get smaller, their heating bills increase, and the groceries expenses increase. Staff cannot afford a pay cut, and anything short of a raise that keeps pace with inflation is a pay cut. This is not something staff can simply do without. Staff will fight for it. They cannot be replaced. Staff need the Board to understand that we cannot work against one another. Staff depend on the Board as the Board depends on staff. Our relationship cannot be contentious. We need to work together in harmony to best serve our community. We are the premier county agency, and we should be paid as such”. She thanked the Board.

**Myra Feliciano – BCBSS Employee**

Myra Feliciano introduced herself. Ms. Feliciano works in the Emergency Assistance Department and has been employed by the agency for 10 years. She read the following into the record: “We are the essential workers who help provide for Bergen County families and individuals who are in financial need. We give the people in Bergen County hope; something to hold on to. It has been very difficult dealing with such vulnerable people and families but staff do it every day to the best of their ability. Not only does staff approve benefits if eligible but they give emotional support. During COVID while staff were at home staff worked with each other so that many families and single individuals who are homeless would have food, money, and shelter. She indicated that staff are going through difficult times too. The cost of living has gone up. There are many families who have no food. They are sick; no housing. Not only does staff provide these services to our clients they also give them hope. Staff provide important information to the people and families of Bergen County about attending services such as CBH care, therapy, and connecting with other agencies to provide more support to help families and single individuals become self-