Minutes of the Meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services March 7, 2023

PRESENT: William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson
Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson
Elaine K. Meyerson, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Tracy S. Zur, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member
Alexandra Harwin, Esq., Board Member
John L. Schettino, Esq., General Counsel
Scott Modery, Director
Michele M. Darmochwal, Administrative Secretary

ABSENT: Erin N. Delaney, Secretary Treasurer
Thomas J. Sullivan, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
County Adjuster
Susan Silverstein, Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was held on March 7, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. in the 4th Floor Board Room of the Bergen County Board of Social Services, 218 Route 17 North, Rochelle Park, New Jersey.

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 7, 2023 has been provided in the following manner:

- 1. By a prominent posting of the schedule of meetings for 2023, 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 17, 2023 and to the Herald News, which was published on January 17, 2023.

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 17, 2023.

A quorum being achieved, the Board met in Public Session.

PUBLIC SESSION:

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 TREASURUER	X	
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X	
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER		X
	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 Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, 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			4= ==	X
	COUNTY ADJUSTER				X
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER				X

There being no comments from the public, 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 Alexandra Harwin, 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
	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 7, 2023

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of February 7, 2023 was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, seconded by William E. Connelly, 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
	COUNTY ADJUSTER				X
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER			X	
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER				X

Treasurer's Report:

(a) Bills List and Schedule of Vouchers:

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to approve the Bill's List and the Schedule of Vouchers. A motion to approve the Bill's List and the Schedule of Vouchers were offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, 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
	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 packets.

Scott Modery reported that the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) caseload for January 2023 was 395 and December was 371 cases, and compared to one year ago it went up 153 cases, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for January was 22,291 and December was 21,834 and compared to one year ago it went down by 804 cases, GA (General Assistance) caseload for January was 413 cases and December was 404 cases and compared to one year ago it went down by 15 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 59,571 in January and in December 59,291 an increase of 280 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 23 inquires, 34 approved, and 2 denials. The agency paid out \$129,880.86 and recovered \$4,332.98.

In January 2023, the agency received 2,092 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 1,586 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,678. In December 2022, the agency received 1,484 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 1,519 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,003.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 1 individual/family in a motel. We have 13 families in the HEARTS Program, 11 in the Emergency Shelter, and 2 in TANF/Bridge side. We have 12 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 70 Emergency Assistance applications and 106 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 51 placements as referrals from 211. We have 253 active DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 111 referrals and currently have 37 open cases.

In response to Commissioner Tracy S. Zur's inquiry regarding what we are doing to communicate the changes in SNAP to the customers, Mr. Modery explained that the Division of Family Development (DFD) at the State has indicated they will be taking the following actions, among others, to get the word out to current recipients: there will be a State Generated Notice in mid-February to all recipients notifying them of same, flyers and social media graphics will be composed and distributed, stakeholder groups like the Community Food Bank will be notified via meetings, postings will be made on the Family Care and DHS websites, and briefings with the Governor's office will take place. Companion agencies such as the Office on Aging and the Division of Developmental Disabilities will be briefed.

Scott Modery reached out to an Administrator in our Reception/Intake Department to get a feeling of what kind of phone calls are coming in. She explained that there is a slight amount of elevated phone calls coming in from customers who have questions and are confused.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur thanked Scott Modery for the training that the Bergen County Board of Social Services did for the food pantry Directors, which also gave them some information to be able to also push out to their clients. She indicated that it was very helpful, and Yvonne Jordan did a fantastic job at the Lunch & Learn. Not only was it helpful for the folks who were on that call, but it was viewed many times afterwards and watched by other pantry Directors.

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. mentioned that she raised a question a few years back about whether the agency can do anything on social media like Facebook to communicate to the public who may not be seeking out our services. She wondered if there was any further thinking about whether that is possible for the Bergen County Board of Social Services (BCBSS) to be doing.

Scott Modery indicated that administration found out several months ago that there is a BCBSS Facebook page, and there are a few posts on the page, but it is not ours. We have tried repeatedly through our IT Department and various other channels to make contact with Facebook administrators to take it down because it is not us, but we have not received a response from anyone.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur thought that we should get legal involvement regarding this issue.

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. indicated that it may be worth creating an actual official page and that may give them leverage to remove the spoof Facebook page.

John L. Schettino, Esq. discussed that this spoof page could be very hard to trace them back and indicated this should be reported to the Prosecutor's Office because it could be set up for fraudulent purposes and some type of scam or to get some sort of information that they are not entitled to have.

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. discussed that it could have also been created at some point by a random employee, and we just don't have the history. It doesn't have a lot of information it's just essentially a placeholder page. She thought creating an actual robust page that is real could be helpful in getting Facebook to take down the fake version.

Scott Modery will make contact with the Prosecutor's Office concerning this issue.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Scott Modery reported that on February 14, 2023 CWA Local 1089 sponsored a jeans day in the name of one of our employees who has family affected by the earthquake in Turkey. A donation of \$920.00 was collected. On February 15, 2023, Union County visited our agency to discuss the way we implement the State of New Jersey's online "Onetrac" system into our workflow,

case banks, and worker assignments. A sample application was followed through our agency process while they toured the facility observing how an application moves from registration, to interview, to processing and DIMS (Document Imaging Management System). Intake and processing supervisors showed our case bank and described how it is arranged, how work is assigned, and who moves the work in the bank. On February 14, 2023, Geraldine Nestrowitz and Scott Modery met with the Audit and Budget Committee to discuss what our 2023 budget looks like. The discussion centered around the unavoidable increases in costs that we are facing in 2023 including pension contribution and especially health benefit increases. Also discussed was the increase in application rates and the extra pressure this places on staff. The one positive item was that the amount we are requesting from the County (Admin funding + TANF funding) is just .26% higher than the amount we requested 16 years ago in 2007. The Benhnke Senior Housing Complex reached out to us and requested a visit from a staff member to discuss SNAP benefits with their residents. On March 1, 2023 we sent an employee to present a short Powerpoint presentation and to meet and discuss SNAP benefits with their residents. A representative from our Adult Protective Services Department attended the "Age-Friendly Bergen Roundtable" on March 3, 2023 at the New Bridge Medical Center in Paramus. The main focus for the meeting was to promote networking, communication and advocacy, throughout Bergen County. SNAP benefits have returned to pre-pandemic levels beginning March 1, 2023, with the exception of the elevation of the minimum benefit to \$95 as reported last month. In anticipation of the large volume of work this will generate for County staff, the State just announced that we will be receiving SNAP ARPA administrative funding in the amount of \$227,902.45. This money is provided for the express purpose of SNAP activities. We have already begun using this money toward overtime costs to maintain timeliness for SNAP. Unfortunately, Medicaid will experience major changes which will also put pressure on staff beginning April 1, 2023 and there is no expectation of any funding to offset this. In response to our participation in the annual Project Homeless Connect event the County issued commendations to both our Adult Protective Service supervisor and the Bergen County Board of Social Services.

Chairman's Report

Chairman William E. Connelly asked the Board Members to please call or email Michele Darmochwal each month to let her know if they can or cannot attend Board Meetings to ensure that a quorum is met.

In addition, the Chairman thanked John E. Ten Hoeve, Jr., Esq. for his years of services to the Bergen County Board of Social Services. Mr. Ten Hoeve will know longer sit on our Board but will be missed.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. reported from February 1 to February 28, 2023 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$5,920.88 and the year-to-date 2023 is \$10,246.75. No new cases were referred to the Prosecutor's office during the month of February.

(b) Audit & Budget Committee

Randi Duffie reported that Scott Modery gave a great budget presentation to the Audit & Budget Committee. Scott Modery provided a brief overview to the full Board. He indicated that he has been talking about the massive increase in health benefit costs. There is a significant salary increase cost this year as well part of which is to bring on additional staff. There are some other line items that are increasing because we were able to offset some of those line items in the prior year with some last minute COVID money that was provided, which we do not have this year. Overall, we are looking at an increase of approximately 12.11% over last year. The increase is going from \$8,086,451 in 2022 to \$9,065,371 in 2023. Mr. Modery explained that the numbers that he usually uses as a metric in the total cost to the County for our operations are Administrative and TANF money because those are the two items that the County pays to operate the BCBSS. They provide us SSI money as well but the SSI money gets reimbursed 100% from the State. The amount we are requesting this year in Administration and TANF money amounts to be a .26% increase over 2007. In 2007, we requested \$9,151,290 and in 2023 we are requesting \$9,175,089. The reason for the small increase over 2007 versus more recent years is there was a lot of cost savings over the years. One of the cost savings was reducing the square footage by moving to the 218 building, having a new lease that did not have all the escalations that were added in after approximately 25 years in the other building. That was a major factor but the other major factor was when Medicaid started reimbursing 75% federal money for all our Medicaid work versus 50% so that made a very big difference.

(c) Building & Grounds Committee

No report.

(d) Personnel Committee

Elaine K. Meyerson reported that she would like to add Personnel Committee to the agenda each month. She discussed that every month this committee meets with Scott Modery and Ritzy Moralez-Diaz to go through all the resolutions, all those being appointed, and advertisements. After the committee did Scott Modery's evaluation they are very pleased he is going to stay on as Director and continue to grow. Mr. Modery is provisional and his position is a Civil Service position. Mr. Modery explained the process to the Board. When the Board appointed him, he went into a provisional status. Ultimately, what will happen is the New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC) will see that provisional status and either call a test or develop a list based on experience and education (E&E).

John L. Schettino, Esq. reiterated that Mr. Modery will continue to serve in his provisional status until CSC issues a list whether it is by way of a test or by way of experience and education (E&E) and once that list comes out the Board appoints from that list. When Scott Modery's name comes up, the Board will appoint him Director in permanent status. Although the

previous resolution did not say provisional, Mr. Modery is serving provisionally until CSC issues a list and at that time a resolution appointing him as Director in permanent status will be put forth before the Board.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

None

(a) Next Board Meeting Date

The next Board Meeting is scheduled to be held in person on Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.

Action Items: Resolutions

(a) 2023.3.07 (1) –	Resolution Approving Additions, Elimination, and/or Changes to
	Positions within the Bergen County Board of Social Services
(b) 2023.3.07 (2) –	Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of Employment for Multiple
	Openings
(c) $2023.3.07$ (3) $-$	Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Part-Time Clerk 1
(d) 2023.3.07 (4) –	Resolution Authorizing Rescinding Resolution 2023.2.07 (12) Authorizing
	the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One External Part-Time
	Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish
(e) $2023.3.07(5) -$	Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from One Internal Part-Time
	Clerk 1 to Full-Time Clerk 1
(f) 2023.3.07 (6) –	Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from One Internal Part-Time
	Clerk 1 to Full-Time Clerk 1
(g) 2023.3.07 (7) –	Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from One Internal Part-Time
	Clerk 1 to Full-Time Clerk 1
(h) 2023.3.07 (8) –	Resolution Authorizing Rescinding Resolution 2022.2.07 (8) Authorizing
	the Hiring of One External Part-Time Human Services Aide
(i) 2023.3.07 (9) –	Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Full-Time Social Service
	Technician to Full-Time Social Worker
(j) 2023.3.07 (10) –	Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human
	Services Specialist 1 to Provisional Full-Time Human Services
	Specialist 2
(k) 2023.3.07 (11) –	Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human
	Services Specialist 1 to Provisional Full-Time Human Services
	Specialist 2
	A

- (l) 2023.3.07 (12) Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Specialist 1 to Provisional Full-Time Human Services Specialist 2
- (m) 2023.3.07 (13) Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal Provisional Full-Time Supervising Accountant
- (n) 2023.3.07 (14) Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal or External Provisional Full-Time Accountant
- (o) 2023.3.07 (15) Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal or External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (p) 2023.3.07 (16) Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal or External Full-Time Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish
- (q) 2023.3.07 (17) Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours for Four Internal Part-Time Human Services Aides to Four Full-Time Human Services Aides
- (r) 2023.3.07 (18) Resolution Authorizing an Offer of Employment for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Specialist 3
- (s) 2023.3.07 (19) Resolution Authorizing an Offer of Employment for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Specialist 3 Bilingual in Spanish
- (t) 2023.3.07(20) Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One Internal Provisional Full-Time Social Worker
- (u) 2023.3.07 (21) Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One External Part-Time Clerk 1
- (v) 2023.3.07 (22) Resolution Approving Lease Purchase with Arctic Coolers
- (w) 2023.3.07 (23) 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) - (v) 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
	COUNTY ADJUSTER				X
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER				X

A motion to discuss and approve Resolution (w) 2023.3.07 (23) 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 and to go into Closed Session was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, 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
	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 5:10 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

The Board went into Closed Session to discuss closed session minutes and personnel matters. 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 10 minutes at which time the Board will reopen the meeting and may take further public action in matters dealing with the Bergen County Board of Social Services. The public will be able to access the meeting remotely once the meeting reopens in Open Session.

OPEN SESSION:

The Board reconvened in Open Session at approximately 5:15 p.m.

Adoption of Minutes:

Closed Session Minutes of February 7, 2023

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Closed Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Closed Session minutes of February 7, 2023 was offered by Randi Duffie, 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
	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 5:15 p.m. was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, 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
	COUNTY ADJUSTER				X
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN	BOARD MEMBER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	BOARD MEMBER				X

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Modery Director