

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
October 3, 2023**

PRESENT: William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson
Susan Silverstein, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Thomas J. Sullivan, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Diane DeCarlo, Esq., County Adjuster
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member (Arrived Late)
Junior Hernandez, Ph.D., Board Member (Arrived Late)
John L. Schettino, Esq., General Counsel
Scott Modery, Director
Michele M. Darmochwal, Administrative Secretary

ABSENT: Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson
Elaine K. Meyerson, Secretary Treasurer
Tracy S. Zur, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Alexandra Harwin, Esq., Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was held on October 3, 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 October 3, 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:

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
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER		X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASSISTANT SECRETARY TREASURER	X	
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER		X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X	
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X	
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER		X
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER		X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	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 Thomas J. Sullivan, seconded by Susan Silverstein, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER				X
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	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 Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan, seconded by Diane DeCarlo, Esq., and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER				X
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	BOARD MEMBER				X

Adoption of Minutes:

(a) *Open Session Minutes of September 5, 2023*

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of September 5, 2023 was offered by Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan, seconded by Diane Decarlo, Esq., and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER			X	
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER				X
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	BOARD MEMBER				X

For the record, Yris Encarnacion arrived at approximately 4:35 p.m.

Geraldine Nestrowitz, Supervising Accountant, was present. She reported on the Bill's List and Schedule of Vouchers.

Treasurer's Report:

(a) Bills List and Schedule of Vouchers:

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to approve the Bill's List and Schedule of Vouchers. A motion to approve the Bill's List and Schedule of Vouchers 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
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	BOARD MEMBER				X

Presentation of 2022 Audit Report

Matthew Wielkotz from Wielkotz & Company, LLC was present to discuss the 2022 annual Audit.

Mr. Wielkotz reported another year the Bergen County Board of Social Services audit had zero findings, which is very unusual, and is a testament to all the great work that Scott Modery, Geri Nestrowitz, and the Board are doing. This was the first year that Geri Nestrowitz was at the helm of the audit. He complimented the staff on providing information on time and in some cases early. Mr. Wielkotz thanked both Geri Nestrowitz and Scott Modery because his firm does some other work at other Boards of Social Services where there are some new fiscal people and they helped out some other counties with questions in the state.

Mr. Wielkotz left the meeting at approximately 4:40 p.m.

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 noted that again we have seen a spike in application activity for TANF and SNAP.

Scott Modery reported that the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) caseload for August 2023 was 358 and July 2023 was 353 cases, and compared to one year ago it went up 52 cases, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for August 2023 was 23,194 and July was 22,958 and compared to one year ago it went up by 1,250 cases, GA (General Assistance) caseload for August was 420 and July was 407 cases and compared to one year ago it went up by 36 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 56,124 individuals in August and in July 2023 there were 57,939 individuals a decrease of 1,815 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 13 inquires, 22 approved, and 0 denials. The agency paid out \$107,383.00 and recovered \$473.08.

In August 2023, the agency received 1,967 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 1,728 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,695. In July 2023, the agency received 1,691 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 1,615 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,306.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 3 individuals/families in motels. We have 23 families in the HEARTS Program, 11 in the Emergency Shelter, and 12 in TANF/Bridge side. We have 9 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 66 Emergency Assistance applications and 91 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 25 placements as referrals from 211. We have 247 active DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 124 referrals and currently have 32 open cases.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Scott Modery reported that we received three rounds of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding to assist with SNAP application and processing backlogs. The final day to utilize this funding was September 23, 2023. As these funds were subsidizing ongoing SNAP overtime processes, we can expect to see overtime costs increase dramatically. Additionally, Medicaid unwinding is also increasingly pressuring the need for overtime. Unfortunately, to date Medicaid has provided no administrative funding to address the massive increase in workload associated with the unwinding. These factors are likely to drive significantly elevated overtime costs for the foreseeable future. We continue to send a Social Worker from our Adult Protective Service (APS) Department to the "*Age Friendly Roundtable*" reoccurring event. This conference allows our APS Department to connect and coordinate with other area resources to promote and create age-friendly communities. We hosted a table at the "*Annual Senior Festival*" at Van Saun Park on September 12, 2023. We were represented by request by our APS Department at the "*Elmwood Park Celebrates Seniors*" event on September 30, 2023. We attended the "*Bergen County Sheriff's Office reentry workshop*". This event gives us the opportunity to learn how to work more closely with the Bergen County Jail to assist those individuals who are being reintegrated into the community. We sent four DDD staff to the Bergen County Department of Human Services "*Self-Care is Not Enough: A Trauma-Informed Lens to Compassion Fatigue and Burnout Prevention for Professionals*" webinar on September 28, 2023. The webinar was free for County employees; however, Mr. Modery was unfortunately unable to get our agency recognized under that County umbrella, which would have provided the training for free.

Our final 2022 Audit report has been released, a copy of which was provided in the Board packet. We are proud to once again deliver an Audit report to the Board that contains no findings, questioned costs, or recommendations. Mr. Modery extended his greatest gratitude to the Finance Department and IT Department, as well as, the Agency Intake and Processing Departments for SNAP and Medicaid as these were also a subject to a portion of the audit. In all scenarios, the agency performed admirably. This would not be possible without the cooperation and coordination of the entire agency. Lastly, we have been making a drive toward minimizing our part-time staff. Mr. Modery shared a grid of where we are today, versus our historical position over the past three and one-half years. We are currently at our lowest percentage of part-time staff in years. Also noted, while there are part-time workers who are interested in full time many of our current part timers prefer to remain in a part time capacity.

Chairman's Report

Chairman William E. Connelly mentioned that each month Scott Modery sends him a request for overtime, and he approves these requests based on need so staff do not fall behind and it does not affect or hurt our customers.

For the record, Junior Hernandez arrived at approximately 4:42 p.m.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Yris Encarnacion reported from September 1 to September 30, 2023 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$7,221.20 and the year-to-date 2023 is \$51,845.84. No new cases were referred to the Prosecutor's office during the month of September.

(b) Audit & Budget Committee

No report.

(c) Building & Grounds Committee

No report.

(d) Personnel Committee

No report.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

None

(a) Next Board Meeting Date

The next Board Meeting is scheduled to be held in person on **Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.**

Action Items:

Resolutions

- (a) 2023.10.03 (1) – Resolution Approving Additions, Elimination, and/or Changes to Positions within the Bergen County Board of Social Services
- (b) 2023.10.03 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of Employment for Multiple Openings
- (c) 2023.10.03 (3) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from One Internal Part-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Aide

- (d) 2023.10.03 (4) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Human Services Aide to Full-Time Social Service Technician
- (e) 2023.10.03 (5) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Social Service Technician
- (f) 2023.10.03 (6) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (g) 2023.10.03 (7) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide Bilingual in Spanish
- (h) 2023.10.03 (8) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (i) 2023.10.03 (9) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish
- (j) 2023.10.03 (10) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish
- (k) 2023.10.03 (11) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Provisional Full-Time Senior Data Processing Programmer
- (l) 2023.10.03 (12) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours for One Internal Part-Time Human Services Aide to One Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (m) 2023.10.03 (13) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for Seven External Full-Time Human Services Aides
- (n) 2023.10.03 (14) – Resolution Approving Transfer of Public Assistance Program from the Borough of Fairview
- (o) 2023.10.03 (15) – Resolution Approving Transfer of Public Assistance Program from the Borough of Park Ridge
- (p) 2023.10.03 (16) – 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) – (o) was offered by Yris Encarnacion, seconded by Susan Silverstein, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	BOARD MEMBER	X			

A motion to discuss and approve Resolution (p) 2023.10.03 (16) 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 Thomas J. Sullivan, seconded by Yris Encarnacion, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	BOARD MEMBER	X			

The Board went into Closed Session at approximately 4:50 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

The Board went into Closed Session to discuss 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 15 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.

A motion to accept the Auditor's Report was offered by Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan, seconded by Yris Encarnacion, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	BOARD MEMBER	X			

Adoption of Minutes:

There were no Closed Session Minutes of September 5, 2023.

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 Susan Silverstein, seconded by Yris Encarnacion, and approved as follows:

MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON	X			
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER				X
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER	X			
DIANE DECARLO, ESQ.	COUNTY ADJUSTER	X			
YRIS ENCARNACION	BOARD MEMBER	X			
ALEXANDRA HARWIN, ESQ.	BOARD MEMBER				X
JUNIOR HERNANDEZ, Ph.D.	BOARD MEMBER	X			

Respectfully submitted,


Scott Modery
Director