

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
November 9, 2023**

PRESENT: Elaine K. Meyerson, Secretary Treasurer
Susan Silverstein, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Diane DeCarlo, Esq., County Adjuster
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member
Junior Hernandez, Ph.D., Board Member
John L. Schettino, Esq., General Counsel
Scott Modery, Director
Michele M. Darmochwal, Administrative Secretary

ABSENT: William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson
Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson
Tracy S. Zur, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Thomas J. Sullivan, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member
Alexandra Harwin, Esq., Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was held on November 9, 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 November 9, 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:

In Chairman William E. Connelly’s absence, Elaine K. Meyerson chaired the meeting.

Flag Salute

Elaine K. Meyerson led those present in a salute to the flag.

Elaine K. Meyerson asked for a Moment of Silence and respect for all the victims of the Israel-Hamas war.

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

Elaine K. Meyerson 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 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			

There being no comments from the public, Elaine K. Meyerson 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 Diane DeCarlo, 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:

(a) Open Session Minutes of October 5, 2023

Elaine K. Meyerson requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of October 5, 2023 was offered by Susan Silverstein, seconded by Junior Hernandez, 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			

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:

Elaine K. Meyerson 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 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			

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 September 2023 was 357 and August 2023 was 358 cases, and compared to one year ago it went up 32 cases, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for September 2023 was 23,918 and August was 23,194 and compared to one year ago it went up by 1,161 cases, GA (General Assistance) caseload for September was 442 and August was 420 cases and compared to one year ago it went up by 34 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 53,966 individuals in September and in August 2023 there were 56,124 individuals a decrease of 2,158 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 16 inquires, 18 approved, and 2 denials. The agency paid out \$51,987.00 and recovered \$2,774.00.

In September 2023, the agency received 1,754 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 1,642 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,396. 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.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 2 individuals/families in motels. We have 26 families in the HEARTS Program, 13 in the Emergency Shelter, and 13 in TANF/Bridge side. We have 9 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 46 Emergency Assistance applications and 88 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 34 placements as referrals from 211. We have 244 active DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 117 referrals and currently have 32 open cases.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Scott Modery reported that Brendaly Sanchez and Annette Wilson hosted a table at the annual Fall Caregivers Conference on Saturday, October 14, 2023. The Board may have noticed that the SNAP Outreach schedule included with the Board packet has fewer Outreach sites than had been scheduled several months ago. The Community Food Bank of NJ has been running these outreach sites for several months and has determined that some only require less frequent visits while there has been a move to “digital referrals” on others. This is accomplished by a coordinator remotely

assisting residents rather than an in-person visit. The World of Resources event was attended by Maya Jacob and Gina Kennedy on October 3, 2023. Over the past few years during the pandemic, email usage increased dramatically. A large portion of this usage relates to new processes which allow clients to email certain case verifications. This increase has caused an unsustainable overhead on our email system. As a result, we have begun exploring cloud based email solutions. This is *not* an inexpensive solution; however, our current usage levels and continued expansion have caused increased down time and sporadic crashing. Upgrades are necessary before critical levels are reached. In conjunction with the County Department of Health Services, Ritzy Morales-Diaz scheduled a “Flu Clinic” on site on November 2, 2023. Approximately 30 people were vaccinated on site. As previously noted, the immense overhead of post-pandemic work has necessitated a lot of overtime. All counties have experienced a drop in Medicaid timeliness as a result. Bergen is currently second in timeliness. While #2 is not usually something to “crow” about, it is important to note that the leading county is only .47% ahead of Bergen. Further, the leading county has only 11% of our caseload. Mr. Modery included a graph to illustrate further. On October 24, 2023 the agency hosted a Delegation of 24 representatives from South Korea. The group was interested in learning about our programs particularly as it related to SNAP, elder care services, and child services. Kija Hwang, Yvonne Jordan, Marlita Margono, Geraldine Nestrowitz, Ritzy Morales-Diaz, Suzan Kirieakes, Allan Larobardier, Michael Sluka, Esq. and Scott Modery attended. In addition, Michele Darmochwal, Maryann Moyer, and Deborah Piccione have begun to plan for our 2023 Adopt-a-Family. We have decided that this year the primary focus will be the HEARTS shelter. Should we have sufficient sponsors we will expand to additional families. If anyone is interested in committing to adopting a family, please let us know as soon as possible but no later than November 30, 2023. If the Board agrees, we would like to take a full Board group photo at the January 2024 Board Meeting. Mr. Modery’s plan is to frame and hang this photo. He suggested yearly January photos of the Board going forward to display in an around the Board Room to create a history of Bergen County Board of Social Services Board Members. Last month, Scott Modery reported that our Adult Protective Services (APS) Department was represented at the “*Elmwood Park Celebrates Seniors*” event in Elmwood Park. He included a link to pictures below from that event: <https://soundsurge.smugmug.com/Candid-Photography/3rd-Annual-Elmwood-Park-Celebrates-Seniors/>. Lastly, in a moral booster event Ritzy Morales-Diaz encouraged staff to dress up for Halloween, and we had a very positive response.

Chairman’s Report

Elaine K. Meyerson wished everyone a healthy & Happy Thanksgiving.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Yris Encarnacion reported from October 1 to October 31, 2023 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$2,189.02 and the year-to-date 2023 is \$54,034.86. No new cases were referred to the Prosecutor’s office during the month of October.

(b) Audit & Budget Committee

No report.

(c) Building & Grounds Committee

No report.

(d) Personnel Committee

Elaine K. Meyerson reported that Scott Modery has been serving provisionally and has been appointed permanent Director. Ritzy Moralez has also been serving provisionally and has been appointed permanent Senior Personnel Technician.

Scott Modery added that Geraldine Nestrowitz has been serving provisionally too and has been appointed permanent as Supervising Accountant.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

None

(a) Next Board Meeting Date

The next Board Meeting is scheduled to be held in person on **Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.**

Action Items:

Resolutions

- (a) 2023.11.09 (1) – Resolution Approving Additions, Elimination, and/or Changes to Positions within the Bergen County Board of Social Services
- (b) 2023.11.09 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of Employment for Multiple Openings
- (c) 2023.11.09 (3) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from One Internal Part-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (d) 2023.11.09 (4) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (e) 2023.11.09 (5) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (f) 2023.11.09 (6) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (g) 2023.11.09 (7) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (h) 2023.11.09 (8) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (i) 2023.11.09 (9) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (j) 2023.11.09 (10) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human

- Services Aide
- (k) 2023.11.09 (11) – Resolution Authorizing Rescinding Resolution 2023.10.03 (9) *Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish*
 - (l) 2023.11.09 (12) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One External Full-Time Clerk 1
 - (m) 2023.11.09 (13) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours for One Internal Part-Time Clerk 1 to Full-Time Clerk 1
 - (n) 2023.11.09 (14) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One External Part-Time Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish
 - (o) 2023.11.09 (15) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Part-Time Human Services Aide, Full-Time Clerk 1, Full-Time Records Support Technician 1, Full-Time Mail Clerk, Full-Time Data Entry Operator or Full-Time Keyboarding Clerk 1 to One Full-Time Human Services Aide
 - (p) 2023.11.09 (16) – Resolution Approving Equitable for a Deferred Compensation Plan
 - (q) 2023.11.09 (17) – 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) – (p) 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 (q) 2023.11.09 (17) 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 Yris Encarnacion, seconded by Junior Hernandez, 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 5:05 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

The Board went into Closed Session to discuss the Closed Session minutes and contract negotiations with respect to two employees. 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 5:20 p.m.

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion to approve the Closed Session minutes was offered by Yris Encarnacion, seconded by Diane DeCarlo, and approved as follows:

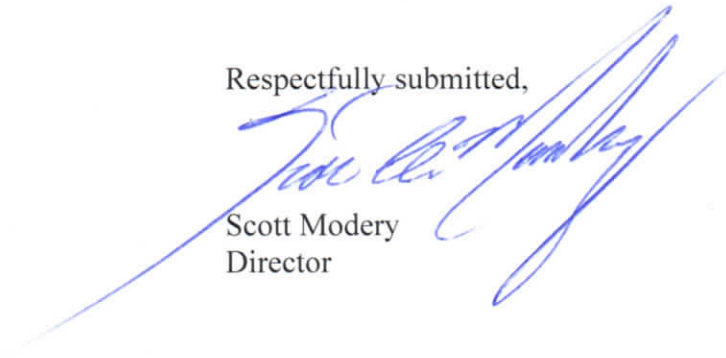
MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON				X
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
DIANE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

Elaine K. Meyerson 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 Junior Hernandez, 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			

Respectfully submitted,



Scott Modery
Director