

**Minutes of the Meeting  
of the  
Bergen County Board of Social Services  
March 5, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Elaine K. Meyerson, Secretary Treasurer  
Susan Silverstein, Assistant Secretary Treasurer  
Thomas J. Sullivan, Bergen County Commissioner, Board Member  
Diane DeCarlo, Esq., County Adjuster  
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member (Arrived Late)  
Alexandra Harwin, Esq., 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, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was scheduled for March 5, 2024 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 5, 2024 has been provided in the following manner:

1. By a prominent posting of the schedule of meetings for 2024, 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 24, 2024 and to the Herald News, which was published on January 24, 2024.

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 19, 2024.

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

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

Chairman William E. Connelly was absent. In his absence, Elaine K. Meyerson chaired the meeting.

**Flag Salute**

Elaine K. Meyerson 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**

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 Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan, seconded by Alexandra Harwin, 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 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			

### **Personnel Department Overview**

Ritzly Moralez Diaz provided a short presentation on the hiring process at the Bergen County Board of Social Services (BCBSS). She commended the Administrators, Director, Administrative Secretary, and the Board because it is not an easy process for hiring at the BCBSS. There are currently 246 employees consisting of 228 full-time employees and 18 part-time employees. We have 44 titles within the agency: 31 are competitive, 12 are non-competitive and 1 is unclassified. Non-competitive are titles where there is no testing by way of the Civil Service Commission (CSC). Competitive titles require testing and passing by way of CSC. The agency has three bargaining units: CWA Local 1089 consisting of 214 members, CWA Local 1031A (Administrators) consisting of three members & CWA Local 1031B (Supervisors) consisting of 19 members. In addition, we have confidential employees. The hiring process begins with a meeting with the Administrator, Director, Personnel, Supervising Accountant, and the Administrative Secretary to discuss the positions that are needed. After this meeting, once the Director agrees with the need for these positions, resolutions are prepared to be introduced to the Personnel Committee for review, and if acceptable to the committee, they are then placed on the agenda for approval by the Board. The day after the Board Meeting the postings go out by way of email to all staff. They are posted on the bulletin boards on Floors 2, 4, and 5, uploaded to our Intranet, agency's website, and on Indeed. Candidates are instructed to forward their resumes to the personnel email address. All resumes are thoroughly reviewed. Once a candidate is chosen, a resolution is presented to the Board for their approval. Second interviews are not done. After Board approval, the chosen candidates are called the next day and offered the position contingent upon their background checks. After the candidates are onboarded, they go through a 30-60-90-day probationary period. Some positions require training in a classroom while other positions require hands-on training in the unit. After 90 days if the candidate does not score high enough, we cannot retain them.

Junior Hernandez asked if once the employee is hired if they have a mentor?

Ritzy Moralez Diaz explained that they immediately go into their 30-60-90. If they go to a department, the supervisor sits with them and an individual shadows them and they are provided with training.

Ritzy Moralez Diaz discussed provisional/permanent status. A provisional promotion means it is a temporary status because that particular position is considered competitive and must be tested for. If an individual is in provisional status, CSC will then reach out to the agency and send us a promotional announcement and then that provisional person has to apply through CSC, not through the agency. If the individual passes and they come out in the top three, we get a Certified List and can make that provisional employee permanent. Once they become permanent, they still have to go through a 30-60-90-day evaluation period in that position. After the 90-day evaluation period and after they become permanent, they get an annual evaluation thereafter on their anniversary date.

Ritzy Moralez Diaz discussed CSC operates under the Rule of Three, which means that after an open competitive or promotional exam is held, the Appointing Authority may select any candidate from the top three ranks unless a veteran is in the top three ranks. Veteran's preference gives all eligible veterans priority on the certified lists.

In regard to confidential staff, they also start provisionally. Once they are accepted by CSC, they do 30-60-90-day evaluations. Once they are made permanent, confidential staff get an annual evaluation thereafter on their anniversary date.

Yris Encarnacion arrived at approximately 4:38 p.m.

**Adoption of Minutes:**

**(a) Open Session Minutes of February 6, 2024**

Elaine K. Meyerson requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of February 6, 2024 was offered by Diane DeCarlo, Esq., 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			

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 Alexandra Harwin, Esq., 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			

**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 2024 was 347 and December 2023 was 337 cases, and compared to one year ago it went down 48 cases. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for January 2024 was 23,471 and December 2023 was 23,236 and compared to one year ago it went up by 1,180 cases. GA (General Assistance) caseload for January 2024 was 507 and December 2023 was 481 cases and compared to one year ago it went up by 94 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 49,838 individuals in January 2024 and in December 2023 there were 49,796 individuals an increase of 42 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 24 inquires, 25 approved, and 1 denial. The agency paid out \$124,512.00 and recovered \$7,495.80.

In January 2024, the agency received 1,933 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 2,618 Medicaid applications for a total of 4,551. In December 2023, the agency received 1,492 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 2,135 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,627.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 4 individuals/families in motels. We have 19 families in the HEARTS Program, 10 in the Emergency Shelter, and 9 in TANF/Bridge side. We have 8 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 64 Emergency Assistance applications and 85 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 27 placements as referrals from 211. We have 241 active

DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 122 referrals and currently have 36 open cases.

**(b) Memoranda to the Board**

Scott Modery reported that Ritzy Morales-Diaz will be making a short presentation to the Board this afternoon explaining the processes of the Personnel Department. She will touch on the Civil Service component as well. On February 7, 2024 Geraldine Nestrowitz and Scott Modery met with the Board Audit and Budget Committee to present our proposed 2024 budget. We have further submitted our “Draft” budget to the State on January 31, 2024. The State has begun their review. Unfortunately, we are limited in what we can do prior to County budget approval, which likely will not be until mid-year or later. A resolution is listed on this afternoon’s agenda for an upgrade to our email system. As Mr. Modery mentioned in a prior Board memorandum, this is not an inexpensive proposition. However, our on-premise email server has become unable to maintain acceptable performance and is causing issues on a regular basis. Further, cloud-based email is the norm for many entities currently. Andrew Davidowicz who is the lead of our IT team was present this afternoon to answer any questions about the upgrade process. We determined that two members of our Adult Protective Service (APS) Department and a HEARTS staff member would benefit from the Dialectical Behavior Therapy Workshop offered by the Bergen County Department of Human Services. This is advertised as free for county employees. There is typically confusion around including BCBSS as “County” employees. In some instances, we are granted this courtesy and in some instances we are not. In this scenario, only our HEARTS staff member was considered a “County” employee. Mr. Modery requested assistance from our Board County Commissioners to gain clarity on this matter. In a morale building event, Ritzy Morales-Diaz encouraged staff to wear a football jersey on February 9, 2024 for “Superbowl Friday”. We held an Employee Breakfast on Wednesday, February 14, 2024. The gathering was well attended by staff, as well as, Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, Susan Silverstein; Board Member and Junior Hernandez, Ph.D.; Board Member. Years of service pins were distributed with the highest tier being 35 years, though one employee is currently one month away from 40 years of service. The Chairman and the Building and Grounds Committee were notified of an incident which occurred on February 23<sup>rd</sup> with the Rochelle Park Building Department as it relates to this building. There will be further discussion regarding this matter in Closed Session this afternoon. We recently received a distribution of over 2,000 reusable grocery bags from New Jersey Clean Communities ( <https://www.njclean.org/> ) to distribute to our clients. The organization provided 36,000 bags in total to all 21 counties. We are combining these bags with literature received from City Green’s ( <https://www.citygreenonline.org> ) “*Good Food Bucks*” to expand awareness of this important program. We had our SNAP M&E review exit conference with the Division of Family Development (DFD) on 2/29/2024. While the final report will not be issued for another month, DFD staff thanked Yvonne Jordan and Ryan Barone for

making this the “*easiest and best review*” that they have done. It is also noteworthy that one of the reviewers stated that “*Bergen is the best...*” county that she has ever reviewed.

### **Chairman’s Report**

Elaine K. Meyerson thanked Scott Modery, Yvonne Jordan, and Allan LaRobardier for the work the Board was praised for and mentioned in Scott Modery’s monthly memorandum to the Board.

### **Committee Reports:**

(a) **Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee**

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. reported from February 1 to February 29, 2024 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$1,423.06 and the year-to-date 2024 is \$2,971.22. No new cases were referred to the Prosecutor’s office during the month of February.

(b) **Audit & Budget Committee**

No report.

(c) **Building & Grounds Committee**

No report.

(d) **Personnel Committee**

A report will be made in Closed Session.

### **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 2, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.**

### **Action Items:**

#### **Resolutions:**

- (a)2024.3.05 (1) – Resolution Approving Additions, Elimination, and/or Changes to Positions within the Bergen County Board of Social Services
- (b)2024.3.05 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement of Employment for Multiple Openings
- (c)2024.3.05 (3) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from One Internal Part-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Aide

- (d)2024.3.05 (4) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours from One Internal Part-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (e)2024.3.05 (5) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (f)2024.3.05 (6) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (g)2024.3.05 (7) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Hours for One Internal Part-Time Records Support Technician 1 to Full-Time Records Support Technician 1
- (h)2024.3.05 (8) – Resolution Approving Extending Memorandum of Understanding for Administration of DMAHS Programs
- (i)2024.3.05 (9) – Resolution Approving SHI Proposal for E-mail Migration and Upgrade Costs
- (j)2024.3.05 (10) – Resolution Rescinding Equitable for Deferred Compensation Plan
- (k)2024.3.05 (11) – Resolution Approving Equitable for Deferred Compensation Plan
- (l)2024.3.05 (12) – 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

A motion to approve Resolutions (a) - (k) on the agenda was offered by Alexandra Harwin, 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 (l) 2024.3.05 (12) 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 Alexandra Harwin, Esq., 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			



The Board went into Closed Session at approximately 5:13 p.m.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

The Board went into Closed Session to discuss personnel matters and Building issues. 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 5:45 p.m.

For the record, Susan Silverstein and Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan left the meeting during Closed Session at approximately 5:40 p.m.

A motion to approve the Director’s Evaluation and Goals & Objectives was offered by Junior Hernandez, seconded by Yris Encarnacion, and approved as follows:

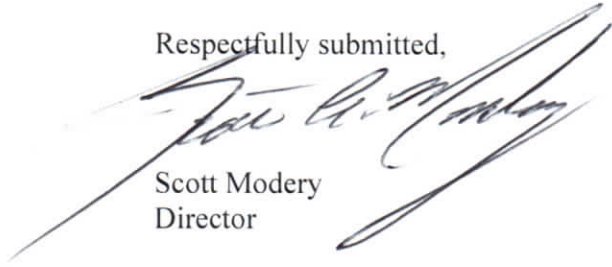
MEMBERS	TITLE	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
WILLIAM E. CONNELLY	CHAIRPERSON				X
RANDI DUFFIE	VICE CHAIRPERSON				X
ELAINE K. MEYERSON	SECRETARY TREASURER	X			
SUSAN SILVERSTEIN	ASST. SECRETARY TREASURER				X
TRACY S. ZUR	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
THOMAS J. SULLIVAN	BERGEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER				X
DIANE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

Elaine K. Meyerson requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. With no further business to conclude, a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:48 p.m. was offered by Yris Encarnacion, seconded by Alexandra Harwin, 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			
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Respectfully submitted,



Scott Modery  
Director