

**Revised Minutes of the Meeting  
of the  
Bergen County Board of Social Services  
September 3, 2024**

**PRESENT:** William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson  
Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson (Arrived Late)  
Elaine K. Meyerson, Secretary Treasurer  
Susan Silverstein, Assistant Secretary Treasurer  
Tracy S. Zur, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member (Arrived Late)  
Thomas J. Sullivan, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member (Arrived Late)  
Diane DeCarlo, Esq., County Adjuster  
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member  
Junior Hernandez, Ph.D., Board Member (Arrived Late)  
John L. Schettino, Esq., General Counsel  
Scott Modery, Director  
Michele M. Darmochwal, Administrative Secretary

**ABSENT:** Alexandra Harwin, Esq., Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was scheduled for September 3, 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 September 3, 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 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 Yris Encarnacion, seconded by Randi Duffie, 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 Yris Encarnacion, 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 August 6, 2024**

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of August 6, 2024 was offered by Diane DeCarlo, Esq., 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	
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:**

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 Elaine K. Meyerson, 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

**Presentation of 2023 Audit Report by Wielkotz & Company, LLC**

Matthew Wielkotz from Wielkotz & Company, LLC was present. He reported on the 2023 Audit with no findings and commended the staff for a job well done.

**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 July 2024 was 295 and June 2024 was 310 and compared to one year ago it went down 58 cases. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for July 2024 was 24,262 and June 2024 was 24,057 and compared to one year ago it went up by 1,304 cases. GA (General Assistance) caseload for July 2024 was 560 and June 2024 was 539 and compared to one year ago it went up by 153 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 42,301 individuals in July and 42,465 individuals in June 2024 a decrease of 164 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 34 inquires, 28 approved, and 1 denial. The agency paid out \$78,277.00 and recovered \$2,569.05.

In July 2024, the agency received 1,881 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 2,410 Medicaid applications for a total of 4,291. In June 2024, the agency received 1,623 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 1,881 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,504.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 9 individuals/families in motels. We have 22 families in the HEARTS Program, 12 in the Emergency Shelter, and 10 in TANF/Bridge side. We have 10 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 46 Emergency Assistance applications and 95 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 36 placements as referrals from 211. We have 238 active DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 116 referrals and currently have 22 open cases.

Scott Modery reported that application rates remain high, and we continue to offer and provide overtime to staff to try to stay current. One of the positive things is in the past we received SNAP funding to fund SNAP activities as in overtime costs. Several weeks ago, we were notified

that there is going to be another round of SNAP funding that is distributed to the counties. At the present time, we do not know the amount.

For the record, Commissioner Tracy S. Zur and Junior Hernandez, Ph.D. arrived at approximately 4:40 PM.

**(b) Memoranda to the Board**

Scott Modery reported that we are scheduling three (3) supervisory staff to attend the Professional Development Series for Managers and Supervisors training presented by the NJ Child Support Institute. This is an 8 week, one day per week training which has not been held since before the pandemic. This is a very helpful course, and we are happy to be able to schedule our newer supervisors, as well as, our longstanding supervisors for this highly rated training. After 13 months of hard work by all, CWA 1089 has ratified a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) by an overwhelming majority. There is a resolution before the Board this evening to approve this MOA and move forward toward a contract. Mr. Modery has been part of a statewide "SSBG Allocation Committee" consisting of four County Fiscal Officers and four Directors since April 2024. The goal was to develop a metric to redistribute Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds equitably to the 21 counties. These allocations have not changed for over 15 years in total, or County allocation amount. In this time period counties have been dramatically overfunded or underfunded. Based upon our newly developed metrics, Bergen will see an increase in funding next year and potentially additional increases for the next several years. The Bergen County Department of Human Services Division of Senior Services recently issued their 2024 monitoring report for the Area Plan funding we receive to service our Homecare Services program. Other than specifying that the agency should have a donation policy, there were no comments or recommendations.

Prior to the meeting, Scott Modery circulated a copy of a grid that outlines application activity with 2024 compared to prior years. Overall, the current year is trending higher than it has in the last few years. In regard to SNAP denials this was not included with the packet or statistics because it was generated this morning. It is based on August. We are separated by unit, Aged Blind and Disabled ABD, which is the (BL) unit. Denials and reasons were listed and in each case the lion share of denials are information that was not received. Mr. Modery will continue to compile this for the next several months. He explained the second column shows cases reopened. In regard to a case that is denied, if they do provide the information within 30 days following the case can be opened without a full application.

Commissioner Tracy S. Zur expressed that she took issue with the way it is stated about the attitude it conveys. She discussed "refused to furnish" required information versus inability to furnish required information. It talks about the attitude of the agency towards the people that are

struggling to come up with this information. Many of which are displaced from their homes and do not have access to a birth certificate and there are problems and challenges.

Scott Modery indicated that the verbiage contained on the grid is verbiage dictated by the state. We can change it for the Board's review but this is what the counties are told to use by code.

Randi Duffie expressed that she is a little sensitive to this situation and appreciated Commissioner Zur's comments.

Administrator Yvonne Jordan added that a system generated form from the state that says "refused to furnish" is what we are required to use. If she changes the verbiage on that letter, she will get a Quality Control error. The state is doing away with their current system and trying to move everything over to a new system so they are refusing to change anything. Ms. Jordan explained that when we request the information from a customer, we request it nicely and we give prompts. Once they file, the client is given a list of items to submit. At day 30, we send an email to those that we have an email address for indicating we have not received their information yet.

Junior Hernandez suggested using Artificial Intelligence.

Elaine K. Meyerson asked when and if they don't respond is anyone reaching out to the customer to see if there is anything they cannot get that we can help them with?

Administrator Yvonne Jordan explained that staff do a lot of outreach by phone and email to people trying to get everything they need.

Scott Modery indicated in regard to reaching out to the customer, FNS has certain requirements for what we need to do. These additional contact attempts are over and above what is required for that program.

Junior Hernandez indicated that the 2024 National Technology Plan by the U.S. Department of Education called for three (3) items: The use, design, and if a person is going to use digital media they have to be able to know how to use it. Whoever designed that website, must consider all accommodations.

The Community Food Bank of New Jersey (CFBNJ) provides outreach to seniors especially for those who don't have computers by way of visiting centers throughout Bergen County.

Assistant Administrator Marlita Margano indicated that (CFBNJ) helps the customer apply by following up with us concerning the status with what is missing, and we let them know what is missing so that they can reach out to the customer to advise what is needed and what must be provided.

For the record, Commissioner Thomas J. Sullivan arrived at approximately 4:45 PM.

**Chairman's Report**

Chairman William E. Connelly noted for those who came in late Matt from Wielkotz & Company LLC was here earlier this afternoon. He reported that the agency received an excellent audit with no recommendations. He congratulated all the staff.

**Committee Reports:**

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

Yris Encarnacion reported from August 1 to August 31 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$1,332.22 and the year-to-date 2024 is \$47,889.74. No fraud referrals sent to the Prosecutor's office during the month of August.

**(b) Audit & Budget Committee**

No report.

**(c) Building & Grounds Committee**

A discussion will be held in Closed Session.

**(d) Personnel Committee**

Elaine K. Meyerson reported that a discussion regarding personnel will be held 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, October 1, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.**

**Action Items:**

**Resolutions:**

- (a) 2024.9.03 (1) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for Three External Full-Time Clerks 1
- (b) 2024.9.03 (2) – Resolution Authorizing a Change in Employment for One Internal Part-Time Human Services Aide, Part-Time Human Services Aide Bilingual in Spanish, Full-Time Clerk 1, Full-Time Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish, Full-Time Records Support Technician 1, Full-Time Clerk Mail Clerk, Full-Time Data Entry Operator, Full-Time Keyboarding Clerk 1, or Full-Time

Keyboarding Clerk 1 Bilingual in Spanish to One Full-Time Human Services Aide Bilingual in Spanish

- (c) 2024.9.03 (3) – Resolution Approving Agencywide Backup Software
- (d) 2024.9.03 (4) – Resolution Approving Memorandum of Agreement with CWA Local 1089
- (e) 2024.9.03 (5) – Resolution Approving Employment Policy for Confidential Employees
- (f) 2024.9.03 (6) – 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) through (e) on the agenda 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			
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 (f) 2024.9.03 (6) 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 Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, 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 5:07 p.m.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

The Board went into Closed Session to discuss building issues and Closed Session minutes. 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 20 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 5:55 p.m.

**Adoption of Minutes:**

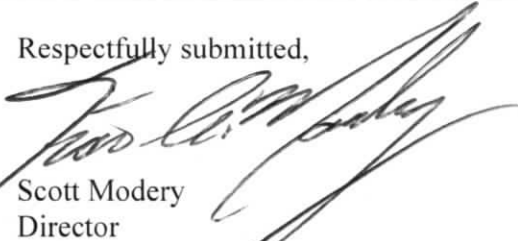
A motion to approve the Closed Session minutes of August 6, 2024 was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, seconded by Junior Hernandez, Ph.D., and approved as follows:

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			

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 5:57 p.m. was offered by Elaine K. Meyerson, 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			
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