

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
October 1, 2024**

PRESENT: William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson
Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson
Elaine K. Meyerson, Secretary Treasurer
Diane DeCarlo, Esq., County Adjuster
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: Susan Silverstein, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Tracy S. Zur, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member
Thomas J. Sullivan, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was scheduled for October 1, 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 October 1, 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 Elaine K. Meyerson, 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			

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 Randi Duffie, 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 3, 2024

Chairman William E. Connelly requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of September 3, 2024 was offered by Randi Duffie, 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 Alexandra Harwin, 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			

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 August 2024 was 302 and July 2024 was 295 and compared to one year ago it went down 56 cases. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for August 2024 was 24,210 and July 2024 was 24,262 and compared to one year ago it went up by 1,016 cases. GA (General Assistance) caseload for August 2024 was 553 and July 2024 was 560 and compared to one year ago it went up by 133 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 42,095 individuals in August and 42,301 individuals in July 2024 a decrease of 206 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 27 inquires, 23 approved, and 1 denial. The agency paid out \$104,415.00 and recovered \$1,760.66.

In August 2024, the agency received 1,917 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 2,167 Medicaid applications for a total of 4,084. 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.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 9 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 7 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 70 Emergency Assistance applications and 92 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 31 placements as referrals from 211. We have 237 active DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 125 referrals and currently have 33 open cases.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Scott Modery reported that on September 6, 2024, CWA 1089 sponsored an Alzheimers Jeans Day and raised over \$650 for the Alzheimers foundation. Additionally, on September 20, 2024, CWA 1089 sponsored a second Jeans Day, which raised \$540 which will be used to purchase Shoprite and/or Target gift cards to provide to our Adult Protective Service or any other immediate need client. Mr. Modery thanked the staff for donating \$1,190 in one month to these causes. On

September 11, 2024, we were notified of an award of \$93,899 from the State of NJ to assist in SNAP related overtime costs retroactive to July 1, 2024. This money must be spent by June 30, 2025. We have been tracking our SNAP overtime costs in hopes of receiving this money and as of September 30th we spent over 40% of this grant money. On September 12, 2024, Dolores Phillips and Mike Biggar hosted a table at the Senior Festival at Van Saun County Park in Paramus. Our Adult Protective Services Supervisor, Sonia Aufiero, attended the National Adult Protective Services Association ([Home - NAPSAs \(napsa-now.org\)](https://www.napsa-now.org)) conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico from September 16 to September 18, 2024. The NAPSAs conference is an inclusive gathering of Adult Protective Services (APS) professionals from across the United States. This event brings together professionals from diverse backgrounds to share insights, learn together, and build connections. Ms. Aufiero was also able to exchange ideas with the statewide APS coordinator and after learning of Bergen's processes and positive relationships with law enforcement and municipalities, other Counties have expressed interest in visiting Bergen County to learn tactics to improve their APS tactics. On September 16, 2024, we were notified that our Qualified Purchasing Agent was no longer with the Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA). The BCUA indicated that as such they were unable to continue with the existing shared services agreement. County Executive Tedesco has offered to assist BCBSS via a new shared services agreement with the County Division of Purchasing. On September 24, 2024, Mr. Modery and staff met with the County QPA Peter Garrity.

On September 4, 2024, Allan Larobardier, Yvonne Jordan, Marlita Margono, and Scott Modery met with Patrick Fallon, Project Coordinator, for the Bergen County Office of Food Security for a demo and discussion regarding their online referral system "OASIS". They discussed potential roles that BCBSS could play regarding this resource. The SNAP Dashboard mentioned in prior Board Memos has been launched here: <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/news/dashboard/>. Data has been deployed County by County and Statewide on metrics including timeliness, approval and denial rates, and denial reasons. When observing data, it is important to note the State's disclaimer: "The approval rate is not reflective of county processes but can be attributed to a variety of causes including county demographics and program eligibility". Some data is questionable, and Mr. Modery has an open conversation with State personnel. Two graphs taken from the SNAP Dashboard site were distributed with the Board packet. Mr. Modery explained that blue areas represent denials in which documentation was not provided. This large percentage of denials is a consistently large factor for denial across all 21 counties. In regard to the state's statistics, we found a problem with their statistics. Bergen County has an incorrect low approval rate. Mr. Modery has been in touch with the State regarding this and they acknowledged that this is an issue for several counties. Our cases approved is a higher number than what is being represented there.

On September 20, 2024, Allan Larobardier along with two client reception and interviewing supervisors and two Emergency Assistance staff met with Kristen Rendini, Director, of the NJRC

([NJ Reentry Corporation](#)) in Hackensack. We have been working with the NJRC for years and continue to maintain a positive relationship to assist our clients who are eligible for their services.

On September 30, 2024, we received notice that SNAP benefits stolen through card skimming, cloning, or other methods will be eligible for replacement until December 31, 2024. See the FNS website information here: [Addressing Stolen SNAP Benefits | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#). Additionally, we have identified a new scam which involves false text messages to clients asking them to confirm SNAP eligibility. DFD was notified and they are aware.

We have enrolled in the United Council on Welfare Fraud (<https://www.ucowf.net/>). The United Council on Welfare Fraud is the only national membership association dedicated to defending against the erosion of integrity in public assistance programs – equipping members across the industry with crucial resources for collaboration, professional development, and advocacy. They provide resources to members identify, investigate, prosecute, and recover fraud in these programs. They also publish monthly newsletters containing important information including potential pending legislation.

Mr. Modery reported that January is picture month. A full Board group photo will be taken at the January 2025 Board Meeting to display in and around the Board Room to create a history of Bergen County Board of Social Services Board Members.

Chairman's Report

Chairman William E. Connelly reported that Commissioners Zur and Sullivan were unable to attend this afternoon's Board Meeting due to a conflict with a scheduled Bergen County Board of Commissioners' Meeting.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. reported from September 1 to September 31 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$1,332.22 and the year-to-date 2024 is \$49,222.06. No fraud referrals sent to the Prosecutor's office during the month of September.

(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 the Personnel Committee had their monthly meeting.

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 7, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.**

Action Items:

Resolutions:

- (a) 2024.10.01 (1) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (b) 2024.10.01 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (c) 2024.10.01 (3) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (d) 2024.10.01 (4) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide Bilingual in Spanish
- (e) 2024.10.01 (5) – Resolution Authorizing an Offer of Employment for Three Internal Full-Time Human Services Specialists 1
- (f) 2024.10.01 (6) – Resolution Authorizing an Offer of Employment for One Internal Full Time Human Services Specialist 3
- (g) 2024.10.01 (7) – 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 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
- (h) 2024.10.01 (8) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (i) 2024.10.01 (9) – Resolution Approving Employee's Assistance Program Agreement with the County of Bergen
- (j) 2024.10.01 (10)– 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 (i) on the agenda was offered by Alexandra Harwin, 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			

A motion to discuss and approve Resolution (j) 2024.10.01 (10) 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 Randi Duffie, seconded by Alexandra Harwin, 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			

The Board went into Closed Session at 5:02 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

The Board went into Closed Session to discuss personnel, building issues, litigation, 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 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 5:13 p.m.

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion to approve the Closed Session minutes of September 3, 2024 was offered by Diane DeCarlo, Esq., 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			

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 Alexandra Harwin, Esq., 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			

Respectfully submitted,


 Scott Modery
 Director