

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
November 7, 2024**

PRESENT: **Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson (Arrived Late)**
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**
Elaine K. Meyerson, Secretary Treasurer
Tracy S. Zur, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member
Thomas J. Sullivan, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member
Alexandra Harwin, Esq., Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was scheduled for November 7, 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 November 7, 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:

In Chairman William E. Connelly’s absence, Susan Silverstein chaired the meeting.

Flag Salute

Susan Silverstein 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

Susan Silverstein 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 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			

There being no comments from the public, Susan Silverstein 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 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			

Adoption of Minutes:

(a) Open Session Minutes of October 1, 2024

Susan Silverstein requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of October 1, 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:

Susan Silverstein 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 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			

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 2024 was 307 and August 2024 was 302 and compared to one year ago it went down 50 cases. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for September 2024 was 24,384 and August 2024 was 24,210 and compared to one year ago it went up by 1,466 cases. GA (General Assistance) caseload for September 2024 was 552 and August 2024 was 553 and compared to one year ago it went up by 110 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 42,472 individuals in September and 42,095 individuals in August 2024 an increase of 377 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 32 inquires, 29 approved, and 1 denial. The agency paid out \$60,101.00 and recovered \$3,752.99.

In September 2024, the agency received 1,822 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 2,096 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,918. 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.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 8 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 8 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 60 Emergency Assistance applications and 93 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 29 placements as referrals from 211. We have 234 active DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 117 referrals and currently have 31 open cases.

For the record, Randi Duffie arrived at approximately 4:35 p.m.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Scott Modery reported that as per the New Jersey Association of Counties State House News dated 10/25/2024 located here: [NJAC State House News](#) Counties are being encouraged to pass a resolution encouraging state leaders to pass legislation to authorize publication of legal notices on websites or digital publications. This is being done in recognition that paper publications

are antiquated. We would welcome this change and believe that it would reach more people than a newspaper publication.

On October 5, 2024, Miledys Alvarez-DeLeon and Sarah Furman hosted a table at the Bergen County Caregiver Conference. This event is focused on caregivers of disabled individuals, mostly seniors. Our representation was for Adult Protective Service (APS), Homemaker and SNAP/ABD Medicaid. Also on October 5th, Annemarie Erngren, Karen Mateer, and Yvonne Jordan attended the Elmwood Park Celebrates Seniors event. This will mark our third year for our staff attending this event. More pictures can be found here: <http://soundsurge.com/epcs2024>

We recently received our health benefit rates for 2025 from the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP). Year over year increases for all active participants in the SHBP is 14.6% and 16.62% for prescription coverage. While we have not yet officially received notification of retiree cost, projections indicate a 12.8% increase for Early Retirees and a 5.2% increase for Medicare Retirees. This health benefits factor alone will amount to a massive increase in our budget request for 2025. We have notified the county of this data.

On October 25th, Gina Kennedy and Maya Jacob hosted a table at the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC) World of Resource fair at the Bergen Community College Meadowlands Conference Center in Lyndhurst.

New Jersey has the second highest error rate for SNAP in the nation exceeding 35%. This has caused the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to threaten financial sanctions against the state in the near future. These sanctions could be imposed upon the state, who could pass them along to the counties. Actual sanction amount(s) are unknown at this time. Mr. Modery included a link to payment error rates nationwide by year here: [SNAP Error Rates](#). We were proud to learn recently that our error rate for FFY24 was 0.00%. However, this may not be sufficient to shield us from a share of sanctions should that occur.

Mr. Modery expressed that it is always satisfying to hear when a client writes positive feedback. During the month of August, we received two handwritten letters providing positive feedback about Janet Chiong-Morillo and James Keegan from our Division of Developmental Disabilities Unit.

Last month, Mr. Modery reported on the state [SNAP Dashboard](#). After reviewing Bergen's data and comparing it to our internal statistics, Mr. Modery contacted the state and notified them that data for "approved" cases appeared incorrect. They acknowledged the issue and notified him that there were a handful of counties with incorrect numbers. They have corrected their data and what was about 480 approved cases for August, is now correctly reported as 1,185 cases.

Chairman's Report

Administration is currently operating the Adopt-a-Family program. The agency has operated this program for many years. If anyone is interested in participating and adopting a family for the holidays they should contact Michele Darmochwal.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Randi Duffie reported from October 1 to October 31 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$5,782.32 and the year-to-date 2024 is \$55,004.38. No fraud referrals sent to the Prosecutor's office during the month of October.

(b) Audit & Budget Committee

No report.

(c) Building & Grounds Committee

A discussion will be held in Closed Session.

(d) Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee did not meet this month; however, the personnel requests were provided to the committee for their review prior to this afternoon's Board Meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Next Board Meeting Date

The next Board Meeting is scheduled to be held in person on **Tuesday, December 3, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.**

Action Items:

Resolutions:

- (a) 2024.11.07 (1) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Specialist 1
- (b) 2024.11.07 (2) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Specialist 1
- (c) 2024.11.07 (3) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Specialist 1
- (d) 2024.11.07 (4) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Specialist 2 to Full-Time Human Services Specialist 3
- (e) 2024.11.07 (5) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide

- (f) 2024.11.07 (6) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Provisional Full-Time Senior Account Clerk
- (g) 2024.11.07 (7) – Resolution Authorizing the Advertisement and Offer of Employment for One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (h) 2024.11.07 (8) – Resolution Authorizing an Offer of Employment for One Internal Full-Time Administrative Supervisor of Income Maintenance
- (i) 2024.11.07 (9) – Resolution Approving Shared Services Agreement with County of Bergen for QPA Services
- (j) 2024.11.07 (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 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			

A motion to discuss and approve Resolution (j) 2024.11.07 (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 Junior Hernandez, Ph.D., 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			

The Board went into Closed Session at 4:50 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 5:00 p.m.

Adoption of Minutes:

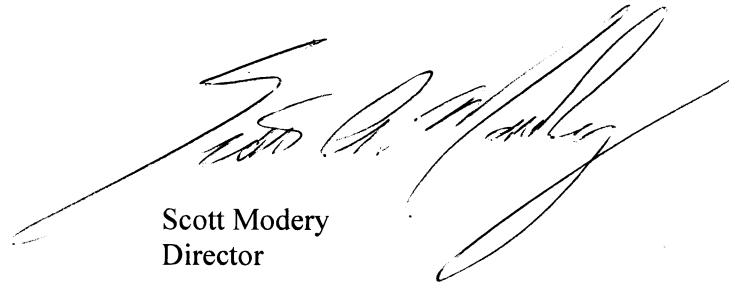
A motion to approve the Closed Session minutes of October 1, 2024 was offered by Yris Encarnacion, seconded by Randi Duffie, and approved as follows:

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			

Susan Silverstein requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. With no further business to conclude, a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:01 p.m. was offered by Junior Hernandez, Ph.D., 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			

Respectfully submitted,



Scott Modery
Director