

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Bergen County Board of Social Services
February 4, 2025**

PRESENT: **Randi Duffie, Vice-Chairperson**
Tracy S. Zur, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member
Diane DeCarlo, Esq., County Adjuster
Yris Encarnacion, Board Member
Alexandra Harwin, Esq., Board Member
Junior Hernandez, Ph.D., Board Member
John L. Schettino, Esq., General Counsel
Scott A. Modery, Director
Michele M. Darmochwal, Administrative Secretary

ABSENT: **William E. Connelly, Jr., Chairperson**
Elaine K. Meyerson, Secretary Treasurer
Susan Silverstein, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
Thomas J. Sullivan, B.C. Commissioner, Board Member

A regular meeting of the Bergen County Board of Social Services was scheduled for February 4, 2025 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 February 4, 2025 has been provided in the following manner:

1. By a prominent posting of the schedule of meetings for 2025, 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 20, 2025 and to the Herald News, which was published on January 20, 2025.

- 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 15, 2025.

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

PUBLIC SESSION:

In Chairman William E. Connelly’s absence, Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie chaired the meeting.

Flag Salute

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie 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	

Oath of Office

John L. Schettino, Esq. administered the Oath of Office to Commissioner Tracy S. Zur prior to the meeting this afternoon.

Open Public Comment Period

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie 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 Alexandra Harwin, Esq., 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			

Christine Murphy - President of CWA Local 1089

Ms. Murphy indicated that she was at this afternoon's Board Meeting to discuss three (3) issues. Ms. Murphy brought some CWA 1089 members to this afternoon's Board Meeting. The first issue discussed was staffing concerns. She indicated that they are concerned about our current staffing levels and have been for about three (3) years. She mentioned that staff are overworked and overburdened and it is causing an issue for all of them. She recognized that the Board has worked on increasing staffing and although she is pleased it is not enough. As we go into budget season, she and CWA 1089 members asked that the Board really look at those numbers and see how many more cases there are now and how many cases per person that each one of them is doing over the next couple of months while the Board is doing budgeting. She expressed that they need the Board's help and they need more staff.

The second issue is she continues to work on making sure we have workable conditions in this building. At this point in time, they have a serious concern with the roof in this building. Ms. Murphy had pictures, which were passed around to the Board that show when they came to work after the last snow storm ceiling tiles had fallen down on people's desks. She discussed had staff been here at that particular point in time that would have landed on somebody's head. She spoke about a particular photo that showed what came out of the ceiling and filled up the employee's garbage can. She expressed that this is not acceptable. There are atleast 20 ceiling tiles missing on Floor 5. She suggested if the Board had time before they left this afternoon's meeting to take a walk and look at it. She has many co-workers that are working with garbage cans on their desks collecting water. She mentioned that it is only going to get worse. We are looking at additional storms coming and they need the Board's help. We pay rent and we should not be forced to work in conditions like this. There is one member on the other side of the building that has a tube that they "jerry rigged" so it does not fall on her head and it goes into a garbage can. These are not acceptable working conditions in any way, shape, or form. They are not here complaining about minor issues. They are present to complain about a massive issue with this building. It has been going on for years, and it is not something that they find acceptable.

The third issue is the parking situation now that the landlord is starting to work on the issues with the building. Ms. Murphy had a conversation with Mr. Modery so she is aware that the landlord arranged for valet, and she also knows they are going to try to have the people not come upstairs and the valet needs to take everyone because at some point in time the valet was telling them to park in the employee's parking spots. There is not enough of parking and now we are receiving emails that state even if you go out for break and you cannot find a spot you only get fifteen minutes. She showed the Board another photo of another individual in the parking garage who decided to make two parking spots on their own making it so difficult and dangerous to get around. She indicated if this is going to go on for six months to a year we need to determine how we are going to handle time. Because of the parking situation, she already has people who have lates. She asked the

Board for their help.

In closing, Ms. Murphy indicated that they want safe working conditions and that is a ceiling that does not fall on somebody's head, water that does not drip on somebody's desk, and parking.

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie addressed the people who came to talk to the Board. She indicated that they are heard and the Board will most definitely take up this discussion.

There being no further comments from the public, Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie 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 Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, 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 January 14, 2025

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie requested a motion to adopt the Open Session minutes. A motion to adopt the Open Session minutes of January 14, 2025 was offered by Yris Encarnacion, 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			

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:

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie 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 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			

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 December 2024 was 273 and November 2024 was 274 and compared to one year ago it went down 64 cases. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) caseload for December 2024 was 25,090 and November 2024 was 24,811 and compared to one year ago it went up by 1,854 cases. The GA (General Assistance) caseload for December 2024 was 544 and November 2024 was 536 and compared to one year ago it went up by 63 cases. In regard to Medicaid, there were 43,325 individuals in December and 43,385 individuals in November 2024 and compared to one year ago there is a decrease of 6,471 individuals.

Burial stats are as follows: 36 inquires, 32 approved, and 1 denial. The agency paid out \$80,436 and recovered \$770.79.

In December 2024, the agency received 1,388 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 2,356 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,744. In November 2024, the agency received 1,585 applications for cash and SNAP applications and 2,171 Medicaid applications for a total of 3,756.

Our Emergency Assistance Unit assisted homeless individuals and families. Currently, we have 2 individuals/families in motels. We have 20 families in the HEARTS Program, 10 in the Emergency Shelter, and 10 in TANF/Bridge side. We have 7 families placed at the Center for Hope and Safety (DV shelter). We had 43 Emergency Assistance applications and 92 clients on Temporary Rental Assistance. We had 21 placements as referrals from 211. We have 232 active

DDD cases. The Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit received 115 referrals and currently has 31 open cases.

(b) Memoranda to the Board

Scott Modery reported that on January 22, 2025, two BCBSS Social Workers from Adult Protective Services (APS) and Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) departments attended the “Audacious Resistance Strategies Workshop”. This training was provided by the Bergen County Department of Human Services and was free to County employees. Mr. Modery reached out to Melissa DeBartolo, Esq., Director of the Department of Human Services, to request that our staff be included under the umbrella of “County Employee” for this training. She graciously granted this request and offered her assistance with future trainings to include our employees as well. The agency is planning an Employee Breakfast on Wednesday February 19, 2025 at 9:30 AM. We will be distributing years of service pins to employees who have reached the 10, 15, 25, 30 and 35-year milestones as of December 31st 2024. On January 16, 2025, CWA 1089 sponsored a Jeans Day fundraiser for Project Homeless Connect. On the same day the agency raffled one personal day for the same cause. Both fundraisers were highly successful with CWA 1089 raising \$600 from staff and contributing another \$250. The agency raised \$750. Due to the overwhelming generosity of our employees and CWA 1089, \$1,600 was donated to Project Homeless Connect. In addition, on January 29, 2025 Sonia Aufiero, Gina Kennedy, and Bashada Schlitz-Riegel hosted a table at the Project Homeless Connect Event. The agency purchased socks and winter hats to give away at the event. We are currently under a Management Evaluation (ME) review. Part of the review involved a tour of the agency and an explanation of our procedures. On January 29, 2025 the DFD Office of Program Compliance visited us and toured the agency. The visit went well and there was very high praise expressed for what the reviewers saw. When I asked how we did, the reviewer stated that they had been to all but three counties so far and, given the opportunity to choose, she would definitely recommend Bergen as the county to send someone in need to. We have had several meetings with Xerox. They have offered to evaluate our office processes as they relate to increasing digital transmission of information vs. paper. Xerox is doing this analysis with no cost and no obligation in hopes of a future partnership in this arena. Building demolition has begun. During the week of January 27, 2025 barriers and fencing were placed in building work areas. Official demolition work began on February 3, 2025. The owner has hired a valet service in hopes of mitigating some of the parking struggles which lie ahead. We are hoping for the best. We have had no interruptions in Federal funding due to the President’s Executive Order. We remain vigilant and will be assessing new information as it becomes available. Mr. Modery has a meeting with the Division of Family Development on Friday February 7, 2025 and is certain that this will be a topic of discussion.

Chairman’s Report

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie reported that Chairman William E. Connelly had a conflict and that is why she is Chairing this afternoon’s Board Meeting. She asked that all Board Members please reply to Michele Darmochwal’s emails confirming their attendance at each meeting to make sure a quorum is met.

Committee Reports:

(a) Welfare, Fraud, and Abuse Committee

Alexandra Harwin, Esq. reported from January 1 to January 31, 2025 the agency received Medicaid recoveries in the amount of \$848.16 and the year-to-date 2025 is \$848.16. No fraud referrals sent to the Prosecutor's office during the month of January.

(b) Audit & Budget Committee

No report.

(c) Building & Grounds Committee

A discussion will be held in Closed Session.

(d) Personnel Committee

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie reported that members from this committee were not present at this afternoon's Board Meeting; therefore, there was no report this month.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Next Board Meeting Date

The next Board Meeting is scheduled to be held in person on **Tuesday, March 4, 2025** at 4:30 p.m.

Action Items:

Resolutions:

- (a) 2025.2.04 (1) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (b) 2025.2.04 (2) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (c) 2025.2.04 (3) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Clerk 1
- (d) 2025.2.04 (4) – Resolution Authorizing the Hiring of One External Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (e) 2025.2.04 (5)– Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide
- (f) 2025.2.04 (6) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Specialist 1
- (g) 2025.2.04 (7) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Specialist 1
- (h) 2025.2.04 (8) – Resolution Authorizing a Promotion for One Internal Full-Time Human Services Aide to Full-Time Human Services Specialist 1
- (i) 2025.2.04 (9) – Resolution Approving Addendum to Professional Services Agreement
- (j) 2025.2.04 (10)– Resolution Approving Addendum to Professional Services Agreement
- (k)2025.2.04 (11)– Resolution Approving Revision to Lateness Policy

(l)2025.2.04 (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) through (k) on the agenda was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, 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			

A motion to discuss and approve Resolution (l) 2025.2.04 (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 Yris Encarnacion, 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 4:55 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 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 5:40 p.m.

Adoption of Minutes:

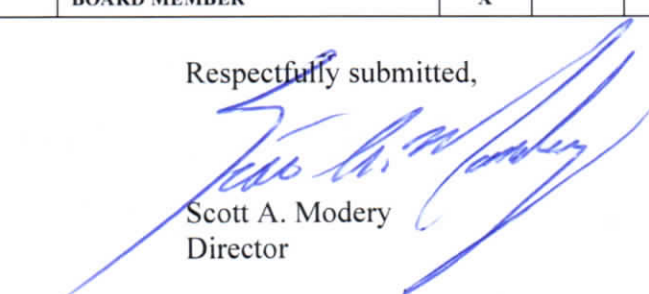
Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie requested a motion to adopt the Closed Session minutes of January 14, 2025. A motion to adopt the Closed Session minutes of January 14, 2025 was offered by Commissioner Tracy S. Zur, seconded by Alexandra Harwin, Esq., and approved as follows:

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			

Vice Chairwoman Randi Duffie requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. With no further business to conclude, a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:42 p.m. was offered by Alexandra Harwin, Esq., 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 A. Modery
Director