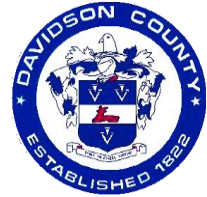


**DAVIDSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Dale Moorefield, Director



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services
Board Meeting Minutes
August 27, 2019**

Board Members Present

**Mrs. Jane Murphy; Mrs. Karen Watford;
Mr. Richard Wagner; Mr. Todd Yates**

Others in Attendance

**Mr. Dale Moorefield; Mr. Scott Craver; Ms. Katrina McMasters; Mrs. Susan Craig;
Ms. Elizabeth Huff; Mrs. Caroline Hedrick; Mrs. Lexa Eagle; Mrs. Sheri Woodyard;
Ms. Karen Keith; Ms. Leslie Kerr; Ms. Belinda Johnson; Ms. Mae Jackson;
Ms. Kaytie Surratt; Ms. Carla Johnston; Ms. Pamela McFarlin-Baldwin;
Ms. Kris Rash; Mrs. Brittany Jones; Ms. Tasha Wall; Mrs. Michelle Nelson;
Mrs. Pamela Moore; Ms. Patricia Wolfe; Mr. Andre Morin; Mrs. Anyel Wright;
Ms. Vera Brown; Mr. Casey Smith; Mrs. Misty Boyd; Mrs. Holly Morrow**

Call to Order

Mr. Richard Wagner called the meeting to order at 4:16 p.m. Mr. Wagner offered an invocation.

Adoption of Agenda

Mrs. Karen Watford made a motion to adopt the Agenda and Mrs. Jane Murphy seconded the motion. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Murphy made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2019 meeting and Mrs. Watford seconded the motions. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Address

Ms. Mae Jackson, employee of the Agency for 13 years, led the public address on behalf of a group of 18 employees and contracted staff. Ms. Karen Keith also shared information during the public address. Ms. Jackson began the address by sharing a Power Point presentation. She provided paper copies of the presentation to the Board. The public address is related to the recent job study presented to and approved by the Board of County Commissioners in July 2019. There have been mixed reactions to the results of this independent job study and our

Agency had no input as to how the study results were implemented. Ms. Jackson wanted to first express that the employees are grateful for their jobs and for the support of the Agency; however, there are questions that this group and others would like to have answered in regards to how the amount of increase was determined. There is also concern about salary compression that had started to change, but has now returned with the changes implemented with the pay study. Refer to the power point presentation for talking points, facts, estimates and general information discussed. The presenters determined that the raises given equated to 1.25% for employees with 10 to 15 years of tenure; basically more experienced staff saw smaller increases in compensation compared to less experienced staff.

Ms. Karen Keith went over the pay plan for the County and used her salary and the salary of Ms. Jackson as examples. She provided details for each of the pay increases she should have received during her tenure here. She also discussed that she received only 1.25 percent when the Personnel Resolution shows that a 5 percent increase could have been given to those who were over the minimum salary grade in the new pay grade. She asked why this was not done.

Ms. Jackson shared her personal story and introduced Kaytie Surratt, who was one of the people Ms. Jackson helped as a child in her role as a Child Protective Services Social Worker.

Ms. Jackson shared some of the results she gathered in a survey as to how employees reacted to the Pay Study and the pay increases.

Ms. Keith also shared that there are many vacancies and she asked why the money from the vacancies could not be split between current staff to give all a substantial increase.

Mr. Richard Wagner informed the people present that the vacancy report is reviewed each month and an in-depth explanation is provided by Director Moorefield during our board meetings. He also stated that the Board is very aware of the vacancy rates and the hire rates. Mr. Moorefield gave an explanation how 5 positions were reclassified recently due to the needs of the agency work and mission and that three new positions were approved by the BOCC for FY2019-2020.

Mr. Casey Smith, Assistant County Manager, stated he “wanted to level the playing field”. Vacancy rate was discussed and how it is handled fiscally. Every county in NC felt the pinch in the economy from 2007 to 2013. The current pay plan was explained and the total raise received by most individuals in DSS was about 4.25 percent when you consider what was received in July and then the increase from the Pay Study that was received in August. Costs to the County were explained by Mr. Smith. The tax rate of \$.54 was referenced numerous times during Mr. Smith’s explanation. The tax rate funds \$55 million for personnel in the County as well as insurance, retirements, longevity, Christmas bonuses and PBB bonuses. The one fifth/one tenth mentioned in prior Personnel Resolutions was discussed. Mr. Smith explained that the County made a decision to deviate from this plan due to the extreme expense of giving raises, which equated to about \$2 million per year rather than approximately \$1 million as it is now. He stated again this was impossible to afford with the tax rate holding at \$.54. Mr. Smith explained lots of scenarios and who makes the decisions. Salary compression was also addressed and discussed. Mr. Smith stated that the Department Heads were consulted when the study was approved by the BOCC. Mr. Smith offered more job studies through the Human Resource Department if the agency feels the Pay Study done by PTRC was inadequate. An explanation was offered as to why some employees in the same classification received more of a raise than others.

Mr. Moorefield addressed the fact that Department Heads were not given an opportunity to see or rebut the Pay Study until it was already presented and approved by the BOCC on July 18, 2019. He stated that in every meeting that he was a part of before, during and after the job study questionnaires were turned in November 2018 indicated that the departments would have an opportunity to review the results prior to submission to our BOCC to provide input and this never happened. Mr. Smith stated that Mr. Zeb Hanner, County Manager, Mrs. Kathy Cashion and himself received the initial results from the pay study and they determined that the County as a whole could not afford to give 5 percent raises to all those who were above the new pay grade assigned by PTRC and made the decision to give what was presented and ultimately approved by the BOCC.

Mr. Moorefield stated that employees went to Human Resources to discuss their concerns and were referred back to him. He, in turn, let them know that the matter was something beyond his control and he recommended a professional public address at the DSS Board Meeting and possibly at BOCC meetings to best communicate their concerns to the boards and bring that conversation to our County Commissioners that serve on those boards.

Mr. Smith stated that he will look at the one fifth/one tenth pay increases for next year's budget and will report back, if necessary, to let the Department know if it is feasible or even a consideration. He again referenced the \$.54 tax rate and having to maintain that rate and do all of the things necessary in the County for the majority of the citizens. Classifications were discussed, as well as the fact that DSS salary has to match with the State Department of Human Resources.

Concerns were expressed about individuals leaving our DSS to go to the same job in another county and it appears that Davidson County is starting to see that movement primarily due to better compensation elsewhere. Mr. Moorefield shared that staff that leave for better pay consistently report positive experiences in working with our staff in the agency, but better pay close by is a factor in their moving elsewhere and this results in our DSS becoming a training ground for staff. Mr. Moorefield did inform the group present for public address that our Agency does not hold positions for thirty days before posting as one of them reported because of the nature of the jobs done in the Department and the needs to have trained staff available for providing our services.

Mr. Wagner also let the group know that they are very much appreciated and that Mr. Moorefield brags on them at every meeting and the good work that is being done throughout the Agency. He stated that this Agency does a tremendous job and the Board is very appreciative of their commitment and work.

Mr. Smith offered an explanation for the reasoning behind the decisions being made and how each decision is considered carefully. He also stated that it is an employee's market rather than an employer's market.

Mr. Wagner thanked the individuals for attending and expressing their concerns as well as to Mr. Smith for his input. Mr. Wagner reiterated how much the Board of Social Services appreciates the employees in the Agency. Mr. Moorefield reported that he believes the staff accomplished their mission in the public address of professionally letting the board know their concerns and disappointments with the results of the pay study and compensation.

No action was taken and there was no other public address.

Management Report

Mr. Todd Yates asked about the number of new hires and Mr. Moorefield shared with him that we are currently showing 19 vacancies. We have made offers for four people that will start work in September. We continue to interview for all of the open positions except one that has not been posted. One of the positions to be offered was qualified for more than the minimum of the pay grade and the request was approved, but sat on a desk in HR for a week without notification being given that the request had been approved. We were fortunate that the person did not receive any other offers and ultimately accepted our offer of employment. Mr. Wagner asked if the HR Department gave preference to our Agency in the process for hiring. Mr. Moorefield stated that he did not believe they gave DSS priority and that recent changes in HR practices delay our hiring efforts some and that he would welcome practices that would help us.

Mr. Wagner questioned what could be done about the problems we are experiencing and Mr. Yates stated he would have to speak with the HR Director to find out about the situation. More concerns were expressed by Mrs. Lexa Eagle and Ms. Elizabeth Huff.

There was discussion about salaries and the fact that they are public knowledge in any government job. Ms. Katrina McMasters stated that when she was employed in Guilford County, her salary was posted in the newspaper next to her name.

Ms. McMasters also shared that the Social Worker that was supposed to help present the information this evening was not able to attend due to the needs of a family and case she was working with and that the bottom line was not necessarily about the pay increase, but the fact that tenure in the Agency appears to mean so little, based on the amount of pay being received.

There was discussion about evaluations and the possibility of using merit rather than across the board increases for staff. PBB bonuses were also discussed. A suggestion was made that everyone get the same information by distribution of information throughout the County.

Old Business

Agency Cell Phones

Mr. Todd Yates stated that he is okay with the purchase and use of cell phones as long as the maintenance of the phones did not become the responsibility of our IT Department. Deputy Director Scott Craver explained that the vendor would handle the maintenance as they will have dedicated support for the phones, the problems encountered, and it should not involve IT. A decision would be made as to the person in the Agency who will be handling cell phones and service. The Board expressed that an evaluation as to the use and problems involved with agency cell phones be done at the end of a year or even two years. Early indications are that Verizon offers best service and devices and if chosen, it will be on a State contract and can be cancelled at any time. By going to Agency cell phones rather than cell phone stipend, the Agency will be able to pursue reimbursement from the State for these phones.

Mr. Todd Yates made a motion to approve the use of Agency cell phones and to review the issue in a year. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Karen Watford. Motion passed unanimously.

SW III Work Against

There was discussion at last month's meeting about the approval of staff in a Social Work III – Permanency Planning and Adult Protective Services positions receiving the same pay as the staff in Social Work Investigate/Assessment and Treatment positions. This was being accomplished through a work against status, but not moving the SW III classification to the same grade level, but to increase the pay to the SW-I/A/T level. This was approved in 2017 by outgoing HR Director, Jim Price and County Manager Zeb Hanner. We learned in June of this year that this was not a permanent resolution to the problem, but a temporary, one-time increase in pay for the current employees at the time of approval. For this to become a permanent change, it would have to be presented to and approved by the BOCC. This issue was tabled for next month's meeting with the intention of getting Mr. Casey Smith in to explain the procedure.

Retirement Recognition

A memento for people retiring was discussed at the last meeting and in Management Team meeting this morning. It was decided to continue our current practices and not provide plaques for retiring staff.

Christmas Luncheon

Former DSS Board Chair, Mr. John Byrum had shared with Mr. Moorefield that US House Representative, Mr. Ted Budd could possibly come to our Christmas Luncheon in December to speak. There was discussion and the DSS Board recommended that Mr. Budd would not be invited to speak.

New Business

Record Destruction

We have identified 232 CPS records, 26 records for out of county requests for home studies and 103 conflict of interest cases that can be destroyed. Mrs. Jane Murphy made a motion to destroy the records as indicated. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Karen Watford. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Todd Yates also made a motion to excuse Mr. Andy Morris from the meeting and it was seconded by Mrs. Karen Watford. Motion was approved unanimously.

Annual Personnel Report

The report speaks for itself. The information breaks down staff by race and sex. The turnover rate for the past year is 18%. It was 16% the year before and 9% the year before that. Mr. Moorefield shared the numbers leaving the Agency as well as a partial list of reasons why. He also shared the numbers for those promoted and those retiring. Some of the people who left the Agency expressed that they enjoyed working here, but left for better pay.

Board Updates

A report on Davidson House was shared. We have moved staff into the House and they are working out of it and are very pleased with the new space. A ribbon cutting is appropriate, but not until the outside is complete and more presentable to the public.

On August 13, 2019, a proclamation was approved by the BOCC recognizing August as Child Support Awareness month.

The training at the Social Services Institute for new Board members was very helpful and good contacts were made. The sessions were very informative and Mrs. Watford and Mrs. Murphy expressed their thanks for being allowed to attend.

Mr. Moorefield shared that there are two individuals that he is aware of that are interested in serving on the DSS Board. Their applications have been submitted to the State Social Services Commission. We should know something before our next meeting in September.

Virtual Work Stations were discussed. We have many staff that use the virtual machines rather than desktop computers. When we went to this system of doing business, it was the most efficient way to go and was projected to last about 10 years. We have been using this system for about 8 years and it is now outdated and can no longer keep up with the demand of the Agency staff using it. Mr. Moorefield has had conversation with our IT Department Director Joel Hartley and both he and our IT staff recommend replacing our virtual machines with new, desktop PC's that are more powerful to handle the demands of our systems used by the staff. A quick fix improvement for this problem would be to spend \$4363.68 for memory upgrades and then replace all of the virtual machines with new desktops over a period of time. That would cost the Agency \$51,534.00 to replace 92 virtual stations and reimbursement from the State would be about 30 percent or just over \$15,000.00. Mr. Moorefield expressed that this would be the best way to give our staff the necessary equipment to do the job that is expected.

Mr. Yates asked if this expenditure would come out of our PBB funds and was told that it would. The servers will be updated later and we should work on replacement of the current machines. Mr. Moorefield assured the Board that there are PBB funds available to cover this expense. There is a budget amendment in the packet that was sent out requesting the transfer of moneys that will be presented to the BOCC at their next meeting. The PBB balance was shared with the Board.

Mr. Yates made a motion to proceed with the upgrades and purchase of new equipment using PBB funds. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Murphy. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Yates made a motion to move into Closed Session. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Murphy. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting went into Closed Session at 5:53 pm to discuss a Personnel matter.

Closed Session – Personnel Matter

The meeting returned to Open Session at 5:59 pm with no action taken.

Date of Next Meeting

Our next DSS Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 24, 2019, at 4:15 p.m. on the first floor of the Governmental Center in Lexington, Conference Room D.

Adjournment

Mr. Yates made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mrs. Watford seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Dale Moorefield