

Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)
Wednesday December 15, 2021, 7:00pm-8:30pm
Zoom Virtual Platform due to COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency

MEETING NOTES

Attendees:

Members Present:

- **David Jonas (Chair)** attending virtually from the Mason District.
- **Nancy Hall (Secretary)** attending virtually from the Mason District.
- **Alice Foltz** attending virtually from the Sully District.
- **Joe Koszarek** from Hunter Mill District
- **Laura Martinez** attending virtually from Providence District.
- **Mary Wilcox** attending virtually from the City of Falls Church.
- **Saud Hasan Shah** from the Lee District
- **Raymond McGrath** from Mt. Vernon District
- **Ben Zuhl**, from Dranesville District
- **Amitra Banerjees** from the Springfield District
- **Karen Darley** from the Braddock District.

Members not Present:

- **Andre Lee**

Staff:

- Michael Becketts, DFS Director
- Kristina Jordan, DFS Documentarian
- Alycia Blackwell, DFS Deputy Director
- Marijke Hannan, DFS Deputy Director

- **This meeting was held via Zoom Virtual Platform due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.**
- **The public was able to access this meeting by dialing 888-270-9936 and then entering the conference code 371526.**

Meeting Opening:

- David Jonas called the meeting to order at 7:02pm

- David Jonas read the electronic meeting script as authorized by FOIA and performed roll call establishing that each member can hear each other.

New Member Introductions:

- (Ben Zuhl is joining the ASSB from Dranesville District. He will be more formally introduced at the January meeting.)

Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes from November 17, 2021, were approved by ASSB Chair and Board.

Director's Announcements:

- Michael Becketts, Department of Family Services (DFS) Director, stated that there was no new guidance about when to begin meeting in person again, but when we do, we must establish a quorum.
- Director Becketts directed our attention to the 2022 Action Calendar. Our attention was directed to January for the Chair to nominate and elect a Vice-Chair and a Secretary; and to February, the note to Nominate Group to Prepare Budget Testimony.
- Dir. Becketts spoke about the growing challenges of the workload created by the ongoing pandemic. DFS is experiencing a higher vacancy rate than before, a situation shared by many human services agencies. He gave the example of Prince William County, which has enhanced its pay and benefits scales and is also experiencing high staff turnover. This is at a time that the CPS (Child Protective Services) hotline number of calls has increased. Fifty staff members (of approximately one thousand employees) are on extended leave, The actual vacancy rate is around 125. This has caused some re-adjustment of what staff can do, and they must stick to the core responsibilities. Vice Chair Alice Foltz asked if Fairfax County is a competitive employer. Dir. Becketts responded that it is, but that many staff members are adjusting their employment around what is important to them. Onboarding and retention are important. The prospect of collective bargaining has not seemed to be a factor so far. Hasan Shah stated that industries are “poaching off of each other,” and that mentoring might ameliorate that.
- The Chair's letter to the BoS letter was brought to the ASSB. There were minor changes, “impressed” in lieu of “awe.” There is still time to review the letter and offer suggestions. **Those should go directly to Melanie Fenwick, DFS Senior Policy Manager, and she will forward them to the appropriate staff person.** After that, the letter will be sent to Chair Jonas as a final copy.
- There will be a new member orientation scheduled for February.

Election for ASSB Chair:

- Vice Chair Alice Foltz chaired the election of David Jonas as Chair for 2022 calendar year chair. He was elected unanimously to serve in November.

Preliminary FY 2023 Budget Forecast:

- Marijke Hannan, DFS Deputy Director brought our attention to page 10 of the Budget Forecast, advising us that the \$280 million increase in revenue is driven by residential taxes, placing a burden on many elderly and disabled persons. Any adjustment in the assessment rate will affect this portion of the tax base. She pointed out the different funding schedules of Fairfax County and the School System. Priorities not in the budget included affordable housing. The County Executive will present the FY2023 Advertised Budget on February 22nd.

Updates: Affordable Housing Advisory Council:

- Vice Chair Foltz attended the Affordable Housing meeting. There was a question of whether the people who might benefit most about knowing of the Housing Vouchers were given sufficient information about them.

Chair's Announcements:

- Chair Jonas stated that the In Person meeting policy is under review and that any notices will be sent electronically to the ASSB.
- Chair Jonas opened the floor to remarks. Joe Koszarek asked about the efficacy of subsidized housing. Ben Zuhl mentioned that he works in Public Access and could help spread the word about the housing voucher program. The Board is interested in how housing intersects with DFS's mission and the people it serves. For the January meeting we will explore Housing in Fairfax County and have an Equity Taskforce report.

Adjourned:

- Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Next ASSB meeting:

- Wednesday, January 19, 2021, from 7:00pm-8:30pm

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