

Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)
Wednesday, December 21, 2022, 7:00pm-8:30pm
Zoom Virtual Platform due to COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency

MEETING NOTES

Attendees (virtual):

David Jonas (Chair), At-Large – Chairman’s Office

Karen Darley, Braddock District

Ben Zuhl, Dranesville District

Joe Koszarek, Hunter Mill District

Raymond McGrath, Mount Vernon District

Laura Martinez, Providence District

Members Absent:

Saud Hasan Shah, Franconia District

Alice Foltz, Sully District

Andre Lee, City of Fairfax

Mary Wilcox, City of Falls Church

Positions Vacant:

Mason District

Staff Present:

- Melanie Fenwick, DFS Senior Policy Manager
- Marijke Hannam, DFS Deputy Director
- Kristina Jordan, DFS Documentarian
- Amy Carlini, DFS Communications Director

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

Meeting Opening:

- David Jonas called the meeting to order at 7:05pm
- David Jonas read the electronic meeting script as authorized by FOIA and performed roll call.

Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes from the November 16, 2022, ASSB meeting were approved with the correction of one typographical error.

Deputy Director's Announcements:

Deputy Director Hannam briefed the ASSB on personnel hiring and retention initiatives, and on the governor's proposed budget amendments.

I. Workforce

- To promote recruitment and retention, DFS is working with the Departments of Human Resources and Management & Budget to provide fair and competitive compensation.
- DFS has also implemented programs for employees' professional growth, wellness, and safety.
- The County Executive has approved adjustments resulting from the County's Pay Compression Review. DFS is working with DHR on steps and timing.
- DFS has worked with DHR and county leaders to secure hiring bonuses, and an environmental stipend for CPS Investigation/Assessment and In-Home Services units.

II. Governor's Budget

Governor Youngkin has released amendments to Virginia's biennial budget. Proposed changes of interest to VLSSE and local departments include:

- Reductions to the Children Services Act budget due to projected decreases in program spending, including for mental health initiatives
- Funds for compliance standards related to technology for local departments
- Funds to sustain and expand Kinship Navigator programs
- Funds to increase maximum maintenance payments to foster homes on behalf of foster children by five percent
- Increased funds for TANF and the Virginia Initiative for Education and Work, including for cash assistance, employment services, and childcare

Laura Martinez asked whether workforce payroll adjustments would address underlying issues resulting from the lack of regular annual step increases for DFS staff. Deputy Director Hannam responded that it would take time to see whether the current changes work. With respect to the governor's proposed budget decrease for children's mental health services, Ms. Martinez asked whether the anticipated cost reduction was due to an improvement in mental health, or a lack of providers to address the need. Deputy Director Hannam reflected that part of the cost reduction is the result of children having been out of school and without access to services, and part is a result of short staffing with private sector providers. She added, though, that the state and local governments will continue to adjust funding based on the need for services.

Annual Report:

Communications Director Carlini invited initial reactions to the updated draft annual report text that was provided to ASSB members on December 19. She and Chair Jonas agreed that ASSB members should provide comments and proposed major edits to Ms. Carlini by January 6, and that she would then review the compiled comments/edits with Mr. Jonas. At the same time, Ms. Carlini's staff would begin the layout work for the annual report on January 6, and a full version would be made available to the ASSB by the end of January for an approval vote at the February monthly meeting.

Initial responses from ASSB members to the annual report text were all positive. Several members asked what the board or the county could do to push the report to a broader readership. Mr. Jonas asked about the availability of a budget to promote the document. County staff recommended increased efforts to get members of the Board of Supervisors to provide links to the report in their newsletters.

Chair's Announcements:

Chair Jonas explained that he would have a scheduling conflict on Wednesday evenings for the next several months and so would no longer be available to serve as Chair. He noted that it was also time for the ASSB to nominate members for vice chair and secretary. ASSB members present agreed to postpone further action on electing a new chair until more members were available for a vote.

DFS Annual Budget:

Deputy Director Hannam reviewed with ASSB members the end of fiscal year 2022 budget numbers, as provided to the ASSB by DFS staff on December 15. Ms. Hannam highlighted the trend in job vacancy numbers.

Adjourned:

- Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm

Next ASSB meeting:

- Wednesday, January 18, 2023, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm