

Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)
Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 7:00pm-8:30pm
Government Center Building, Conference Rooms 4/5
12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035

MEETING NOTES

Attendees:

Laura Martinez, Providence District, President
Raymond McGrath, Mount Vernon District, Vice Chair
Julian De Phillips, Mason District, Secretary
Noah Abraham, At-Large – Chairman’s Office
Andre Lee, City of Fairfax
Karen Darley, Braddock District
Mary Wilcox, City of Falls Church
Joe Koszarek, Hunter Mill District (remote)

Members Absent:

Ben Zuhl, Dranesville District

Positions Vacant:

Springfield District
Franconia District
Sully District

Staff Present

Michael Becketts, DFS Director
Melanie Fenwick, DFS Senior Policy Analyst
Pallas Washington, Deputy Director, Neighborhood and Community Services
Debra Laird, Senior Assistant County Attorney

Approval of Remote Participation:

The meeting was held in person with one member joining virtually. A quorum of the ASSB was physically assembled at the primary meeting location. The ASSB approved the member’s remote participation. The member participated from the Hunter Mill District and the voice of the remotely participating member could be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location.

Meeting Opening

Chair Laura Martinez called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and performed the roll call.

Approval of Minutes

The July 19 meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

Director's Announcements

Annual Report

- Next meeting Amy Carlini will attend to discuss the annual report, with a focus on narrative storytelling around family resilience.

Budget Passed by General Assembly

- The Legislative period has opened.
- Concerning issue in Governor's budget – The state is over expended on TANF funds for families by \$56 M. Several Fairfax community-based organizations and DFS may lose funding for some programs as a result. Director Becketts discussed with VDSS CFO, the \$7.4 M at a minimum that could be impacted. We will not know the full impact until the budget process in December. Advocacy has been identified as the primary route to address this.
- Chair Martinez notes this as an area of future discussions

Public Defender Reimbursement/Child Custody Cases

Debra Laird, Senior Assistant County Attorney

- Introduced Walter Herbert, court appointed attorney in Fairfax.
- Mr. Herbert has been a family law attorney since 1987. He explained that he can afford the low rates because he has an established practice. Walter shared an anecdote of Judge Jane Elridge where he was asked to serve as court appointed. Only eleven attorneys available to now take cases. The Chief Judge of Juvenile Domestic Relations court is asking lawyers on the spot while sitting in hallways to take cases. Most of the cases are emergencies. Younger, less established lawyers are unable to take cases at the current rates. The existing model may not be sustainable for the next generation of lawyers. There is not a plan to address this shortage and the impact to the child welfare system. State level legislation would be required to address this and the budget was cited as a recent failure of legislation in this area.
- The Children's court committee meeting may be the correct forum for discussion of this as a system of care issue.
- Director Becketts will discuss the issue with his peers in Virginia League of Social Service Executives (VLSSE) and will take the lead on writing a position letter from the VLSSE. should poll counties on the impact of this compensation on staffing court appointees and therefore moving the child protective services system.

Neighborhood and Community Services Promoting Child & Youth Wellbeing

Pallas Washington, Deputy Director, Neighborhood and Community Services

- Started her career in Child Protection Services (was with DFS for 11 years) and recalls experiences that reflect the issues discussed by Ms. Laird and Mr. Herbert.
- Discussed how Neighborhood and Community Services works with youth, families, caretakers in their communities. Based on the understanding that people live in

systems, the organization has changed significantly to support families intentionally through a lifespan continuum.

- Deputy Director Washington continued to describe the organization and programs of NCS, as well as major initiatives.

Chair's Announcements

One Fairfax Focus Group

- Chair Martinez and Julian De Phillips represented ASSB at the One Fairfax focus group, which discussed representation and equity across Boards, Authorities, and Commissions (BACs).
- Members of ASSB should look for opportunities to participate in processes like this in the future.

District Items

- Noah Abraham has reached out to the Chairman's office to solicit questions for ASSB and DFS. This will be a future topic.
- Noah Abraham has received a letter from the Supervisor's board confirming his appointment to the CoC Board.
- Vice Chair McGrath has been contacted by the Affordable Housing Advisory Council (AHAC). He should be named as the ASSB representative at the next Supervisor's meeting. He will join the quarterly meeting of AHAC at the Government Center on Friday.

Adjourned:

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm

Next ASSB Meeting:

Wednesday, October 18, 2023, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm