

**Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)**  
Wednesday, January 17, 2024, 7:00pm-8:30pm  
Government Center

**MEETING NOTES**

**Attendees:**

At-Large – Chairman’s Office, Noah Abraham  
Providence District, Laura Martinez, Chair  
Mount Vernon District, Raymond McGrath, Vice Chair  
City of Fairfax, Andre Lee  
Sully District, Jose Garzon  
Mason District, Julian De Phillips, Secretary  
Franconia District, Latriece Prince-Wheeler (Virtual)

**Absent:**

Braddock District, Karen Darley  
Dranesville District, Ben Zuhl  
Hunter Mill District, Joe Koszarek

**Positions Vacant:**

City of Falls Church  
Springfield District

**Staff Present**

Michael Becketts, DFS Director (Virtual)  
Melanie Fenwick, DFS Staff Support  
Amy Carlini, Director, DFS Communications (Virtual)  
Yonas Wondwossen, Director, Childcare Assistance and Referral

**The meeting was held in person.**

**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 Franconia 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**

Minutes from the December 11, 2023, meeting approved with one change. Amy Carlini was not listed as an attendee and was added.

**Director’s Announcements**

Director Becketts continued the discussion about engaging with an outside consultant for strategic planning and how the ASSB might proceed. ASSB could meet initially in Feb to discuss how ASSB can

leverage outside guidance to better inform our advice and structure board activities. Discussion continues with examples of areas where external guidance can help ASSB transition to a more active position of providing guidance from the current posture of primarily consuming information from DFS. Chair Martinez moved to resolve to do this by the next meeting. Approved unanimously.

The 2024 legislation review, and discussion of current bills will be on the February meeting agenda. The Governor is carrying bills for funding in some areas, such as adults and aging, child welfare, and other assistance.

DFS in partnership with Chief Equity Officer, led by Toni Zollicoffer, is putting out a report on the status of women and girls in the county. March 22<sup>nd</sup> there will be an overview of research done by UVA. Shape and Future on aging research is also concluding. DFS will establish a work plan to implement the recommendations in the report in partnership with the commission on aging. This is a public meeting at the Government Center.

In March we will also talk about the budget. The ASSB will receive information about the state of DFS funding at that time.

Reminder of February 7<sup>th</sup> orientation for new members.

### **Election of Chair**

Chair Martinez re-elected unanimously. Next meeting ASSB will elect vice-chair and secretary.

### **Annual Report**

Amy Carlini reminded the board that January is Stalking Awareness Month and Stalking Awareness Day is January 18. The draft text of the annual report has been distributed for review. All proposed edits are due to Melanie Fenwick by January 23.

Raymond McGrath asked about the Letter from the Chair's use of statistics to go along with assertions, such as that more people are living below the poverty level. Director Becketts helps clarify that the statement may need to be revised. Questions on language should be provided to Melanie and staff. Chair Martinez clarifies that the updates to the letter should aim for accuracy and a compelling narrative.

### **Childcare Updates**

Yonas Wondwossen and Flor Philips introduced the Childcare Assistance and Referral program. The program offers a number of resources and is housed within DFS. It served around 5800 children in 2023, in partnership with other organizations. This is largely funded through the Childcare Development Grant but has received increasing amounts through state funding sources due to ARPA. In FY25, ARPA funds are drying up, which could have a significant impact on the programs. While encouraged by the Governor's commitment to maintaining current funding levels for early childhood education, there was no verbiage to address future families coming into the program.

Raymond McGrath asked about the amount of time that the program could be funded without ARPA funding in FY25. Flor Philips stated that the budget, if approved, would fund a set number of children through a Child Target Number. Board of Supervisors does invest in early childhood, there are local sources of funding, but that also has uncertainties in duration.

Chair Martinez asked if this issue of legislative impact is included in the annual report if not already. Melanie Fenwick commented that this is not explicitly stated in the report, in part due to the complexity of funding sources. Flor Philips clarified that the state level funding provided as a passthrough is a positive in this case but noted that some partners may be able to provide language around this.

Jose Garzon asked about specific providers, the nature of these groups that provide childcare and receive payments from DFS. Yonas Wondwossen described center based, in home, nonprofit, and SACC recipients.

Noah Abraham asked about outreach and awareness for Childcare Assistance. Yonas Wondwossen described coordination with schools, back to school nights, childcare associations, providers, and others as avenues for communication and outreach.

Chair Martinez will send a note to Melanie Fenwick and team requesting the appropriate language be recommended for addition to the report. So moved by the Chair and approved unanimously.

### **Chair's Announcements**

Chair Martinez discussed her conflict with the February 21 meeting date and options for changing the date were discussed. Melanie Fenwick will send a questionnaire to the board to determine availability.

Chair Martinez discusses her commitment to the role of Chair and continuing the work through the year. Next meeting, we will be electing Vice Chair and Secretary. Chair Martinez nominates Raymond McGrath for Vice Chair. Julian De Phillips nominates himself to continue as Secretary.

### **District Items**

Noah Abraham discussed the CoC (Continuum of Care) board on behalf of ASSB, asks how ASSB can better support CoC and looks to set up an off-cycle meeting to discuss.

Raymond McGrath mentioned he talked to Supervisor Storck's staff regarding publishing the annual report. From their perspective, the function of DFS pushing electronic versions of reports as links for inclusion in other material is a benefit. This is a follow-up to a previous discussion about whether to print copies of the annual report.

Jose Garzon inquired about the status of the letter to the VLSSE from DFS to provide a letter regarding compensation for court appointed attorneys. Melanie Fenwick will follow up with the Director and update the board at the next meeting.

### **Adjourned:**

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm

### **Next ASSB Meeting:**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm; Government Center Conference Rooms 4/5