

The Accomack County Board of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, November 19, 2019, at 9:30 A.M. Present were Ms. Reneta Major, Chairman; Mrs. Elsie Mackie, Vice-Chairman; Mr. Robert Crockett; Mr. John Sparkman; Ms. Laura B. Gordy and Mrs. Vicki J. Weakley, Secretary. Mr. Robert Martin was unable to attend.

Ms. Major called the meeting to order. Ms. Gordy gave the Invocation.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of October 15, 2019.** On motion by Mr. Sparkman, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the Minutes were approved as written. Ms. Gordy abstained as she was not present at the November 19, 2019 meeting. The motion carried.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 4 – Introduction of New Employee – Tyquanda Mabry.** Mrs. Weakley introduced Ms. Mabry to the Board. Ms. Mabry stated everyone called her “Tia”. Ms. Weakley stated Ms. Mabry would be in the Families and Children Unit. Mrs. Weakley further stated we are now full-staffed and we are excited to be in that position. Ms. Major stated she hoped Ms. Mabry would get acclimated to SNAP, TANF, MEDICAID and VaCMS. She further stated on behalf of the Board she was welcoming Ms. Mabry to the agency.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 5 – Fraud Report.** Board Members stated it was another good report. Mr. Sparkman stated he had seen where someone had been prosecuted for fraud. Mrs. Mackie stated she had read it in the newspaper. At that time Mr. Crockett stated he had one question. At the bottom of the last paragraph of the report client was sentenced to 36 years and all was suspended except 45 days. He asked the background of that case for such a huge suspension. Mrs. Weakley stated she did not know but she would inquire about it. Mrs. Weakley further stated a fraud cases went to the Virginia Supreme Court on appeal and the issue was whether or not it should have been a felony. The Supreme Court upheld it and stated even though the specific language doesn’t reference it as a felony the same monetary limits apply. This was a positive decision.

Mr. Sparkman then inquired about the monetary limits for a felony. Mr. Crockett stated it was \$1,000 if dealing with fraud and embezzlement. However, grand larceny is \$300. Mr. Crockett then inquired whether they would treat a fraud case like an embezzlement case – how would they handle that because it is different as far as a felony level? Mrs. Weakley stated she had never heard anyone make reference to it but the amount they used in the Supreme Court hearing was \$200. Mr. Crockett stated that was a felony and they treated it like a theft instead of embezzlement.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 6 – Director’s Report.** Mrs. Weakley stated she attended a webinar on the new Google docs.

She further stated she attended a Community Policy Management Team (CPMT) meeting and FYI for the Board Members the meetings are running so much smoother now that CSA Coordinator Rudy Zavala is on board. She also attended a Truancy meeting.

Mrs. Weakley attended a Virginia League of Social Services Executives (VLSSE) Conference in Newport News. Discussion was held about changes since the Democrats are in control. There is some suspicion that the work requirement for Medicaid they had been talking about for years will probably never happen as the Democrats were never in favor of that. The thing about the work requirement for Medicaid was a misunderstanding, as most of the people who

applied for Medicaid Expansion were already working and just under-employed or their employers offered insurance so expensive they could not afford it.

Mrs. Weakley there was lots of discussion on homelessness. Elderly population being homeless has risen by 40% across the State. There is no solution at this time, but a major concern is that there have been a lot more evictions – not just for the elderly, across the State. There are a number of pilot programs across the State; however, not on the Shore. An Eviction Hotline program was started to try and help work with landlords before someone is put out on the street. The pilot programs are trying to negotiate between landlords and tenants. The programs will pay a certain amount to get the client back up to where he/she should be, and the tenant pays a portion and is required to attend a budgeting seminar before accessing funds. The State is trying to do this to avoid evictions and the resulting homelessness.

Ms. Major inquired about what volume of homelessness Accomack County gets. Mrs. Weakley stated it depends. There are periods when we see a lot of clients, related to evictions. Accomack County DSS and Northampton County DSS combined with other stake holders, participate in the Rapid Rehousing program; however, there isn't really "rapid". It is a multi-disciplinary team with people representing both Counties. With the individual's permission they will bring that individual's situation to the group and try to assist that person with finding housing and/or other resources to help them be more stable and self-sufficient. We often put them up in a hotel for a few days until we can find something else. The Domestic Violence shelter has a grant which allows them to take a certain number of people who do not fall under domestic violence policies, but need a place to shelter. Mr. Crockett stated he volunteers at Lighthouse Ministries and the most common issue with homelessness is they have no structure. He further stated Lighthouse is not a twenty-four hour shelter, it's a transitional shelter. The average stay is three months. There are times when people are turned away because they will not agree to the structure at Lighthouse and do not want to go through the interview process. Their rules consist of not being able to stay unless they allow staff to help them find a job, help them structure their finances, etc.; however, there are some people who would say I don't want any part of that. There is no way you can help people like that.

Mrs. Weakley stated in January they will be doing a new homeless count, but it is difficult to get accurate numbers.

Ms. Major stated she would now be indirectly involved in the above committee. The lady in charge of it this year is new to the position. In days of old, places like McDonald's and big corporations would partner with us and on the day of the homeless count, they would offer a sandwich and coffee to the homeless, so we could get a more accurate count of our homeless numbers. In Accomack County they are saying the Elks will assist us, this year. Mrs. Weakley inquired whether McDonald's would be assisting this year. Ms. Major stated they were not doing it this year. Ms. Major stated it would be so nice if there was a place for the homeless to go and get a sandwich and coffee on that day. Mrs. Mackie inquired whether they had possibly thought about a church maybe serving soup or something. Ms. Major stated that is the key – go to faith based. A lot of churches on the Shore have soup kitchens. We could have it at Northampton County DSS, but people are private and don't want anyone to know their business. Mrs. Mackie stated some people do not want to admit they are homeless and some don't think they are homeless, because they are living with a family member.

Mr. Crockett stated he wanted to clarify a previous statement he made. He had said Lighthouse Ministries is not a twenty-four hour service. However, they are there twenty-four hours, but people cannot just knock on the door at any

time. They have five kids there at the present time and they cannot take someone off the street without knowing them and put them at Lighthouse next to these children. Mrs. Mackie stated in the future the Shore is going to need a mission style facility for these people. Ms. Major stated we need some type of awareness to let people know we do have homeless people on the Shore.

Mrs. Weakley stated Bridges Out of Poverty has had four work group meetings. They have two upcoming training sessions – one in March and one at the end of April. After that they will try to do a strategic plan, for the Shore.

For those who do not remember, Bridges Out of Poverty is a set of constricts to help people understand why people live in poverty. It is not because they are lazy, but more likely because it is all they have ever known. That population has strong ties and strong relationships and often if they try to get out, their neighbors, family, co-workers and churches will try to pull them back. If we are going to touch the 20% of our population that lives in poverty, we have to understand it, approach it in a way for people to see how they can get out of poverty, and try to determine how we can do that on the Shore with our unique qualities. The training will be two one day sessions and we will invite as many people as we can. Hopefully, we can develop a good strategy to help us and enable both Counties to move forward. Mrs. Weakley stated the Board Members were welcome to go to either of the two one day sessions. She also mentioned it would be nice for the Accomack County Board of Supervisors to attend as well. She will inform the Board when the time approaches for the training.

Mrs. Weakley further stated she attended the ACDSS Supervisors' meeting which we are trying to have on a monthly basis.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 7 – FPM Award Letter**. Mrs. Weakley stated we have received another award letter. They are continuing to give us money to hold more FPM trainings. Mrs. Weakley stated she wished they would open it up and allow us use the funds for other things. Ms. Major stated this will be used for more Family Partnership meetings. Mrs. Weakley stated before we bring a child into custody, we try to get everyone in the family together for a meeting and discuss what is going to be the best solution for the child. Hopefully, the child will not be placed in foster care; however, if the child is, we will discuss how the family can come together to reduce the amount of time the child stays in foster care.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 8 – Child Welfare Case Review**. Mrs. Weakley stated we had our regular Child Welfare case review. The reviewer was very pleased, but as Mr. Crockett always points out, they have to find something that needs to be corrected. Mrs. Weakley stated documentation continues to be a struggle with all the required details and put in the proper place in the computer program. We are constantly trying to correct that and make sure everyone is appropriately trained to get appropriate details in the case. The reviewer wrote us a commendation letter afterwards commending us on how well our IV-E cases were organized and documented. IVE is the Federal funding which is used for some of the foster children who fall under the old ADC deprivation guidelines; i.e., removed from a single parent, etc. The State of Virginia for the first time passed their IV-E review and the reviewer said most states did not pass. She further stated this was the best IV-E review they have seen. We have one Benefit Program Specialist and two foster care Family Service Specialists who do IV-E. Again, the reviewer was very impressed with our system and how well we were keeping everything, with zero errors for IV-E cases, during this review.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 9 – Financial Statement – Administrative Office Manager Shirley Harmon**. Mrs. Harmon stated for the month of October our

Total Expenditures were #319,563.06. Our Year-To-Date Total Local Adjustment was \$206,005.28 and our Total Local Balance to Date is \$610,293.72. Mr. Crockett stated we are 5% below budget. Mrs. Harmon stated she has a couple of budget lines she is watching. She has made a request to the State for more money for those budget lines.

On motion by Ms. Gordy, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the Board went into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing Evaluations (Hart) and Director's Consult, as permitted by the Code of Virginia Section 2.2.3712.

A motion was made by Mr. Crockett to return to Open Session and that the only things discussed in Closed Session were the items listed to go into Closed Session. Mrs. Mackie seconded the motion. Ms. Major called a vote (Mrs. Mackie – yes; Ms. Gordy – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; Mr. Sparkman – yes; and Ms. Major – yes).

Ms. Major stated there was only one action item and that was the foster care/non-custodial case. On motion by Ms. Gordy, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the foster care/non-custodial case was approved for the child to be in custody. The motion carried.

Ms. Major stated the next regular meeting will be held Tuesday, December 17, 2019, at 9:30 A.M.

On motion by Mr. Sparkman, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the meeting adjourned at 10:31 A.M.

APPROVED: **C. Reneta Major**_____

ATTEST: **Vicki J. Weakley**_____