

The Accomack County Board of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, May 19, 2020, at 9:30 A.M. The meeting was held by teleconference due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Present were Ms. Reneta Major, Chairman; Mr. Robert Crockett; Mr. John Sparkman; Mr. Donald L. Hart, Jr.; and Mr. Robert Martin. Mrs. Elsie Mackie was unable to participate due to a prior commitment.

Ms. Major called the meeting to order. Mr. Hart gave the Invocation. Ms. Major then did a roll call of those in attendance by teleconference. (Mr. Crockett – here; Mr. Sparkman – here; Mr. Hart – here; Mr. Martin – here; and Ms. Major – here).

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 3 – Minutes of March 17, 2020**. On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Hart, the Minutes of March 17, 2020 were approved as written. Ms. Major stated due to the fact this was by teleconference she was calling a vote (Mr. Sparkman – yes; Mr. Martin – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; Mr. Hart – yes; and Ms. Major – yes).

Ms. Major continued to **Item 4 – Fraud Report**. Mrs. Weakley stated this was the report submitted by Frances Bailey, Fraud Investigator. Ms. Major stated Mrs. Bailey continues to do a good job.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 5 – Director’s Report**. Mrs. Weakley stated ACDSS had closed its doors to the public on March 20, 2020. The Agency has been continuing to operate under normal business hours; however, we have been working more hours than usual.

Mrs. Weakley stated she had numerous meetings to report as the Board was unable to have a Board meeting during the month of April, as follows: Conference call: Members Helping Members; virtual meetings with DSS Commissioner - held weekly on Thursdays through April and beginning of May – and now every other week; ACDSS Supervisors’ meetings were daily in April and then Monday, Wednesday and Friday – currently once a week, on Thursdays as that is the same date of the DSS Commissioner’s meeting; virtual VLSSE (Virginia League of Social Services Executives) meeting to elect officers, two virtual CPMT (Community Policy and Management Team) meetings; a virtual Bridges meeting, VLSSE Professional Development Committee; and virtual interviews for Human Services Assistant in Adult Services unit. Ms. Major stated our Director had been busy as usual even under these times.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 6 – Continuity of Operations Plan**. Mrs. Weakley stated everyone had a copy of the Operations Plan. She further stated the one we had on file was a significantly old one. Ms. Weakley stated the plan had been rewritten to include a more detailed pandemic response, for the present and for the future. On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Martin, the Continuity of Operations Plan was approved. Ms. Major called for a vote (Mr. Sparkman – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; Mr. Martin – yes; Mr. Hart – yes; and Ms. Major – yes).

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 7 – COMP Plan**. Mrs. Weakley stated for the Members who had been on the board this was a plan we do every year and it was due at the end of April when we cancelled the Board meeting she got permission to file it the end of this month. Starting with **Page 2 – Section IV – State and Local Increases**. Initially we had the proposed percentage of increase for raises and bonus amount and when that was supposed to happen. As far as we know at this point those monies have been un-allotted. However, after Governor Northam reviews all of the budget issues he might determine there is a possibility it could go through so Mrs. Weakley included it in the Comp Plan.

Mrs. Weakley stated we did not anticipate any salary increases at this time. **Section V – Pay Practices – A – Merit Increases.** Mrs. Weakley stated we do not provide merit increases. We never have done that so we did not change anything.

B – Starting Pay. Mrs. Weakley stated we use the State’s compensation decision worksheet. We did not make any change.

Page e 3- Section V – C – Promotional Salary Increase. Mrs. Weakley stated we did not make any change.

Page 3 – Section V – D – F and Page 4 Items G – M. Mrs. Weakley stated all of these are new items added to the Comp Plan by the State to make DSS more appealing to possible new workers. We looked at what made the most sense for our agency. For instance, **D. Voluntary (Lateral) Transfer – Competitive.** If the worker participated in the normal interview process, we would consider giving him/her a raise using the compensation worksheet the State provided.

Section V – E – If a worker volunteered to move to another position without the interview process, we would consider that a lateral move without any increase in salary.

Section V – F – Redefinitions. This would be a situation where a worker would assume new duties that would involve a significant amount of new duties or would be a raise in level of responsibility. At that time we would look at giving him/her between a 5%-10% raise for the additional duties.

Section V – G – Voluntary Demotions. We indicated we would evaluate pay in response to this. This is not a very common situation and we would evaluate pay, whether it was a demotion for someone who applied for a lower position or a benefit for the agency to do that.

Section 5 – H – Demotion Due to Layoff/Reduction in Force. Those are established by the State – we have no input – we just follow their rules.

Mrs. Weakley stated we would move along to **Section V – L – Internal Alignment.** Mrs. Weakley stated she could not recall whether any Board Member was on the ACDSS Board during the last time this was done. It was during Mary Parker’s tenure as Director. Since the raises seem to be off the table and the salary ranges the State had negotiated are also off the table, we would like to do this. In the event they remain unallotted we would like the Board’s consideration to do an internal alignment.

In an internal alignment, State staff would evaluate the experience of each worker and make a recommendation as to what their salary should be. We could chose to go their recommendation or not; i.e., if anyone is 20% or below what their salary should be, we could accept or refuse that and then just raise the salary 5%-10%. This is a State established routine and policies that State policies cover how this would happen. Of course, it will have to be with ACDSS Board’s approval.

At that time Mr. Crockett stated he had two questions. Mr. Crockett wanted clarification if the internal alignment was being approved, or if it would need further approval from the Board. It was agreed the matter would be brought before the ACDSS Board after final decisions are made on the budget. Mr. Crockett then asked a question about **Paragraph G on Page 4 – Voluntary Demotions.** He asked **“Why would it not be automatic for a lower salary?”** After considerable discussion, it was determined, if there were ever a situation

regarding a voluntary demotion and Mrs. Weakley was considering not lowering the salary as a result, this matter would be brought before the Board for discussion.

Mrs. Weakley proceeded to **Section V – M – Change of Duties**. This has not been in the COMP Plan before. She indicated we could consider providing a pay change if we were asking someone to change their duties. It would depend on whether their duties required more responsibilities or not. This gives us the right to consider if we ask someone to take on a significant number of additional duties.

Mrs. Weakley continued to **Section V – N – R**. There is no change on any of those. We do not provide increases for any of those situations and we have not except for **Section V – Q – Retention**. This is a new item and it gives us the opportunity to offer someone no more than a 5% raise if we are concerned about losing them and their skillset.

Mrs. Weakley proceeded to **Section V – R – Adjustment for Attainment or Use of Critical Skill**. This is the same as prior years. We give a 5% increase when they start if they are bi-lingual in Spanish or Creole.

Mrs. Weakley continued to **Section V – S – Competitive Salary Offer**. There is no change from previous years. We can offer to meet a salary if a valuable employee is thinking about accepting a position elsewhere and she could verify their salary offer.

Mrs. Weakley moved to **Section VI – Supplemental Pay – A – On-Call Compensation**. This is the amount of money workers who are on-call for child and adult protective services complaints receive for an 8 hour shift. It has been \$16 for an 8 hour shift. We are proposing it be changed to \$20.

Mrs. Weakley continued to **Section VI – B – Pay or Leave for Social Work Performed While On-Call Duty**. There is no change in this.

Mrs. Weakley moved to **Section VI – C – Temporary/Acting Pay**. We did not change if someone takes on supervisor or non-supervisor responsibilities. We did change if someone were to fill in for the director to 35%. The State allows this if someone has to take over the duties and responsibilities on top of what his/her regular duties are.

Mrs. Weakley continued to **Section VII – Evaluation Date**. This did not change as employees are evaluated annually on their anniversary date.

Mrs. Weakley moved to **Section VIII – Sick Leave Accumulation Payment**. No change in the dollar amount paid workers for sick leave when they leave the agency.

Mrs. Weakley moved to **Section IX – Disability Leave Program**. No change with disability and leave plans. The ACDSS Board previously approved this.

Mrs. Weakley continued to **Section X – Range Revision**. No on this as it creates compression.

Mrs. Weakley moved to **Section XI – Classification & Compensation Report**. This is reviewed monthly and the State requires it is don on a monthly basis.

Ms. Major called for a motion on the Compensation Plan for 2020-2021. On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Hart, the Compensation Plan was approved. Ms. Major called for a virtual vote (Mr. Sparkman – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; Mr. Martin – yes; Mr. Hart – yes; and Ms. Major – yes).

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 8 on the Agenda - Response to COVID-19 Pandemic**. Mrs. Weakley stated she wanted the Board to know what we are doing, how we are doing it and what changes have been made. Most staff are teleworking – particularly all of the benefit staff. The State Human Resources wants us to consider continuing to offer teleworking even after we come out of the pandemic, to make working for DSS more appealing. Service staff are currently in the office one day per week. There are times they have to come in the office to access files which are too cumbersome to take home, or sign out a car. Supervisors are currently in the office two days per week. Some support staff is in more than that, as their work is more difficult to do off site, but they are about the only ones. We purchased pre-paid phones for workers so they would not have to use their personal phones to contact clients. Their office phone is connected to the pre-paid phones. We had to purchase hot spots for about 12 employees who did not have internet access from home. The State still has not gotten us computer access for three people, so they have not been able to access systems from home. We are working around that. Hopefully, we will not have to work around this much longer. This is not a unique issue for Accomack. It is a State wide issue.

We have a notice on the County website, have WESR running an ad and we sent a letter to the Community Partners, to let everyone know about our change in customer services. A copy was included in the Board packet showing how clients can contact us about their benefits or make CPS or APS complaints if they need to do so. We have boxes with applications for AICC (Accomack Interfaith Crisis Council) and Members Helping Members. We place the boxes outside the front door and if anyone is interested, they pick it up, complete it and place it in our blue drop box out front. If they call we will also mail applications to clients.

TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) cases which is the monetary payment which goes to parents with children at home who have little or no income. These cases the State has automatically renewed. They have asked us not to close any Medicaid cases unless the client has requested same, death, or the client has permanently left the State.

The State has pushed the renewals for Medicaid forward for six months and they will do that indefinitely until we return to normal. SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) previously known as Food Stamps those folks have received three additional supplements – one in March, April and May. This will bring everyone up to maximum amount allowed. Either this week or next week a P-EBT card which is somewhere between \$358 and \$375 that will supplement everyone who had children getting free lunches in schools, is to be sent out. Due to the poverty level in Accomack County every child will get the P-EBT card. If families are already on SNAP, the amounts will be added to their current benefits.

VIEW (Virginia Initiative for Education and Work) is basically closed, temporarily. All sanctions for people not complying were automatically lifted. The version of that program for SNAP recipients (SNAP E&T) has been placed on hold. Our apps have significantly increased. At the time we started this the Board was given an Application Tracking Sheet. When we started on April 6th we had 65 applications; the week of April 13th we received 71 more, the following week 48 more and the following weeks 47, 37 and 41. It spiked at the beginning and dropped back some, but we have continued to receive a steady stream of applications. We have been given permission to not interview people if information is in the application. There are still a number of phone calls to clarify information.

Families First, the new program for preventive services in Child Welfare has also been placed on hold and money for this program has been unallotted, at this time.

Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services have had an initial drop in calls, because children aren't in school and families are not visiting their elderly relatives. When restrictions are lifted and families start visiting their elderly family members and children go back to school, we anticipate an increase in referrals.

The State and Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services, which oversees the Adult Protective Services policies, have temporarily relaxed face-to-face restrictions because of the pandemic. The State has identified a program called doxey.me for child welfare workers to use for "face-to-face" visits. However, clients do not like it and have not been willing to use it. They want face time on phones and the State will not allow that because it is not secure.

Mrs. Weakley stated she had included two articles in the Board packets about Child Welfare workers. There has been a move and paperwork is on Governor Northam's desk to acknowledge APS and CPS workers as first responders. They have been acknowledged as first responders by the Federal Government; however, the State has not yet made that call.

With personal protective equipment we have had issues. We normally have some on hand for workers to go into homes. However, we did not have enough to cover workers at the beginning of the pandemic. C. Ray Pruitt of Emergency Operations assisted Mrs. Weakley in obtaining five N-95 masks. The family members of two employees made cloth masks for staff in our building. We also purchased masks from the Virginia Department of Corrections.

We had hand sanitizer donated by Exalted Coding System in Fort Royale and we had folks from Norfolk pick it up for us, and we went to Norfolk to pick it up. We also purchased sanitizer from the Cape Charles Brewery so we are covered at the moment.

We had two staff meetings before we closed to the public and staff started teleworking. The director met with Supervisors daily at the beginning of the pandemic and now we meet on Thursdays after the DSS Commissioner's conference. In turn, the director relays information to all Supervisors who contact their workers virtually and bring them up to date, on changes.

We put "treats" on everyone's desk and we bought lunch for everyone before we sent everyone to work from home. We have done special things like wearing hats one week, crazy socks another week and blue (CPS) and purple (APS) because May is foster care and also the month for Adult Protective Services.

We have supervisors calling workers at home to see how they are doing and whether they are running into any issues. Mrs. Weakley stated she does a motivational email every week to try and keep everyone encouraged and up to date.

Mrs. Weakley stated Board Member Elsie Mackie, who was absent due to her prior commitment to working the voting polls, picked a day to bring everyone snacks. Everyone was appreciative of her doing that for staff. She wanted to thank her personally; however, Mrs. Mackie would read it in the Minutes.

Mrs. Weakley stated she wanted the Board to know how proud she is of everyone on our staff. They have done an amazing job. Mrs. Weakley stated she had heard complaints from other parts of the State where service workers were complaining

about going out in the field; however, she wanted the Board to know staff had not complained at all. The only thing mentioned when we were beginning with the pandemic and closed to the public was "can we wear jeans."

We had one worker who had lost four family members and the Supervisor stepped in and assisted covering the work, so the worker could take time off.

At that time Mr. Crockett and Ms. Major both said well done. Ms. Major stated on behalf of the Board to say kudos to staff and that the Board is proud of them. We cannot thank them enough. Even though Virginia is currently not recognizing CPS and APS workers as front line responders, they are still leaving their homes and are at risk – especially in Accomack County. This has affected everyone in some way. Thanks again to ACDSS staff and let them know a job well done and we are proud of them.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 9 – Financial Statement – Administrative Office Manager Shirley Harmon**. Ms. Harmon stated we did not have a meeting in April. For the month of March our Expenditures were \$335,365.56 and for the month of April our Expenditures were \$351,496.59. Our Year-To-Date Total Local Adjustment was \$504,097.68 and our Total Balance to Date is \$312,201.32. We are currently in the last month of our State budget and we have one more month in the County budget which is at the end of June.

Mr. Crockett stated a great job. This is the last month of our Fiscal Year. We are at 80% in expenditures and on budget we are at 91.6%. Mr. Crockett then asked Ms. Harmon and Mrs. Weakley whether they anticipated any adjustments or reductions in State funds that would affect our current budget. Mrs. Weakley stated he did but they are closed mouth about specifics. We are planning on that happening. Mr. Crockett then inquired whether they had any idea about amount of the reduction. We have asked a couple of times and they say wait and see. Mr. Crockett then stated we have a good buffer with 80% expenditures and on budget at 91% - we have a buffer to absorb a reduction.

On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Hart, the Board went into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing Resignation – Verenice Pantaleon – Office Associate II; Retirement – Whitesy Banks – Family Service Specialist III; EPPE – Gary Kellam – Benefit Program Supervisor; April Graham – Benefit Program Supervisor; and Nadine Greenley – Family Service Supervisor – APS; and Director's Consult – Director EPPE, as permitted by the Code of Virginia Section 2.2.3712.

On motion by Mr. Martin, seconded by Mr. Crockett, the Board returned from Closed Session and confirmed the only items discussed were the ones listed on the Board Members Agenda. Ms. Major called a vote (Mr. Sparkman – yes; Mr. Crockett – yes; Mr. Martin – yes; Mr. Hart – yes; Ms. Major – yes).

Mrs. Weakley stated she wanted to let Board Members know David Parker, husband of our previous Director Mary E. Parker, had passed away. She knew several of the Board Members had worked with her prior to her retiring. Ms. Major stated she had initially thought to mention this at the beginning of the meeting.

Ms. Major stated the next Board meeting would be held on June 16, 2020, at 9:30 A.M.

On motion by Mr. Crockett, seconded by Mr. Hart, the meeting adjourned at 10:35 A.M.

APPROVED: C. Reneta Major

ATTEST: Vicki J. Weakley