

Town of Greenwich
Board of Social Services Regular Meeting
April 28, 2009- Hayton Room - Town Hall - 6:45pm

MINUTES

Present: Kimberly Terrenoire, *Chair*; Steve Francis, *Vice-Chair*; Victoria deBary, *Secretary*; Maryann Ramos, Rebecca Wayland *Excused:* Liz Menten, Steve Francis; *Also Present:* Victoria Anyikwa, Commissioner; Adina Goldstein, Deputy Commissioner; Carol Cherry Bob LaMarche, Nestor Nana, DSS; Gerry Isaacson, RTM Health and Human Services Committee; Kristen Greene, Commission on Aging; Chris van Keyserling, RTM; Walter Lippman, Peter Tesei, First Selectman

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:45 pm.

The Minutes of the March 24, 2009 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

Board Business: The Chair welcomed Maryann Ramos and Rebecca Wayland to the Board. **Review of Board Officer Nominating Procedure:** The timing of Board elections was discussed. The draft of the proposed Bylaws will be distributed electronically to the Board so that members may make comments on election procedures. **Program Policy Review Update:** deBary, Menten and Maxwell are continuing to review current BSS policies.

DSS After Hours Emergency Procedure: The Commissioner explained after- hours procedure. The DSS operates from 9am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Residents calling the department after hours are directed to Infoline at 211, a not for profit resource set up to handle emergencies 24/7. Infoline then calls DSS staff, who get in touch with the caller. This past weekend, a water main break made it necessary for a landlord to find housing for tenants. He called 211 and did not hear back from anyone from the DSS. The Commissioner discovered that the Infoline worker had taken down an incorrect name and phone number so that when a case worker returned the call it was not to the landlord seeking assistance. The Commissioner spoke with the Infoline worker who explained that the landlord was so irate and excited that she had been unable to hear him accurately so errors were made in the spelling of the caller's name and in the phone number. The Commissioner suggested to the Infoline staff that perhaps more training is needed in dealing with agitated and excited callers so that accuracy is certain. The Commissioner explained that the Department does not have a credit card and cannot make emergency hotel reservations over the weekend. The procedure is for the landlord to pay for the hotel and obtain reimbursement from the appropriate town department. There was discussion about assigning a designated on-call caseworker for after-hours emergencies. Union requirements and budget constraints make this unfeasible at the present time. The Commissioner will contact the Red Cross to explore better coordination of after-hours emergency procedure.

Quarterly Matrix: Caseload numbers continue to increase this quarter. The department is seeing more clients and many clients with more intractable issues. The large increase in new cases this month were largely due to seasonal programs, e.g. energy assistance and camperships. Clients per FTE has increased in the first Quarter of this year to 88, compared to 72 during the first Quarter of last year. The Commissioner reported that this increase has raised caseworker stress levels. Wayland suggested that keeping track of the number of direct service hours as a percentage of total hours would be good way of monitoring staff workload. Ramos asked the Commissioner if more staff people were contacting employee assistance programs. The Commissioner explained that this is confidential information that is not shared with her.

Homemaker Update: The Commissioner reported that she has not heard from GADC further on their proposal to develop a homemaker program. The Family and Children's Agency has told her that they cannot handle 127 clients. Peter Tesei commented that it was a good thing to investigate options in program services but that he was totally supportive of the current DSS Homemaker program and that there were no plans on his part to further curtail the program. He stated that the relationships between the

homemakers and the clients were a crucial component of the program that could not be duplicated with outsourcing. He reminded the Board and staff that Ron Lalli and John Crary work for the First Selectman and that they had no direction from him to continue to pressure the Department to downsize the program. He stated that the town has other things to focus on.

Evolv Update: Nana has the requested data on wait time for client service but has not had the time to have the Commissioner review them. Goldstein assured the Board that procedures were in place in Evolv that allow her to carefully monitor the assignment of cases and send alerts to Team Leaders if she sees the need. Goldstein reported that the staff is coping with the increases in need for service and new clients are being seen in a timely manner.

Business Office: LaMarche has data on total program costs which had been requested by the RTM Health and Human Services Committee. He will email this document to the Board.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 8:20pm.

Action Item 1: deBary will send the draft Bylaws to the Board for comments

Action Item 2: Anyikwa will contact the Greenwich Police Department Safety Officer personally to reschedule his visit to the Department.

Action Item 3: Anyikwa will meet with the Greenwich chapter of the Red Cross to discuss coordination of after-hours emergency procedures.

Action Item 4: Anyikwa will collaborate with R. Lalli to rework the potential Homemaker Services savings based on the recent headcount reductions.

May 19 Agenda Items:

BSS Policy Reviews

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria deBary