

Town of Greenwich
Board of Social Services Regular Meeting
May 19, 2009- Hayton Room - Town Hall - 6:45pm

MINUTES

Present: Kimberly Terrenoire, *Chair*; Steve Francis, *Vice-Chair*; Victoria deBary, *Secretary*; Liz Menten, Steve Maxwell, Maryann Ramos, Rebecca Wayland; *Also Present:* Victoria Anyikwa, Commissioner; Adina Goldstein, Deputy Commissioner; Carol Cherry, Rick Weiner, Bob LaMarche, Nestor Nana, DSS; Gerry Isaacson, Bill Bambrick, RTM Health and Human Services Committee; Lori Jackson, Commission on Aging; Chris van Keyserling, RTM

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

The Minutes of the April 28, 2009 meeting were approved by unanimous vote with the following corrections: following *Present:* delete, Steve Francis, *Vice Chair*.

Board Business: DSS Program Policy Review Status: Menten reported that she had written drafts of policy statements for Escorted Transportation, Town Financial Assistance and After Hours Emergencies. She will develop a spreadsheet to show eligibility requirements for various levels of service from the DSS. Homemaker Service Policy Statement is being worked on by deBary. The current DSS policy statements and the revisions have been mailed or emailed to all Board members. Some Board members stated that they did not have these documents. Menten will resend. The Commissioner reported that most services provided by the DSS are dependent on financial and other eligibility requirements but that the Department was also a resource for all residents who have a question or social service need. These residents would be referred to appropriate private sources for the help needed. BSS Bylaw Revision: The May 18 draft of the Bylaws with a revised statement of procedures for nomination and election of Board officers was approved with changes by unanimous vote. Citizen Complaint Follow-Up: The Chair, several BSS members, Chris von Keyserling and Peter Tesei met with the complainant to discuss after hours emergency procedures. The Commissioner has followed up with Infoline (211) about staff retraining and has requested a Town credit card for use when emergency housing is needed for town residents. The Commissioner has met with the Greenwich Red Cross to review coordination of emergency procedures. The Red Cross will be sending her a Memorandum of Agreement stating what they can do in an emergency and how best to coordinate services.

Department Reports: The Budget Update: Anyikwa reported that the FY09-10 Budget was passed by the RTM at the May 11 meeting. She reported that District 6 leader, Coline Jenkins, made a statement at the RTM meeting that District 6 had continuing concerns about the DSS Budget. The Board was reminded that Ms Jenkins had received a detailed and timely response to all questions submitted by District 6. The Commissioner has received no further questions or comments from Ms Jenkins or other District 6 members. The Evolv Report was given by Nana. He is continuing to look at the various points in client service where wait times exist to study how these times can be best observed and monitored. The steep rise in caseload numbers in April was discussed. The Commissioner reported that this was due mostly to the camp program. All campership applications have to be reviewed by a caseworker to assess financial need and suitability. Maxwell asked if there was a number available for the amount of time the caseworkers spend reviewing these applications. deBary questioned whether campers need to be classified as clients. Anyikwa stated that many of the campers are current clients and that if not, a case has to be opened in order for the worker to spend time on the application. Increased new client numbers in April were also due to increased applications for energy assistance. Wayland suggested that the numbers for campers and energy assistance requests could be subtracted from the new client numbers in order to observe more valid trends in new clients. She will work with Nana to get these numbers. LaMarche gave the Business Office Report. Funds to pay for GADC payments to TAG will be removed from the DSS budget shortly. Wayland asked why the Town Financial Assistance budget was under spent for this and the previous month. The

Commissioner reported that Department policy is for a client to develop a plan for dealing with the problem that caused the current emergency need for financial assistance before any money is given out. Many new clients have no way of working out a plan for the future other than to hope to find new employment; one month of assistance will not resolve the problem. Francis suggested that a new area of expertise might be called for to work with these new clients. Commissioner's Report: Following up on Action Item 2 from the April meeting, the Workplace Safety Officer from the Greenwich Police Department visited the Department and made suggestions. Anyikwa has also spoken with Alan Monelli about the buzzers under the desks. Do they work? What happens if they are pressed? The Commissioner reported that the First Selectman is working with Department Heads to increase security throughout Town Hall. Menten suggested that staff might need training on when and how to act if they feel threatened. The Commissioner reported that she is continuing to work with Ron Lalli on Action Item 4 to subtract escorted transportation costs from the Homemaker budget to get a clearer picture of savings resulting from staff cuts. Wayland asked about the recent disturbances and arrests at Wilbur Peck. What can be done for the residents of Town housing to address the causes of this event? The Commissioner stated that she and her staff had been thinking about ways to address this issue and were planning a brain storming session with community partners to discuss how to assist HATG residents in their early 20's. Francis asked the Commissioner about planning for likely increases in client numbers. If the DSS was working full tilt last April what are they doing now to cope with the increase in workload? The Commissioner reported that clients are receiving monthly routine check-ins at six-week intervals. She also said that applications for State assistance could be taken at Stamford. Francis asked her to think about contingency plans for a probable continued increase in client numbers.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 9:00pm.

Action Item 1: Menten to resend policy documents

Action Item 2: Wayland will work with Nana to show new client and caseload data w/o seasonal fluctuations

Action Item 3: Anyikwa will work on contingency plans for a continued increase in caseload.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria deBary

Next meeting: **Tuesday June 16 at 6:45pm** in the Hayton Room