

Social Services Advisory Board members present: Benjamin Berger, Larry Cain, Damita Gilliam Frye. A quorum was not present.

Members Absent: Yajaira Balcarcel, Katherine Hawkins, Brenda McMahon and Cristina Mehrabani

Staff present: Anita Brown, LaTanya Buckhalter, Catrina Ewen and Tanya Robinson.

Others: None

Call to Order: At 6:30 pm, Larry Cain, Advisory Board Chair convened the Social Services Advisory Board informational meeting held on Thursday, January 27, 2022.

Public Present: None

Additions to Agenda: None

Welcome: Welcome to Benjamin Berger and Damita Gilliam Frye. Chair and DSS staff took this time to introduce themselves.

Review of Minutes:

The approval of the September 2021 minutes was deferred to the March meeting due to quorum not being present.

DIRECTOR REPORT:

The Department is experiencing staff shortages. Currently, the Department is down 25% of its workforce including key positions such as the Director and two Managers. In addition to the already short staff has been the spike in COVID cases of which 6 staff were in quarantine for January. Interviews are taking place via ZOOM to fill vacancies for:

- Director position closes on February 4, 2022.
- Benefit Programs Manager –2 vacancies -recent hire, Catrina Ewen
- Benefit Programs Specialist – 3 positions vacant-Interviews set –Feb 1-2
- Human Service Assistant – recent hire- Denise Arce
- Family Service Manager – posting closes Feb 22
- Family Services Specialist I- posting closes Feb 22.
- Utilization Review Analyst –Interviews set Feb 9
- Housing Program Specialist -2 positions, one full-time and one part-time.
- Self-Sufficiency Specialist – new hire scheduled to begin Feb 14.

The FY21 fiscal year report was shared with the board present. (Attachment A) This report is generated by the state each year. It reflects Staff and Operations, Benefit payments to clients, and Client service payments under such programs as Family preservation, Independent living, Virginia Initiative for Education and Work program (VIEW) costs for FY21. Few people know the huge return on investment that a locality has for programs that assist residents. The city contributed \$2 million in FY21 but received over \$71 million back to the economy. This

does not include the \$3 million that local landlords receive from the Housing Choice voucher program in rental assistance.

The FY2023 budget has been completed and submitted to the City Manager. The DSS budget presented to the city was a flat budget with no additional requests being made this year. The Department's current budget is \$7.8 million, with an increase of \$280,000 due to an increase in operating costs.

City Hall renovations – As it has been posted on the City's website, staff located at City hall have temporarily relocated to different sites around the city. This includes staff coming to the Piedmont bldg. where Social Services is located. To enable this move, Social Services which occupied part of the first floor, part of the second floor, and all of the 3rd and 4th floors, consolidated the 3rd and 4th floors staff. Since COVID began, staff have operated under a hybrid work schedule where they telecommute part of their workweek and are in the office the other part. This plan allows for the flexibility of office sharing and still being able to maintain separation. So far the Economic Development, Community Development, City Clerk, Assistant City Clerk, and the Mayor. On February 7th the remaining staff will be moved to their new relocations which include, the City Manager, City Attorney, Executive Assistant, and the Assistant City Manager will be moving over to the Piedmont Bldg.

Benefits:

The retirement of the Benefits Program Manager on November 30, 2021, increased the Benefits Program Manager vacancies to 2. Catrina Ewen has been serving as the Acting Benefit Program Manager and was recently hired to fill one of the vacant Benefit Program Manager positions. During the hiring process, another candidate was selected to fill the other vacancy but then declined the offer. With Catrina's promotion to Benefit Program Manager, her position now becomes vacant.

We have received \$30,000 in SNAP E&T funding.

SNAP E&T is a program similar to VIEW and is available to our clients who receive SNAP. This will expand our workforce/training program and should enable more of our clients to work toward independence. The VIEW worker is currently providing case management to 46 VIEW clients and will begin working with SNAP E&T clients on January 1, 2022. We recently signed an agreement with Skill Source to assist our clients with workforce training to further our program goals. DSS is always looking for more partners to assist individuals in becoming more self-sufficient. At this time, participation is not mandatory but that could change as COVID restrictions are lifted.

By the numbers:

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cases-80

SNAP (Food Assistance) cases –1500

Medicaid cases – 5400

Child Care – cases- 110

At this time the state has extended an "interview waiver" that is due to expire on March 30, 2022. This waiver allows faster processing of new SNAP and renewal applications as well as TANF renewals. The waiver temporarily eliminates the requirement for an interview.

Currently, the agency is averaging 210 new applications each month.

There is a waiver from the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) for Medicaid clients. The waiver was extended due to COVID until April 2022. What this waiver does is it places a pause on renewals and does not allow workers to close cases for any reason other than the client permanently leaving the state, requests the case to be closed, or an increase in coverage.

Currently, only Crisis assistance is available under the Energy assistance program. Crisis assistance will pay for security deposits, repair, or replacement for their heating source. This program closes on March 15, 2022.

Services:

Two foster children were placed in a Kinship placement and thus removing them from foster care. The Kinship program is a program whereby family members of youth who are taken into foster care are contacted for potential placement with them. During the last two weeks, two more children were taken into care.

This year, a Church group generously volunteered to provide holiday gifts for our youth in Foster Care and Independent Living. Independent living consists of Foster children who are over the age of 18 but still under the umbrella of Social Services. These youth sign an agreement in which they are engaged in either a work component or receiving educational training and receive financial assistance to help them become independent.

Each year, the City has a program called the 12 Days of Christmas in which City employees come together to give back to the community in a variety of ways. This year due to COVID restrictions still being in place many opportunities were not an option. Kisha Wilson-Sogunro, Manager for the Parks, Culture & Recreation Department who heads up this outreach each year, contacted DSS, she had received a donation of \$1,000 in gift cards. City of Manassas employees then took the donated gift cards and purchased gifts for the youth in foster care and Independent living.

In addition to these wonderful donations, a City resident donated book bags for children coming into foster care. In the bags were items such as books, blankets, and toiletries.

The CPS team continues to exceed state standards with a rating of 100% compliance.

The Department applied to the state for a Promoting Safe and Stable Family (PSSF) COVID grant that provides \$11,435 in additional funds for client purchases and services or goods. The funding does not require a local match. Normally the traditional PSSF funds require a local match of 11.5%.

As a reminder, anyone interested in becoming a foster parent or who knows of someone who would like to become one is encouraged to contact Kristi Rophael at 703-361-8277. The department is always looking for good foster parents.

Customer Service

Denise Arce has joined the Customer Service Unit. The CS Unit had been down two people and made the coverage difficult as it left on two people to cover providing that no one got sick or was out for any reason. In January, 287 customers came into the office, and 408 client verifications were processed.

CARE Funding:

The Department continues to process applications for COVID assistance under the CARES Act funding. To date, \$247,000 has been expended of the \$400,000 assisting city residents with rent/mortgage, burial, child care, and utility payments.

Children's Services Act (CSA)

Currently, 45 children are being served under CSA:

9 children from the MCPS

23 DSS Children, 13 of which are Foster Children

5 children from the Court Services Unit

8 children from Community Services Board

Housing

The Housing Program in Manassas City is called the Housing Choice Voucher Program and serves clients in both Manassas City and the City of Manassas Park. The Housing Choice Voucher program was formerly known as Section 8 housing. Prince William County operates a different housing program from the City of Manassas. The program is a tenant-based program in which an eligible recipient receives a voucher to go out on the private rental market to find a landlord willing to rent to them under the program. The waitlist is closed and will be for several years. Typically the wait is very long averaging 8 to 10 years. The last time the waitlist was open in 2014 and it will be several years before it will be open again. When applying to be on the waitlist, one may wait for the list to be open and then wait for their name to come up to the top of the list. When their name comes up, it is at that time that eligibility for a voucher is determined. Anyone may apply to a waitlist in any location, in the country. When someone has a voucher they may "port in" which means they can move to any state in the US with their voucher but they must find a landlord willing to accept the voucher. Currently, the program has 301 vouchers and has recently received 10 special homeless vouchers and 1 Independent Living voucher (for foster care youth over 18 in the Independent Living program). Anyone interested in becoming a landlord for the HCV program or just would like more information. The information can be found on the Social Services section of the City's website.

Michele Childs is the Housing Voucher Program Supervisor and has 316 cases that which she has been managing alone since October 2021.

For anyone experiencing homelessness or know someone who is or about to be homeless, they can contact the Prince William County Coordinated entry program. **Coordinated Entry System (CES)** is a process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access. The CES team will quickly identify, assess, refer, and connect households to resources based on their strengths and needs. Through this process, people experiencing homelessness can access the crisis response system, in a streamlined way by contacting one telephone number.

CES number is (703) 792-3366 (TTY: 711).

CES New hours of operation are Monday - Friday 8:30 am-5:30 pm
the line will be closed Weekends and Holidays

The 10 special Homeless vouchers that the City received are designated for those people who come through Prince William County's CES program and want to locate within the City of Manassas. Currently, 6 have been leased, 2 are looking and the final 2 are available.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

The Annual Report will be presented on February 28, 2022, in the City Council Chambers. The time slot has not been set yet but the Council meetings usually begin at 5:30 pm. All Board members are invited to attend if possible.

The department has a couple of volunteer opportunities:

Parent Representative

· The Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT) meets monthly on the third Wednesday at 3:30 pm. Meetings are in person.

Private Provider Representative

· The Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT)

Interested persons must be residents of the city to be considered for the parent representative. The private provider representative can be anyone who provides services like mental health, physical therapy, etc. These two volunteer opportunities are appointed by the City Council and anyone can apply through the Boards, Committees, and Commissions page on the City website.

It was recommended that perhaps a brochure could be developed that could explain what Social Services does and what services are offered through the department.

Ms. Buckhalter will look into the possibility of a hybrid meeting as a way for board members to be able to meet Board members present agreed to look into this possibility. *Note: This meeting is publicly accessible and must adhere to the Code of Virginia 2.2-3707.

Next scheduled in-person meeting March 24, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT With no further business to discuss, meeting adjourned at 7:26 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Brown