

Social Services Advisory Board members present: Larry Cain, Katherine Hawkins, Dheeraj Jagadev and Brenda McMahon. These members constitute a quorum.

Member Absent: Yajaira Balcarcel, Tony McGhee, Cristina Mehrabani

Staff present: Anita Brown LaTanya Buckhalter, Michele Childs, Michele Gehr, Lindsay McCarty, Jessica Moise, Tanya Robinson, Kalisha Spence and Remona Thompson

Call to Order: At 6:34 pm, Larry Cain, chair convened the Social Services Advisory Board regular meeting held via Google meet on Thursday, January 28, 2021.

Public Present: None

Additions to Agenda: None

Welcome: Welcome to Katherine Hawkins.

Review of Minutes:

- The minutes from November 19, 2020 meeting were approved without correction. Motion to approve minutes: 1st – D. Jagadev 2nd – Larry Cain. Motion passed without opposition.

PRESENTERS: Classification and Compensation update - Upon review of job descriptions for staff at the agency, it became quite apparent that they needed updating. The City's policy is to update job descriptions every 3 years. The last time that the DSS position descriptions were updated was 2012 and at that time many were not done well. Since the City's HR department did not have the staff available to conduct the study, DSS took the initiative to compile the data and submit the findings. Included in the report:

- Cost of living in Northern Virginia. The cost of living was found to be approximately 56% higher here than the national average.
- Current City pay grades representing 40+ DSS employees.
- Salary data from 9 surrounding localities. It was found that for most positions, the salary range was not competitive. This alone, makes it difficult to attract new talent and keep good people.
- A recommended new salary range for just DSS positions. This was done due to the fact that positions within DSS require a particular set of job knowledge and skills, not unlike Police and Fire & Rescue staff. DSS staff work directly within state, federal and local policies and guidelines. DSS workers must be knowledgeable about multiple programs. Working in, as many as 18 different programs in order to provide services to City residents.
- New job classifications/descriptions and promotional ladders for current positions and future positions. Currently when a vacancy occurs, an approved job description must be utilized. The current approved job descriptions have not been updated thoroughly since before 2012. This makes filling positions difficult as it is not a true reflection of the work required.

Inquiry was made as to if any board members who would like to review the draft report and offer any suggestions? D. Jagadev and L. Cain indicated that they would be willing to look it over.

DIRECTOR REPORT: Agency report November-December 2020 (emailed to members previously) (attachment a, 3pgs.)

Agency update-

Despite several workers being infected with COVID and teleworking, the agency continues to work diligently in providing services to those residents in need. Vaccinations have been allocated for all DSS staff. CARES assistance has extended.

Benefits: The Benefits unit has many changes coming down, one of which is unemployment benefits are no longer counted as income. This change alone could add to the already large caseloads workers carry.

The workforce development programs are in full swing with updated agreements for assisting Manassas City residents with training and employment opportunities. To assist clients: Equipment and training classes have been purchased. Also the agency is working with a driving school and DMV for learner's permits.

The Benefit unit consists of 16 workers who are supervised by a single manager. The agency has requested the following in the new budget year to assist with the ever increasing caseloads and large ratio of workers to manager:

- Establishment of a Benefit Programs Specialist IV- This worker would assist the Benefit Programs Manager in the day to day supervision of workers and providing signoff on cases of lesser workers.
- Increasing an established part-time worker position to full time status.

Services: The agency saw an increase in APS/Adult Service cases resulting in that caseload being doubled. The state has recommended that an additional worker be sought to assist with this increase.

CPS cases have increased as well and a potential uptick is expected if schools re-open. The Services unit is planning on recruitment, training and support of new Foster parents as well as establishing a standard of operating procedures for all programs.

Customer Service: The lobby has a new "doorbell" that allows workers to see and speak with residents seeking assistance and information. A new large drop box was installed on the exterior of the bldg. so that clients could drop off documents ensuring limited exposure.

Housing: Housing has welcomed a new Housing Specialist. The housing unit is currently 100% leased up and has a new program, Foster Youth Independence Program that is seeking qualified applicants and is working closely with the Services Unit. This program assists youth aging out of foster care with housing assistance.

Administration

The Administration unit has been working on the Classification and Compensation Study for the department and it is almost complete. The budget is complete and has been submitted. As part of the budget submission, the agency has requested 6 new positions.

OLD BUSINESS:

a) **Community Needs Assessment:**

DSS in moving forward with conducting a Community Needs Assessment. It is hoped that possibly the Interfaith Council could assist with getting the assessment out to the community. A meeting has taken place with Heather Martinsen with the PWC Community Services who is doing a community needs assessment that includes the City of Manassas. Ms. Martinsen has offered to include anything that the agency would like to have in the survey and enlist the help of the Interfaith Council to get it out to the community. She anticipates having the results by June. Some of the areas that will be included in the survey includes; mental health, access to health care, housing, food insecurities, just to name a few.

b) **Christmas for Foster Children – Lindsay McCarty**

Those that were able to assist with providing Christmas gifts for the foster kids this year, a great big “Thank you”. The Services Unit will be working on streamlining the process for next year and get out the list a lot sooner. This year the agency had 15 children in foster care who received not only a single gift but an assortment of gifts. There were extra gifts received which allowed the agency to provide gifts to families that were receiving services from DSS. Again a big “Thank you” to everyone.

NEW BUSINESS:

a) **MCDSS presentation to City Council**

The annual report is scheduled to be presented on February 8th, 2021 at 5:30 pm. The Council meetings continue to be virtual and can be viewed live on the Manassas City website or on the local Comcast channel.

Next scheduled meeting is March 25, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT With no further business to discuss, motion to adjourn by, Motion passed without opposition. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Brown