

Social Services Advisory Board members present: Yajaira Balcarcel, Larry Cain, and Councilmember David Farajollahi, Katherine Hawkins. These members constitute a quorum.

Members Absent: Brenda McMahon and Cristina Mehrabani

Staff present: Anita Brown, LaTanya Buckhalter, Michele Gehr, and Tanya Robinson.

Others: Connie Turner

Call to Order: At 6:30 pm, Michele Gehr, Director DSS convened the Social Services Advisory Board regular meeting held on Thursday, September 23, 2021.

Public Present: None

Additions to Agenda: None

Welcome: Welcome to Connie Turner. Long-time city resident who was attending to find out more about the Manassas Social Services Advisory Board. Board members took this time to introduce themselves.

Review of Minutes:

- The minutes from June 24, 2021 meeting approved with any corrections noted. Motion to approve minutes as presented 1st – D. Farajollahi 2nd – ?. Motion passed without opposition.

DIRECTOR REPORT: Agency report September 2021 (emailed to members previously) (attachment a, 3pgs.)

Customer Service/Administration

Manassas City public schools are open to in-person instruction. The office received 462 residents in the office over the past month, averaging 16 clients each day. Customer Service has been short-handed but has recently hired Torice Washington as a new Human Service Assistant.

To date, \$181,387.42 of the CARES Act funding has been spent assisting with rent/mortgage, burial, childcare, and utility costs for city residents. Through this assistance, 44 families have secure housing.

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.

· The Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) meets on Thursdays at 1:00 pm.

Meetings are virtual but looking ahead, it is hoped that meetings can take place in person when allowable.

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. There is a link on the Social Services web page to apply.

With the leaving of DJ and Tony, the board has two vacancies. The link to apply is on the City of Manassas website.

Administrative: The Administrative unit is in the process of hiring an Administrative Assistant who will assist with administrative functions and IT.

Afghan refugees:

About the 58,000 Afghan refugees were brought through Dulles. These refugees are currently waiting in local military bases to be resettled throughout the Northern Region. More are expected. Benefits will be gearing up to work with the refugees. We will work closely with our local nonprofits (i.e. Catholic Charities, Lutheran Family Services, International Rescue Committee, etc.) to determine what these families need and how we can best support them as a community. There have been talks with VA Housing and HUD for possible housing assistance. Any individuals, businesses, etc. wishing to make donations to the refugees are reminded to be culturally sensitive in donations especially in the area of clothing. We are aware that there are unaccompanied minors and they will be referred to the non-profits in efforts to reunite families.

Office Share:

We were approached by City Hall over a year ago letting us know that the city department may need space in the building during the upcoming remodel. We will be joined at DSS by the City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Economic Development, Patty Prince, City Attorney, City Clerk, and the Mayor in early January. MCDSS will move to a telework model indefinitely and our Benefits and Services Units will office-share. The Benefits and Services have been largely teleworking since the beginning of COVID.

Housing:

Housing has been very busy. In the last month, Manassas City was issued 10 Emergency Housing Vouchers for Homeless Residents. Michele Childs issued these vouchers in record time. As of yesterday, one individual leased and another is expected by end of the week. We were able to get two VIEW clients and two clients from Family Services much-needed housing vouchers.

Services:

Family Services recently offered an FSSI position to Jean Martin. Jean is a former MSW Intern at MCDSS and will report to work on September 27. Welcome, Jean!

Family Services currently has four new interns, 1 BSW and 3 MSW's. Three are IV-E Stipend Students and will work primarily in Foster Care. A Social Work Internship is a great way for students to apply their classroom instruction to the real world. We are happy to provide opportunities for new Social Workers to become the best in the business.

We have received additional funding for several of our Family Services Programs:

- \$10,884 was given for Chafee Independent Living and Chafee Education/Training as part of the state's COVID relief. This money will assist our aging-out foster youth with direct financial assistance, housing, food, and services.
- \$54,347 was added to our budget as part of the Family First Act. This funding will be used for our Prevention Unit and will provide wrap-around care to families who need it.
- \$7,208 will be added to assist our Adult Protective Services (APS) unit.

Benefits:

Assistance for cooling has ended and we are gearing up for heating starting the second week of October. Our SNAP applications have increased in the last month. New applications are now coming in at a rate of three times more than in May and June 2021. New regulations (Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE)) have increased eligibility for families.

We have received \$35,000 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 SkillSource to assist our clients with workforce training to further our program goals.

An inquiry was made if Social Services offered any services for individuals dealing with substance abuse?

It depends, is the individual being investigated for child abuse or neglect? Yes, we can help.

Are they in the VIEW (Virginia Initiative for Education and Work)? Yes, we can help.

Have they been abused or neglected and they are older? Yes, we can help.

If they do not fall into one of these situations, Social Services does not have assistance available. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of services available for adults with substance abuse issues. At the inquiry of Mayor Davis-Younger, M. Gehr contacted Manassas Fire & Rescue and the Manassas Police Dept for data on this potential issue. The data does not reflect an uptick in overdoses. There was a report of a "bad" batch of something that came through Manassas a few months ago that caused an uptick but nothing long-term. A meeting will be scheduled with both Chief Keene and Chief Garrett to go over the data to include geography, what type of drugs, how many calls were made only to have the individual refuse treatment. The data of this type is not something that is collected normally. On occasion, there is talk among people that say there is an increase when in reality there is not. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

There was a site identified for a potential Drop-in center located on Sudley Road that has been pulled. The community was not receptive to the Drop-in center so another location is being sought. Everyone agrees that it is needed but not in their neighborhood.

The Hyperthermia shelter run by Manassas Baptist will be available again this year. In the past, for the shelter to be activated the temperature had to be 28 degrees or below. This year they have raised it to 32 degrees. Anyone interested in assisting at the shelter can receive training by contacting Manassas Baptist.

OLD BUSINESS:

a) Interfaith Council update- The Council met a few weeks ago. More faith-based organizations have joined. A lady from the Church of the Brethren that had a very large soup kettle wanted to come and help feed folks at the Hyperthermia shelter when it is open, so that connection was made with Manassas Baptist. The council has received many inquiries on how to assist the Afghan community and refugees. Some non-profits have been tapped to assist with donations and assisting the refugees. More information will be forthcoming. The Al Danoor Islamic Community Center in PWC has expressed interest in collaborating with the Council. They have received a lot of donations, so much so they cannot hold any more.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a) Councilmember Farajollahi shared that he has a friend/colleague that is willing to assist any Afghan individual/family with immigration issues free of charge. Please contact Councilmember Farajollahi for a referral.

Next scheduled in-person meeting November 18, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT With no further business to discuss, meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Brown