

St. Mary's County
Department of Social Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
July 31, 2018

The special meeting of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services Advisory Board was held Tuesday, July 31, 2018 at 5:30pm in the board room of the Joseph D. Carter building.

Members Present:

Michael Blackwell
Katie Paul
Adam Dyson
Richard Buckler
Annette Wood
Wanda Brown
Cynthia Brown

Also Present:

Alexis Zoss, Director
Leisha Wood
Lynn Fitrell

A quorum was established and the meeting was called to order at 5:30pm

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the May 22, 2018 minutes, second. Motion carries.

Education Session:

Introduction of new board members, Katie Paul and Adam Dyson. Each new member provided a brief background including their current employment and involvement within the community.

Introduction of Alexis Zoss, Director, St. Mary's County DSS.

The board asks Director Zoss to talk about her priorities and her plans for working with the Board. Director Zoss shares the strategic initiatives from the Executive Team which consists of herself, Assistant Director for Services, Lisa Ford, Assistant Director for Family Investment, Charles Wood and Assistant Director for Program Oversight and Child Support, Kevin Corrigan.

1. Staff Investment – Plans for retaining staff to include the on-boarding process, training and supervision
2. Physical Infrastructure – Internal upgrading of the office to include carpet and climate control
3. Modernization – To include the implementation of electronics as well as the upgrade of systems and processes
4. Practice Models – To include Family Investment Administration, Social Services Division (Child and Adult Welfare), LGA (IT; Procurement; Fiscal) – Evidence based practice including the implementation of the “Nurtured Heart” approach. Workforce Initiatives

Director Zoss plans to provide data to the board on a regular basis. She plans on reaching out to the board to understand how the board views DSS and what ideas the board has for improvement.

The board asks Director Zoss to explain the agency's plan to continue maintaining community ties and asks if there has been a lapse since the departure of the previous Director.

Director Zoss responds stating that assignments are based on availability of staff to attend external community meetings. There are plans to inventory which staff are currently appointed to boards and committees.

Election of Officers

The board nominates Michael Blackwell for the Chair position

The board nominates Annette Wood for the Vice Chair position

The board seconds the motion and approves the election of Michael Blackwell, Chair and Annette Wood, Vice Chair

Michael Blackwell states that on behalf of the board, they plan to be active in the role of supporting Director Zoss and assisting the Department.

Director's Report

Update on the Lexington Park office Security

The agency recently received funding approval for the installation of a camera security system. Approval was received to add one (1) additional security guard. Steps are being taken to ensure staff feel empowered to take necessary steps including calling 911 in the event of an emergency.

HR Update

An HR Manager has been hired and will begin work on August 15th.

There are currently 24 vacancies

During the month of June, there were three (3) internal promotions and three (3) new staff will start August 15th.

Interviews have been confirmed for the next two (2) weeks.

The Child Protective Services unit is now fully staffed.

DHS is sponsoring mandatory sexual harassment training for all staff, Thursday September, 13th.

Other Items

The board seeks advice from attending previous board members regarding moving forward with the relationship between DSS and the board

Lynn Fitrell states it is wise to continue to look at the community and what contacts are important along with identifying potential partnerships. She states that Director's have traditionally worked together and involved the board. Communication is important.

Leisha Wood states the new and existing board members should continue to bring ideas to the table.

Michael Blackwell brings to the board's attention the recent overdose in the Lexington Park library. The library has been blamed by some who state there is a failed policy from the Director. Pictures were posted on social media. Libraries are known to be trusted places for people of all ages to go and the public should not be discouraged from doing so given this incident.

The board discusses the current opioid epidemic and how it is a misunderstood addiction. Some board members are interested in participating on the opioid task force. There is a need for training and education for the public and those who work in public businesses.

The board would like to discuss the by-laws at the upcoming September meeting.

Adjourn

- A motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:37pm.

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, September 25, 2018 at 5:30pm in the Board Room of the Joseph D. Carter Building

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