

St. Mary's County
Department of Social Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
April 24, 2018

The regular meeting of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services Advisory Board was held Tuesday, April 24, 2018 at 5:30pm in the board room of the Joseph D. Carter building.

Members Present:

Michael Blackwell
Richard Buckler
Rose Frederick
Lynn Fitrell
Susan Fowler
Annette Wood
Wanda Brown

Members Absent:

Leisha Wood
Cynthia Brown

Also Present:

Therese Wolf, Interim Director
Daniel Armitage, DSS Attorney

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the March 27, 2018 minutes, second. Motion carries.

Education Session:

Daniel Armitage introduces himself to the board. Dan has been with the agency for 17 years. He gives the board a brief biography of himself. He is a St. Mary's county native and is a Washington College graduate. Dan attended the University of MD Baltimore Law School. He currently is in a local private practice with his wife. Dan began working for DSS in 2000 on a temporary/short term basis and was soon after asked by the director to take a permanent position. On top of being the agency attorney, he also hears cases for the SMC Housing Authority for those appealing the potential loss of housing assistance. As the DSS agency attorney, Mr. Armitage works closely with Foster Care and Child and Adult social workers, case managers and supervisors. He assists case managers with CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) cases when determining whether or not a child(ren) will enter the foster care system. Mr. Armitage assists with adult guardianship cases of vulnerable adults who have a wide variety of concerns including mental illness, exploitation or self-neglect. A guardian is appointed by the courts, first looking for family to assist. DSS can be appointed guardianship of an adult under the age of 65 years. Guardianship of an adult over the age of 65 years is appointed to the Office on Aging. Mr. Armitage takes an active role in educating and training social workers on how to be successful in the court room. He feels it is extremely important for social workers to be prepared when presenting a case in order to better enhance the outcome. CINA cases are held weekly in St. Mary's County versus monthly in surrounding counties. Dan feels strongly that foster parents have the ability to show a child a different path rather than a way of life that may not have the brightest outcome. Dan has seen many success stories while working with DSS. He would like to see those who play a significant role in the community advocate for a heightened awareness for

those who do not have anyone to assist them. He feels there is a concerning difference between the amount of resources for adults vs. children.

Chair Report:

No Report

Director's Report:

Director Wolf states that a security review of the Lexington Park office was recently completed. DHS is in the process of arranging for a metal detector and wands to be placed at the current security desk. We are currently in the process of adding a second security guard. The building is stated by DHS not to be safe for employees in that the event of an emergency (fire, etc) there is no safe exit for staff. It is being said that the office will need to be relocated keeping in mind accessibility to customers/residents. Director Wolf states she recently met with board Chair, Rose Frederick, to discuss the security issues and that it will be a complicated process. DHS will be looking at potential options in the area. It will not be a quick move. The board will be kept informed of the matter.

Fundraising – It has been discussed that board take on a fundraising effort and what direction would they like to go in? The board questions what the other local DSS offices are doing regarding fundraising. Charles County has recently completed its new Visitation House. It is stated by Rose Frederick that Calvert County has someone that provides funding which matches the funds raised by DSS. The funds fall under MASSB to be re-distributed. The Board approves the release of funds – source of 501C3 – non-profit status.

HR Matters – There were 11 new hires in March with 4 more in the hiring pipeline. There are 2 new employees beginning in April with 1 internal move. The agency will lose 4 employees in April. MSW schools are completing soon, IV-E students are expected to apply at local DSS offices.

New Business

Rose Frederick states that interviews for the SMC DSS Director position will take place in June. It is stated that the board by-laws state that any board member running for election to a political office must step down from the board. If this is the case, Rose states that she will need to resign and Susie Fowler will become chair. Susie, Lynn and Leisha's terms will expire June 30, 2018. The County will need to solicit for new members.

Adjourn

- A motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:56pm.

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, May 22, 2017 at 5:30pm in the Board Room of the Joseph D. Carter Building
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