

**VIRTUAL MEETING**

**BEAUFORT COUNTY DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORY BOARD**

100 Clear Water Way

Beaufort, SC 29906

June 15, 2021

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Pamela Brandon-Hennigh, Wendy Bukowski, David Green, Nancy Pinkerton, Lynn Russo, Andy Thacker, Charles Atkinson (Ex-officio)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Grace Dennis, Frankie Middleton

**STAFF PRESENT:** Bill Love, Janice Beach, Beth Cody, Cherie Scoggins, Terry Geitner, Wanda Mayse

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Council Member Lawrence McElynn

**I. CALL TO ORDER – Lynn Russo, Chairman**

Ms. Russo called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**II. WELCOMING GUESTS**

Mr. McElynn introduced himself. He is on County Council and is the chairman of the Community Services Committee.

**III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 20, 2021 BOARD MEETING**

A MOTION WAS MADE BY WENDY BUKOWSKI AND SECONDED BY NANCY PINKERTON TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS WRITTEN. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**IV. ADOPTION OF THE JUNE 15, 2021 AGENDA**

A MOTION WAS MADE BY DAVID GREEN AND SECONDED BY WENDY BUKOWSKI TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**V. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT – Lynn Russo, Chairman**

Ms. Russo asked the Board members who have not already done so to please fill out the Conflict of Interest forms and send them to Ms. Beach by the end of the month.

Ms. Russo polled the Board members asking when they would feel comfortable returning to in person meetings. It is difficult sometimes having our meeting this way with connection issues. Everyone is in favor of returning in person starting with our August meeting.

**VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT –Bill Love**

Mr. Love said that Covid-19 has been challenging for everyone. We have been doing a great job with our virtual meetings for the last year and a half. He has asked staff to talk about what is going on in their programs.

Compensation Changes – The County has evaluated and approved changes to our compensation which is a positive move. This will make a significant difference in our ability to recruit and retain individuals. It was a sacrifice the Council had to make but the employees will benefit from it. An example would be - the starting pay for Direct Care workers went from \$13.85 to \$16.30 per hour. Mr. Love has heard staff talking about it and how much they appreciate it. The County had to make sacrifices and adjustments to be able to do this so if any of you have contact with council members please let them know how much we appreciate it. Even with our shortcomings related to staffing and the pandemic, we have continued to do an excellent job. We have been able to be creative and evaluate how we are going to provide services without making any sacrifices or putting anyone at risk. We are gradually moving consumers back in. Terry Geitner will talk about that later.

Disabilities Resource Guide – Mr. Love said that each of you should have gotten the Beaufort County Disabilities Resource Guide. It is an excellent resource for families and the community. DSN is highlighted in three different places in the resource guide. Case Management, Early Intervention, and our housing and Day Program are mentioned in the guide. We are told that over 8,000 offices will get copies of it. Ms. Scoggins took a stack of them to Beaufort County Representative Shannon Erickson’s office. They will be placed in libraries and doctor’s offices. Our commitment is to be able to provide services to every individual with a disability in Beaufort County. We must take everyone who requests services.

Lunch Plans – Mr. Love had told the Board that at our first in person meeting he would like to take the members out to lunch for our meeting. This won’t be possible because this is a public meeting and has to follow certain rules and regulations. Mr. Atkinson said it is a FOIA issue as well. The meeting has to be advertised. Mr. Love would still like to treat you to lunch so we would have to rearrange the meeting time since we meet at 4:00 or he can have lunch brought in. Ms. Russo suggested going to lunch and then coming back to DSN for the meeting. Mr. Atkinson stated that when a quorum gathers it is considered a meeting and is not allowed.

Community Partners Committee – Mr. Love said the school district has developed a Community Partnership Committee and they have asked DSN to be a part of that. The state has said that the school district in Beaufort County needs some support and representation from community leaders. The first time we met at the school there were about 75 of us there. They want to educate people about what the resources and support systems are in Beaufort County. Wanda Mayse, Cherie Scoggins, and Terry Geitner went to the last meeting, which will be an ongoing, regular meeting. They are the ones who picked up these Disability Resource Guides. This is another step in education people about our services here.

## VII. DEPUTY DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Wanda Mayse

Ms. Mayse thanked the Board members for being on the Board and supporting us. The Board has done tremendous things and have helped us get a lot of things done. She appreciates your support and being someone we can talk to and process when we were making decisions for the disability community during the pandemic. It is always nice to have ears and eyes outside of what we are close to on a day to day basis.

Staffing – Ms. Mayse said we still have a lot of vacancies. We continue to recruit new staff. We continue to try to keep morale high with the staff members we have here. They are working diligently and have been wonderful filling in gaps and taking on extra responsibilities to make sure we maintain the quality of care that we are providing. They are making sure we are not compromised in the area of safety and quality of services because we are still under compliance reviews from three different entities. We have managed to do well miraculously. Some of the reviews are table top and some hybrid. They come out on site for certain areas and some things we are shuffling papers back and forth. I don't like that process because sometimes things get lost in the transmittal and we are having to send things multiple times. We have maintained the quality of service and maintained safety. Parents have been a challenge in trying to explain to them maintaining compliance with CDC and DHEC guidelines as far as visits are concerned. It is exhausting having conversations with them and explaining what is in the guidelines and what is outside the guidelines. Parents can visit with their family member. We are having to rely on their integrity whether they have been vaccinated or not. Some have. Some have said they have and they have not. If we don't have sound evidence or don't believe they have, consumers will have to quarantine when they come back. Most of our consumers have had their vaccine. Two have not which is their right. We have done very well since the first bout of positive cases and have not had any since then. We had a few resignations last week. People have options; there are a lot of jobs in the community. With the generous starting salary we should be seeing more applications. They are coming in slowly but we hope to see more coming in. Ms. Mayse feels we will still have struggles in the next couple of months, but is cautiously optimistic by August we will have a more stabilized workforce.

Census – We have had some movement in residential placement, but we are still full.

Day Program – Mr. Geitner said we are making huge headway seeing things turn despite some setbacks. We have a total of 87 consumers in the Day Program. This includes those out on contract as well as in house. The interviewing process for staff has improved. I got three good applicants to move forward with. He mentioned at the last meeting about the cleaning contract for the old Barnes Law Office on Carteret Street and met with them yesterday to identify the space we would be cleaning. It is a large area but we can break it down in several days. We have to assess consumers to see who will be able to work there because there is no elevator and it is a two story building. Tomorrow and Thursday, the Board of Education Special Education will be using our conference room for their retreat. They are excited about coming here. Back in our garden area we have two raised box gardens. Several years ago at an ABLE bazaar, we used them as an area where people could search for shark teeth. It has been tilled, top soil and irrigation added, so it is ready for a garden. We have planted some vegetables and I will be looking at getting some flowers to plant as well. We have two compost bins back there that the Recycle Center provided. Mr. Geitner will have Ms. Beach send you the flyer about composting so you can contribute if you like.

Fiscal – Ms. Cody said we have transitioned to fee-for-service retrospective payment for Day Program. We are making sure we have the number of individuals we can bill for because we are now paid per unit for folks we have in there now. We have to maintain a balance between the cost of the staff and the number of individuals we are able to serve and bill for. Cherie Scoggins will be talking about Conflict Free Case Management. Our

consumers cannot receive services from Case Management from the same agency they receive Day Services from the same agency. To handle Case Management budget and Day Program budget, Ms. Cody wants them to come to the Day Program but also wants them to be in Case Management so they can be billed for this. Due to the federal government's decision, that is not what we should be doing and we are trying to strike a balance. We are working very hard together as a management team with the different pieces and parts to make sure everything balances. Mr. Love said during the Obama administration the federal government said we can't provide Case Management and Day services under the same roof. Ms. Brandon-Hennigh asked what federal bill was that. Mr. Love said he will have to get that information for her.

Case Management – Ms. Scoggins said a data project was sent down from the state in order to assess the individuals we are giving Case Management services to. At this time we have 207 active waivers. 96 of those individuals are in conflict. 62 are conflict free, meaning we provide Case Management to them and they receive a direct service that is not our Day Program or our Residential. We have 49 that because of Covid and the pandemic they have not yet started back with direct services. A meeting was held to discuss this and make sure the families are proactive. We are sending out a letter this week to them explaining what the process is. Case Managers have done a phenomenal job. This month they are in the top percentile in the state for billing.

Early Intervention – Ms. Scoggins said the Early Intervention department had a little one pass away. Please keep the family in your thoughts. It is difficult for the family but also for the Early Interventionist. Early Intervention is very stable. There are typically about 200 little ones that we are actively providing service delivery to. Ms. Scoggins said she had the opportunity to sit in on a meeting with Ashley Hutchinson who is part of the education department. We want to make sure we are identifying all the little ones who need Early Intervention services. In that meeting Ms. Scoggins was made aware that 82% of little ones that are going into Pre K are below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. That drew a red flag for me so I asked what could be done to make sure we are not seeing such a significant impact on the school system. Ms. Scoggins met with Shannon Erickson who thought it would be helpful if we create a module system that has to be certified through DSS. We need to be getting into private and public child care centers to make families aware where there are developmental disabilities or identifying early onset of things we may be able to assist with. Child care providers are the ones who spend a lot of time with these little ones and they have a relationship with the families to be able to say they are seeing something and tell them they may want to have it checked out to be proactive. DSN is also visiting pediatricians offices so that we can get them to understand that if a referral is done early on, that is when you can see a significant change and we can work with those little ones from 0-3 and really make a lot of headway if we can get in there and provide direct services to them. If we can get them into ABA, PT, OT, family services – all those things will make a significant difference when they go into Pre K. Our agency is very committed to all the things we can do to make a difference. Ms. Scoggins is going to be on the Early Children's Leadership Council to try to help with that. We will look at policies and things like that. These are some of the initiatives we can do in our community. That is what the Early Intervention department is doing to try to make an impact in those areas.

Mr. Love added that each DSN department has a different set of rules and regulations from the state and federal government. Ms. Russo asked that if there is a conflict with state and

federal rules, which one would you use. Ms. Mayse said you would use whichever one is the higher standard to maintain. That is true for state, federal, and local. You always use the more restrictive.

#### VIII. POLICY/DIRECTIVES COMMITTEE – Grace Dennis, Chair

Mrs. Dennis was not present.

#### IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Hospitality Committee, Wendy Bukowski, Chair – Ms. Bukowski had nothing to report
- Personnel Committee, Lynn Russo, Chair – Nothing to report
- Public Relations/Legislative Committee, David Green, Chair – Mr. Green said he participated in the Beaufort Chamber’s legislative reception about two weeks ago and met up with most of our local representatives and state senators and he got to meet Congresswoman Nancy Mace. Mr. Green said he reintroduced himself to them and found out the field representative for Ms. Mace is the son of one of the folks who worked with our Osprey Village Board’s president. He said he is aware of what is going on with our organization. On the federal level there is a bill in Congress that could potentially allocate \$400 billion to HCBS. We are not sure how that would pan out or what the money would actually be used for but one would be addressing the waiting list for waivers. Also raising the rates at which we get people reimbursed for services because there is such a shortage of services. Another could be providing housing and making affordable housing available for people with disabilities.

A discussion was had about adding more houses. Ms. Mayse said there is a need but there is a lot more to it than just building a house and putting people into it. There are so many channels we have to go through with the county, county council, and the state. There is a lot of red tape to go through. Mr. Love said we really do need to have two more houses in the Bluffton/Hilton head area.

Ms. Mayse said Mr. Green had touched on the FMAP money and there is a meeting Friday which Ms. Cody and Ms. Scoggins will be attending where the state will be giving guidance on what that FMAP money can be used for.

#### X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Russo asked when the Community Review Team reviews would resume. Mr. Love said we should be able to start back in the next month or two. He also informed Ms. Russo that the County Council had approved two more members for our Board and they had been forwarded to the governor for approval.

Mr. Larry McElynn introduced himself and said he is on County Council and he is chair of the Community Services Committee. He and Mr. Atkinson are working on many projects together. He is glad to hear the compliment on salary increases. This is more than a 15% increase in salary which is better than a 3% COLA. Mr. McElynn thinks this will make a huge difference across the county with recruiting and retention. He thanked DSN for the

work that they do and has frequently said to Mr. Love and staff how much what we do is appreciated. Mr. McElynn was on the Drug and Alcohol board for quite some time. He said he agrees we do need a couple more houses and if there is anything he can do to help us achieve that to please let him know.

XI. The next board meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 17, 2021:

**100 Clear Water Way  
Beaufort, SC 29906**

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY NANCY PINKERTON AND SECONDED BY WENDY BUKOWSKI TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 5:00 PM.

  
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Lynn Russo, Chairman

  
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Date

  
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Nancy Pinkerton, Vice-Chairman

  
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Date