



Luzerne County Children and Youth Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time/Location: September 9, 2020/noon/ Conference Room 132 (MS
Teams/Conference Call Meeting)

In Attendance: Charlene Aben, Robert Childs, Maggie Farrell, Dennis Gochoel, Larry Marchetti, Alex Milanese, Olga Papa, Eileen Song, Josh Wilder

Absent: Ciro Cinti, Martin Dartoe, Mary Agnes Kratz, Fritz Scarnulis, Susan Roskos

Children and Youth: Janice Bonner, Donna Domiano, Kelly Gaughan, Deanna German, Caitlyn Holland, Lisa Koval, Robin Ritsick, Joanne Van Saun

Office of Human Services: John Alunni

Welcome – Georgine Meyers took attendance. Chairman Song welcomed everyone to the September meeting. Chairman Song announced the newest member to the Advisory Board, Olga Papa. Member Papa introduced herself to everyone. Alex Milanese recently became a member of the Board and re-introduced himself to everyone.

Approval of Minutes – July meeting minutes approved by Member Wilder, seconded by Member Papa, all in favor.

Director's Report – Deputy Director German reported that staff continues to alternate working remotely as well as coming into the office. Visits are currently held in the office so there are receptionists, a manager, screeners and QA staff here daily as well as staff from legal and clerical. In person visits started in July. Everyone is required to wear a mask. Sanitizer is used to clean in between visits. Caseworkers were initially visiting children during the red phase via video. Now with the green phase it is in person. Some facilities still require contact via video. The agency submitted the Needs Based Budget. We are now in the process of responding to the follow up questions. There were no additional programs added to the Needs Based Budget. Administration is working on preparing to present the budget to County Council. This budget will be done line by line for each item which includes the request for raises. There are currently 520 children in foster care. There have been delays due to the virus in the courts. Adoptions numbers are down as well due to postponements in court. There are approximately 25 caseworker vacancies. In the past few months there have been some retirements. There are 8 candidates that have been recommended for positions and are waiting for their FBI checks to come back. The quarterly PCYA conference in June was cancelled but the October conference will be virtual. Staff are doing trainings virtually. The agency is in the process of starting the Request for Proposals for services to the agency. The Events Committee is starting to discuss the Adoption Celebration and Foster Children's Holiday Party. This year it will not be in person but the committee will figure out a way to celebrate. One idea was to purchase a tree sapling

with a poem to give to each family that adopted but the committee is open to suggestions. A gift will be purchased for each child for the Holiday Party so an idea was to do a drive by and have Santa hand out gifts. The agency continues to use the Visitation Grant to promote retention, recruitment and monthly visitation to families. As part of the retention we are purchasing windbreakers for each staff member. If any Board Members are interested in purchasing a jacket they can contact Georgine Meyers. The order must be submitted asap so please reply immediately if interested. Finally, the agency is preparing for the annual inspection at the end of September into the beginning of October. Chairman Song asked if anyone tested positive for COVID. Deputy Director German noted that some folks were tested but nobody has tested positive at this time. Chairman Song asked if 10 day meetings are being held. Deputy Director German noted that it is being held virtually with a limited number of people participating and without the service providers.

Committee Reports

1. **Events and Fundraising (Wilder)** – Member Wilder noted that he submitted a request for a gift card for Wegmans for the events. He reached out to past donors and hopefully donations will come in. The online fundraising didn't work out. He is open to suggestions. Letters were sent out to all Advisory Board Members to get out but nothing came back yet. Member Farrell asked about using social media to get the fundraising word out. Chairman Song talked about taking a look at how to do online requests. Member Farrell offered to assist and talked about getting the word out on what is being done with the events.
2. **Strategic Planning and ByLaws (Gochoel)** – Member Gochoel discussed the Board Member Survey. He will send out the link to all Board Members. There are 19 questions that will be due by September 20th. Ms. Meyers will print it out and send to Member Scarnulis and Member Aben.
3. **Recruiting and Community Advocacy (Song)** – Chairman Song discussed setting up a meeting with County Council. She would like to ask about what happens with applicants that submit to be on the Board. Also would like to support budget items like raises. She will work on this in the next few weeks. Member Childs noted that he knows someone that applied several times but ended up handing their application in person to ensure receipt. The C&Y Board should have between 5 – 17 active members.

Old/New Business – No old/new business.

Fiscal Update (Dalessandro) – Fiscal Officer Holland noted it is budget season. Fiscal staff are mainly working from home and staff are starting to return a few days a week. If anyone has any questions, feel free to reach out to her.

Final Questions/Comments – As previously requested by the Board, Director Van Saun held a discussion on what happens when a report comes into the agency as a GPS referral. Next month CPS will be discussed.

Adjournment - Motion to adjourn made by Member Milanese, seconded by Member Farrell, all in favor.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at 12:00pm.