



Luzerne County Children and Youth Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

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

In Attendance: Charlene Aben, Denise Acosta, Robert Childs, Maggie Farrell, Dennis Gochoel, Larry Marchetti, Alex Milanese, Olga Papa, Eileen Song, Joshua Wilder, Susan Roskos

Absent: Ciro Cinti, Martin Dartoe, Mary Agnes Kratz, Francis Scarnulis

Children and Youth: Ceil Bartolai, Janice Bonner, Chris Dalessandro, Donna Domiano, Deanna German, Caitlyn Holland, Lisa Koval, Georgine Meyers, Joanne Van Saun

Office of Human Services: John Alunni, Lynn Hill

Welcome – Chairman Song welcomed everyone to the December meeting. Ms. Meyers took attendance. Denise Acosta was introduced as the newest member to the Advisory Board. Several Board Member terms are expiring. Chairman Song thanked them for volunteering.

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

Director's Report – Deputy Director German discussed the October Licensing Inspection. It was one of the best inspections that the agency received. There were minor issues noted and the Plan of Correction has been submitted. The agency presented its budget and are awaiting final approval from Council. The RFP process has concluded. Contracts are being sent out to providers. There will be a second round of RFP for the categories that did not receive a proposal. The agency received a lot of positive feedback from the Adoption Celebration in November. Adoptive families were provided with tree seedlings, certificates, and commemorative watering cans. The agency was able to secure a mini grant to assist with the event. Next event is the Foster Children's Holiday Party on Saturday. It is a drive by Santa event with gifts for each child as well as holiday cookies for each family. There are currently approximately 30 caseworker vacancies. Staff continue to work remotely and go to the office as needed. The agency had a holiday celebration for staff which was a drive by event with Santa. Each staff member was provided with a small holiday gift. There was much positive feedback from staff regarding this event. Mr. Dalessandro from the fiscal department discussed the 2021 budget. It went very well. Council has the opportunity to make amendments. The agency hopes to receive all funding requested. Vice Chairman Gochoel asked about budgeting and vacancies. Mr. Dalessandro provided information and noted that the agency is reimbursement based. Director Van Saun added that a majority of funding comes from the State and Federal government. She also discussed how employees retire and resign, others are then promoted. She

noted it is a very tough and stressful job. Some new workers, once on the job, discover that the position is not for them. The position carries a lot of stress and liability. Other counties are struggling as well.

Committee Reports

- 1. Events and Fundraising** – Secretary Wilder noted that Attorney Rodgers assisted with the Children’s Holiday Party. He explained that the Advisory Board raises funds for the Adoption Celebration and the Children’s Holiday Party. He thanked everyone for their support. Chairman Song noted that Attorney Rodgers has been an avid supporter in fundraising with his network of personal contacts. We are very grateful to him. This is something the Board is committed to do every year.
- 2. Strategic Planning and ByLaws** - Vice Chairman Gochoel reviewed the proposed changes to the ByLaws. He noted that it can be presented at the next Board meeting. In the meantime he asked if anyone has questions to please contact him. He noted that he will share questions that need clarification with Sharon Lawrence. He will update his version for everyone to review again. Once fine-tuned, Chairman Song will have it sent to Sharon Lawrence and Council. Member Milanese noted he will try to draft up an itemized list of observations and concerns.
- 3. Recruiting and Community Advocacy** – Chairman Song noted the committee did not meet this month. There was an interview session with Ruth Corcoran who is a writer for the Times Leader. When the link becomes available, they will share with the Board. Deputy Director German noted there was an article in the Sunday Citizens Voice on November 30th that Bob Kalinosky wrote in regards to adoption and foster parenting. Next committee meeting should be in February or March. Chairman Song asked that if you know of any potential people interested in becoming a Board Member to please let her know.

Old/New Business – Mr. Alunni discussed the Sunshine Act concern regarding subcommittees. It was shared with the County Solicitor. Subcommittees do not carry out any official agency duties. They are not required under the Sunshine Act to be advertised. If a Board Member has any clarification items in the future, please do not hesitate to contact Chairman Song and John Alunni. The Board discussed the 2021 meeting dates. The Board is required to meet 10 times per year. It was decided that January and August would be the months that no meeting is held. Vice Chairman Gochoel made a motion to meet all months with the exception of January and August, seconded by Member Childs, all in favor.

Fiscal Update (Dalessandro/Holland) – Mr. Dalessandro gave his fiscal update during the Director’s Report.

Final Questions/Comments – Due to time constraints the discussion on what happens when a CPS call comes into the agency will be postponed. Chairman Song asked Member Acosta to review committees and decide which committee she would like to participate in. Chairman Song also discussed that the Executive Committee would like to have Members donate money to purchase hats, gloves and scarves to donate to the agency to be given to children for the holidays. If interested, please contact Chairman Song by Friday with the amount you would like to commit to. Chairman Song will be working on highlighting 2020 accomplishments.

Adjournment - Motion to adjourn made by Member Papa, seconded by Member Wilder, all in favor.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 12:00pm.