

Human Services

BOL Meeting Minutes - Final



Committee Chair: Nancy Barr

800 Michaelian Office Bldg.
148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor
White Plains, NY 10601
www.westchesterlegislators.com

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

10:00 AM

Committee Room

CALL TO ORDER

Please note: Meetings of the Board of Legislators and its committees are held at the Michaelian Office Building, 148 Martine Avenue, White Plains, New York, 10601, and remotely via the WebEx video conferencing system. Legislators may participate in person or via Webex. Members of the public may attend meetings in person at any of its locations, or view it online on the Westchester County Legislature's website: <https://westchestercountyny.legistar.com/>. This website also provides links to materials for all matters to be discussed at a given meeting.

With a quorum present, Chair Barr called the meeting to order at 10: 02 AM

Others in Attendance: BOL - Legislator Shanae Williams, Jill Axelrod; OTHERS - Kathy Halas (Remote)

Present: Legislator Barr, Legislator Pierce, Legislator Williams Johnson and Legislator Woodson-Samuels

Remote: Legislator Alvarado

MINUTES APPROVAL

January 23rd, 2024 10AM Minutes

On motion of Legislator Williams Johnson, seconded by Legislator Woodson-Samuels, the minutes were approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Legislator Barr, Legislator Pierce, Legislator Williams Johnson and Legislator Woodson-Samuels

Remote: Legislator Alvarado

I. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Discussion with Westchester County Department of Social Services (DSS) Regarding Application Process, Communications and Childcare

Guests:

Katrina Alexander, Deputy Commissioner, DSS
Steve Taylor, Manager 1 of CCS, DSS

Katrina Alexander discussed the customer service process and experience between the public and Department of Social Services staff. She went into detail regarding the number of calls received and the Department of Social Services capacity at the moment to handle the calls. She cited staffing and the phone vendors as things that need to be improved in order to operate at its fullest potential. Legislator Barr asked specifically about the instances in which the Department of Social Services receives phone calls and there is no one to answer, leaving the phones just ringing. Ms. Alexander attributed this to the call waiting capacity of the phone service vendor which used to be 200 and has now been dropped to 80. She says they are working on evaluating the issue and finding solution. In the meantime she did note there is an overtime project on the books to handle the backlog of voicemails and they are also looking to train people internally to be able to respond to voicemails more efficiently.

Steve Taylor discussed the Childcare subsidy department of the Department of Social Services. He talked about the process from application to approval. He described some of the ways in which the department is flourishing including being at almost full staff. He also discussed points of improvement. One way he mentioned the department could improve was by figuring out a way to let more families know about the availability of childcare subsidies. He also mentioned the steep learning curve of training new staff and would like staff retention to be improved. Legislator Barr asked specifically about the minimum wage requirements as it relates to families applying for assistance. Mr. Taylor explained that the minimum age requirement is by way of state law and is something that has been in effect for at least 8 years. He explained that the Department's recertification process does allow for 90 days from the time a customer is informed up until their actual recertification date, which should help with those who need new verifications from their employer due to the rise in minimum wage.

There were also questions that arose from Legislator Alvarado concerning the eligibility of summer camps to partake in the child care subsidy program. Mr. Taylor and Kathy Halas who was also on the call, said they would look into what if anything has changed and can be done to overcome this issue.

II. OTHER BUSINESS

III. RECEIVE & FILE

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Legislator Woodson-Samuels, seconded by Legislator Pierce, the Committee adjourned at 11:21 AM by the following vote:

Aye: Legislator Barr, Legislator Alvarado, Legislator Pierce, Legislator Williams Johnson and Legislator Woodson-Samuels