

Scotland County of Social Services Board
May 22, 2025
Special Meeting

The vision of the Scotland County Social Services Board is to foster individual responsibility and to create a strong cooperative community that is responsive to the needs of its citizens.

DSS Board Members Present: Andy Kurtzman, Mollie Flowers, Amanda Holland, Darwin Williams

DSS Staff Members Present: Kimberly McRae, Jessica Buehler, Wendy Stanton, Shannon Hammonds

DSS Board Members Absent: Dorothy Tyson (recused)

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Andy Kurtzman. Amanda Holland led the opening prayer.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Amanda Holland and seconded by Mollie Flowers. The board agreed and the motion passed.

Open Forum

- None

New Business

- Consolidation of Health and Social Services Departments Discussion

Mr. Williams informed the Board that after speaking with the County Manager, it is important to note that employment will not be affected by the consolidation. However, Mr. Williams stated that if consolidated, the human resources of the consolidated departments would be managed by county personnel policies. Mr. Kurtzman stated that at the State of the County meeting, he was informed of a financial audit involving the Department of Social Services. Mr. Williams assured Mr. Kurtzman that the audit in no way influenced the consolidation discussion. Mr. Kurtzman inquired about the advantages of consolidation. Mr. Williams reiterated that the current goal would be to consolidate the human resources portion of the departments to fall strictly under county personnel policies like the remainder of the county currently does. Mr. Kurtzman inquired about the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) wanting to have more control over both departments once consolidated. Mr. Williams informed Mr. Kurtzman that he would be unable to answer that question as he is only one county commissioner. Mr. Williams stated that he would like to see all members present at the June 2, 2025 meeting if possible.

Mr. Williams briefly discussed information that had been received from counties, in which consolidation had occurred (i.e. Richmond County), as Scotland County would not be a pilot county for consolidation. Mr. Williams stated that initially it seemed that there was more negative feedback. Mr. Kurtzman asked that Mr. Williams discuss the current pros and cons that he is aware of. Mr. Williams responded by stating that he is not advocating for consolidation, or he is against it. Mr. Williams discussed wanting to do what was best for the County and assured those present that the BOCC would not micromanage the Department of Social Services. Mr. Kurtzman discussed that the current County Manager is familiar with the Department of Social Services, but a time would come when there was a County Manager that was not. Mr. Kurtzman briefly discussed the concern of the BOCC being the final decision maker for both departments. Mr. Williams stated that while that may be a phobia staff have, public input that is received at the June 2, 2025 BOCC meeting will aid in the decision making process. Mr. Williams again encouraged all to attend.

Mr. Kurtzman and Mr. William briefly discussed the future chain of command if the departments were consolidated. Mr. Williams stated that there would still be directors for both Social Services and Health. Mr. Kurtzman inquired about the changes that would directly affect the Social Services Board. Mr. Williams stated that the information would be determined by the model in which the BOCC were to choose if consolidation was passed. Mr. Williams discussed that while change can be tough, the BOCC would not make a decision that would be harmful to the county. Mr. Williams discussed that consolidation may also be a way for the county to save money. Mrs. Flowers inquired about the amount of money that has been saved by Richmond County since their consolidation. Mr. Williams informed the Board that that information had not been obtained as of yet.

Mrs. Flower inquired about the current structure of human resources at Social Services. Director McRae stated that the structure has changed recently. Mr. Williams stated that once the previous Human Resources Director retired, restructure took place. Mr. Williams then inquired about the reasoning behind there being a human resources technician that is devoted to and located at both the Health and Social Services departments. Director McRae briefly discussed that the volume of staff located at Social Services, which is roughly around 120 staff members, was one of the reasons why there was a dedicated human resources technician on site. Director McRae stated that the hiring process is integrated with the county human resources as the county human resources recruits, qualifies, and has the final approval of all positions being filled. Director McRae stated that when a human resources technician and supervisor were in the building, hiring processes were done in house at Social Services. Both Mrs. Stanton and Mrs. Hammonds discussed that the process for hiring has become lengthy since the county human resources has been integrated into the process. Mrs. Flowers stated that she would be most comfortable hiring

her own staff rather than an outside source making the decision. Mrs. Stanton stated that while county human resources does the qualifying of applicants now, Social Services still interviews and recommends the applicant they wish to hire. Those present begin to discuss the human resources piece in more detail. Mrs. Hammonds stated that previously Director McRae made the offer to hire and the process was more convenient when it was in house due to a quicker processing time. Mr. Williams acknowledged this, but stated that it would be more consistent to have human resources under the same policies and procedures. Mr. Williams inquired about the structure of human resources now as it relates to both Health and Social Services. Director McRae stated that while there is a human resources technician housed with the Health and Social Services departments, she has no decision making power and takes paperwork downtown to the county. Director McRae stated that once the current human resources director was hired, human resources was restructured and all personnel and hiring decisions are now made at the county office.

Mrs. Holland stated that while the human resources piece is important, the Board is currently tasked with providing oversight to the Social Services Director. Mrs. Holland discussed the importance of being made aware of any concerns. Mr. Williams stated that he is aware of any current concerns with Social Services and that the consolidation, to his knowledge, would be to have Health and Social Services under the same county procedures and policies as the rest of the county. Mr. Kurtzman discussed the possibility of also creating a Consolidated Human Services Board to include both Social Services and Health Board members. Director McRae stated that her only current concern is how the consolidation would affect Social Services and the staff. Director McRae then shared the information that the County Manager sent to staff, which showed the differences in the State Human Resources Act and county policies and procedures.

Mr. Kurtzman stated that consolidation had previously been brought up before and questioned why it was being brought up again. Mrs. Buehler stated that consolidation was previously discussed in 2017. Mrs. Stanton discussed that her only concern is that after reading the newspaper, finance is discussed. Mrs. Stanton informed those present that Social Services is currently working through vacancies and she questioned if positions would be eliminated. Mr. Williams asked that Social Services inquire with their department to create a list of concerns as he would like those to be presented. Mrs. Holland asked if there are any concerns that have been discussed by the County Manager as the Social Services Board has not been made aware of this. Mr. Williams stated that the only goal discussed was human resources. Mrs. Stanton informed those present that the human resources portion had already been completed once the current Human Resources Director was hired. Mr. Kurtzman asked if there had been any concerns that the BOCC or the County Manager that are not being filtered down the the Social Services Board of the Social Services Director. Mr. Williams stated that any concerns would have been made apparent to Director McRae. Mr. Williams again asked for a list of concerns from the

Department. Mr. Kurtzman inquired about the entity that has manifested the desire to consolidate. Mr. Williams stated that he believed that was the County Manager.

Mr. Williams called County Manager, April Snead, as Mr. Kurtzman asked for clarification on the consolidation and if the consolidation was finalized. County Manager, April Snead, discussed that it was her duty to give the BOCC all options in terms of looking at the efficiency of the County. Currently the BOCC has not been able to look at the full efficiency of Social Services and Health as they are not the governing Board. County Manager Snead discussed the public hearing would take place on June 2, 2025 and that county personnel are invited to attend as well.

Mr. Williams discussed concerns of the Social Services Board and the makings of the Board if consolidation took place. County Manager Snead stated that this would be dependent on the model in which the BOCC took. Both the Health Director and Social Services Director would report to a Consolidated Director that is hired by the County Manager and approved by the BOCC. The BOCC could become the governing body and appoint members to a Consolidated Human Services Board, which would be an advisory board. It was discussed that the BOCC could also not become the governing body and leave both the Social Services and Health Department Boards in place.

Mr. Williams inquired about the effects consolidation could potentially have on employment. County Manager Snead stated that positions have not been rifted in other departments and would not be rifted, even if consolidated. However, County Manager Snead stated that some vacant positions may not be posted and filled. Mr. Williams asked if the work forces at Social Services had been reduced. County Manager Snead stated that a decision was made to not fill a supervisor in the Economic Services Unit, which she supposed. County Manager Snead also discussed a frozen Income Maintenance Caseworker I position. Director McRae stated that there are currently 9 vacant positions on the Economic Services side that had not been posted. County Manager Snead stated that she would take a look into this, but that the number itself did not seem correct.

County Manager Snead stated that since the BOCC is not the governing Board for either Health or Social Services, they do not have much power outside of giving both departments a budget each fiscal year. County Manager Snead stated that is not the case with other departments in the county, with the exception of the Sheriff's Office as the Sheriff is an elected position. Mr. Kurtzman inquired about the BOCC potentially taking on more responsibility. County Manager Snead stated that only the BOCC could answer that question. County Manager Snead stated that the BOCC would not get into the day to day operations of either department as they have a County Manager, Finance Officer, and Department Heads to oversee operations. County Manager Snead ended the call.

Director McRae discussed the financial monitoring that was discussed early in the meeting. Director McRae stated that monitoring occurs and is not always discussed as they are a part of the operations of Social Services. Director McRae discussed the situation in which the finance supervisor was placed after the technician position became vacant unexpectedly. Director McRae stated that although the finance supervisor followed the director of the Local Business Liaison to ensure funding continued appropriately during that time. When the auditors came, that specific time frame was chosen. Director McRae stated that a temporary worker had been hired to help and that there is now a finance technician as well. Director McRae stated that the upcoming strategic plan includes program administrators being cross trained and manuals being created. Mr. Williams assured Director McRae that the consolidation was not related to the fiscal monitoring.

Those present discussed the importance of creating a list of concerns to be presented at the BOCC meeting. Social Services Board members were assured that they would receive a list of the questions and concerns as well. Director McRae asked that a Board member be present to represent Social Services and to present the concerns and questions during the public hearing. Mrs. Holland discussed the importance of not calling them concerns as that can be seen as blatantly opposing the consolidation. Mrs. Holland discussed the importance of having an open mind to consider the advantages and assets it may bring to the county. Mrs. Holland discussed that the importance of the special meeting was to gain more knowledge so that those attending the BOCC meeting would not be uninformed. Mrs. Holland stated that the consolidation discussion had been on the agenda for the past three months. Mr. Williams stated that a decision would not be made until at least after the public hearing took place. Mr. Williams discussed that the BOCC would need to then decide on the model of which would take place in terms of governance. Mr. Williams stated that while there would not be any dialogue between the BOCC and those conversing at the public hearing, it would still be important to discuss any concerns or questions. After a brief discussion, it was decided that Mr. Kurtzman would represent the Social Services Board at the June 2, 2025 meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made by Darwin Williams and seconded by Amanda Holland. The Board agreed and the meeting was adjourned.

Jessica Buehler, Board Clerk

Andy Kurtzman, Board Vice Chair