

Durham County Board of Social Services

January 18, 2023

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, January 18, 2023. The DSS Board meeting will continue to be virtual until further notice.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance: Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs and Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman. Board members: Janice P. Paul, Jacqueline Beatty-Smith, and Charles I. Mitchell.

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy and Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman; Assistant Directors: Rhonda Stevens, Jovetta Whitfield, and Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason.

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, Kalindra Ellerbe, Lee Little, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Susan Lee, Jennifer Moon, Lynn Thomas, Christie McMillan, Pamela Purifoy, Emma Perry, Tonia Gay, and Montrella R. Springfield.

DSS Human Resources Analyst James Hart attended the meeting.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs was present.

County Attorney Alan A. Andrews was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the January 18, 2023, DSS Board meeting to order at 3:03pm.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs welcomed everyone to the meeting and read the Public Charge. The Board of the Durham County Department of Social Services asks its members and citizens to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous manner, both with the Board and fellow citizens. At any time, should any member of the Board or any citizen fail to observe this public charge, the Chairman will ask the offending person to leave the meeting until that individual regains personal control. Should decorum fail to be restored, the Chairman will recess the meeting until such time that a genuine commitment to the public charge is observed.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked everyone to state their name and address before speaking.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs introduced the new County Attorney Alan A. Andrews to the DSS Board and DSS Leadership and Management Team.

County Attorney Alan A. Andrews gave a brief introduction relating to past venues. County Attorney Andrews thanked Chair Commissioner Jacobs for the introduction and the opportunity learn more about DSS.

DSS Board members provided an introduction and welcomed County Attorney Alan A. Andrews. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged Senior Assistant Attorney Danielle Briggs for her commitment to the DSS Board.

Approval of the Agenda

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs proceeded to move forward with the review and approval of the proposed agenda.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith moved for the acceptance and approval of the proposed agenda. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman seconded.

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Board member	Yes	No	Abstained
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Approval of Minutes

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested a motion for the approval of minutes from December 21, 2022, regular meeting.

Board member Janice P. Paul offered the motion and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

The voice vote was unanimous by the DSS Board.

Board member	Yes	No	Abstained
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

DSS Board Report

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs began with an expression of concern regarding the ending of the FNS Emergency Allotments and the Public Health Emergency stating it will have an effect on the community and staff. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about partnering with the Durham Food Security Coordinator and linking together outside resources.

The homeless population are most vulnerable with multiple illnesses and issues. The need to bring people together and look at system of care along with reviewing data to see how DSS fits into it and all the social determinants that are impacting people receiving services.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs is a part of the Familiar Faces Leadership Network which is an organization with the National Association of County Officials. Chair Commissioner Jacobs and Director Gudrun Palmer Criminal Justice Resource Center visited Haven for Hope in San Antonio Texas.

Approximately 1200 homeless people are served daily. All services needed by the people are on on-site including 900 units to support housing. Chair Commissioner Jacobs will forward the information to Interim Director Bradshaw to share.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs continued with the review and approval of board reports.

DSS Director's Report – Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw

Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw again welcomed County Attorney Alan A. Andrews stating DSS looked forward to working with him.

Interim Director Bradshaw advised that a lot of her time since the last meeting has been devoted to budget meetings with leadership, working on some mid-year needs, the Expanded Budget Request and the Agency's proposed budget for the new year.

Sharing from her report, she highlighted some changes within the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2023 recently passed by Congress and discussed some readiness efforts underway at DSS to prepare for the ending of FNS Emergency Allotments in March and the Public Health Emergency (currently set to expire on April 11, 2023). She advised around action being taken to prioritize, analyze vacancies, identify reallocation opportunities, fill vacancies more quickly and provide some training.

Finally, she advised that Joanne Pierce is scheduling a Goal 2 meeting soon and it is anticipated that we will learn more around some recent reorganization at the County Office, including the shift from General Managers to Assistant Managers.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Director Bradshaw for the detail report and opened questions from the Board. Chair Commissioner Jacobs expressed gratitude to Interim Director Bradshaw for looking to improve processes and how to do things better bringing years of knowledge. These are challenging times, and her help is very much appreciated.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman thanked Interim Director Bradshaw for the detailed report and her insight for improvement. Vice Chair Dr. Holsey-Hyman requested DSS host an informational session for students graduating in May from NCCU as well as potentially collaborating to support staff who may wish to further their education in the field of social work. A follow up meeting was mentioned and will be held at a later date.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about the population that will be impacted pertaining to the Medicaid continuous enrollment program phasing out. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens responded the number is not known because cases have not been terminated. Currently waiting for guidance from Medicaid, there could be approximately five thousand individuals.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith asked about shifting from general managers to assistant managers and is it related to position classification. Chair Commissioner Jacobs indicated the new county manager is restructuring leadership positions.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned some groups to consider communicating with around the PHE changes including Durham Center for Senior Life, Durham Congregation in Action, and Durham Public Schools.

Board member Janice P. Paul questioned the impact of implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield advised around the State's efforts and how this is being rolled out in phases.

Vacancy Report – James Hart

James Hart, HR Analyst, did not report this month.

Family Economic Independence (FEI) – Rhonda Stevens

Assistant Director is planning a meeting to communicate the changes mentioned in the Interim Director's report. Information will be shared with internal staff directly engaging with clients to communicate the changes to the community in a way they can understand. Information will be forwarded to community partners. There has been a discussion about hiring temps to assist with telephone calls and other recommendations. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens mentioned creating a QR code which can be utilized on smartphones.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy pointed out Public Health does a lot of work around nutrition and Durham Public Schools can be a great resource for communicating to families.

Interim Director Bradshaw mentioned the State has initiatives in place such as mass texting, mailing notices and e-notices through e-PASS (clients urged to setup an account and register through e-PASS to receive these).

Board member Janice P. Paul acknowledged FEI's program outcomes and percentages for surpassing expectations.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs commented on Work First and clients receiving higher paying jobs for better economic mobility and opportunities in Durham.

Child and Family Services – Jovetta Whitfield

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about relaunching of the Child Welfare Collaborative.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield plans to speak with Lynn Thomas and staff because that area will be handled by the worker responsible for mentoring the interns. Additional information will be provided at the February meeting.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the Safe Babies Court Team and if staff and DSS attorneys support the initiative. Durham County District Court 14 is looking to setting one up in Durham. More information will be available after the new Chief District Court Judge takes office. The focus would be on infants and procedures and support that the State will provide to achieve permanency in a more timely manner. Assistant Director Whitfield will meet with the DSS attorney and discuss collaborative work for everyone.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the data request from Emancipate NC. The request is for information relating to Interstate Compact. Assistant Director Whitfield reached out to the State because data is tracked by the Compact Office in Raleigh, NC.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield for the report.

Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) – Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason spoke about the emergency allotment going away and the effect relating to Food and Nutrition benefits. This will have a major impact on clients especially the elderly. Staff will be prepared to provide adequate information to clients about the changes.

Program Integrity received another charge letter in December added to the two already obtained from the State. Staff are working diligently to meet the State's deadline.

She advised some Customer Information staff were accepted in the Durham County Leadership Academy for 2023.

Congratulations to Pamela Purifoy featured as a Member Spotlight in the Partnership for a Healthy Durham newsletter.

Board member Janice P. Paul asked about the Durham Community Safety and Wellness Task Force. Chair Commissioner Jacobs responded the Community Wellness and Safety Task Force members are appointed by the city and county, the origin was reviewing non law enforcement responses and approach to community wellness and safety. They are wrapping up and preparing to make recommendations to the city and county.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman informed the Board the focus is more on violence and assessing survivors who have been victims of violence and trauma.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason.

Aging and Adult Services – Janeen Gordon

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon highlighted the Low-Income Homeowner Relief Program provided \$253,523.30 in tax support. Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) has served 1116 households for a total of \$373,800.

A discussion was held with the State's Adult Program representative around Senate Bill 105, and the lifting of the slot cap for the Special Assistance In-Home Program, and the waiting list. Durham has the highest wait list in North Carolina and the focus placed on reducing and depleting the list. A mid-year budget request was submitted to address staffing needed due to Durham being out of compliance (wait list). The State is looking at this is an eligibility program which may not require case managers.

Board member Janice P. Paul questioned programs becoming mandatory depending on eligibility versus the county voluntarily participating and providing funding. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon stated there has been a certain number of slots and allocations, therefore, slots were capped. As of July 1st, the cap was removed, and expectation was to eliminate the waiting list. Durham has the largest wait list because people are coming off and more are added. AAS is working toward hiring temps until permanent staff are in place and trained. The program was paused for six months to see if the General Assembly was going to assist with funding for the counties, but they opted out.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked who is providing in-home services and is it getting funded. In-home services are provided by Medicaid providers. Chair Commissioner Jacobs emphasized the challenges and needs because the population is growing. Chair Commissioner Jacobs will look into getting DSS on the agenda at the legislative breakfast January 23rd.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith mentioned the Medicaid Administrative funding that will be reduced soon and proposed that to be mentioned at the legislative breakfast. Interim Director Bradshaw indicated the State is trying to work collaboratively with counties to make sure there is a seamless transition.

Operationally, we are currently dealing with the long process that has taken place to fill positions and excessive turnovers. Other program areas need additional staff, but due to the number of vacancies, requesting new positions is not feasible. Further, the County Manager is repurposing eight positions from DSS.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs congratulated AAS on the increase of the Low-Income Housing Relief Program.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman inquired about the eight positions the County Manager is taking from DSS. Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw stated the positions will be removed from the budget and repurposed. They are FEI vacancies that have been vacant for a long time.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked everyone for the information and moved to Business Operations.

Business Operations – Margaret Faircloth, Kelly Inman

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman reported the rough draft of the new service spending request has been submitted and the budget must be in SAP February 10th. Recommendations will be provided at the next board meeting.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman has not received an update on 300 block parking. The distribution of new hang tags and placards to staff has started.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about adequate parking for customers. According to Chief Operations Officer Inman implied customers are creating parking spaces and there is parking on the streets. No complaints have been received from the public.

Maintenance issues are increasing within the building and a meeting with General Services is scheduled to discuss frequent complaints. The main issue is the HVAC system and General Services is conversing with the vendor.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Chief Operations Office Inman for the report and thanked leadership for the detail conversations around important issues.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked the staff and County Attorney Andrews for their presence at the DSS Board Meeting.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved for the DSS Board to go to closed session to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character fitness, conditions of appointment or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee, or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or events by or against an individual public officer or employee. General personnel policy issues may not be considered in a closed session. A public body may not consider the qualifications, competence or performance character fitness appointment or removal of member of the public body or another body and may not consider or fill vacancy among its own membership, except in an open meeting. Final action making an appointment or discharge or removal by public body. Having final authority for the appointment or discharge or removal shall be taken in an open meeting.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs entertained a motion to approve going into closed session for the reasons stated.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion and Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman seconded.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved forward with a voice vote.

Board member	Yes	No	Abstained
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

The voice vote was unanimous.

The DSS Board returned to regular meeting. No action taken.

The meeting was adjourned by a majority vote.

Respectfully submitted

_____	_____
Chairperson	Date

_____	_____
Secretary to the Board	Date