

# **Durham County Board of Social Services**

## **Regular Session Minutes**

**June 12, 2024**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, June 12, 2024. The DSS Board Meeting was hybrid, in-person attendance in Conference Rooms 2421/22.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance: Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs; Board members: Jacqueline Beatty-Smith, Charles I. Mitchell, and Wendy Sotolongo.

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Director Maggie Cveticanin, and Deputy Director Valery Dambreville

Assistant Directors: Margaret Faircloth, Jovetta Whitfield, Latoya Chambers (Interim), Cynthia Cason (Interim), Kimberly Lincoln (Interim) and Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman.

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, , Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Susan Lee, Pamela Purifoy, Tonia Gay, Emma Perry, Lee Little, Carole Trimble, James Hart and Montrella Springfield

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the June 12, 2024, regular meeting to order. The public charge was read by Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved forward with the approval of the agenda.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to review and approve the proposed agenda. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda and Board member Wendy Sotolongo seconded.

The agenda was unanimously approved.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		

## **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the May Regular Meeting will be available for approval at the July Board meeting.

## **Chair Report**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs conveyed the County Budget was approved Monday, June 10, 2024. This is a historic budget because it is getting close to \$1 billion dollars, staff did an amazing job trying to meet the request from Durham Public Schools. Many departments made sacrifices and there is only 3% cost of living this year. Deputy Manager Claudia Hager, Keith Lane and staff were innovative with minimizing the impact on the tax rate by utilizing \$5 million of ARPA funds which is federal money and \$2 million in fund balance. Property taxes were raised to 4.65 which the highest amount. Also, because some of the money is one time the county budget will start out in a hole next year. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs encouraged everyone to vote in the upcoming election and advocate for the need for the state to fund public education. The County is taking on responsibilities for things that should come from state taxes and hundreds of millions of dollars are going to private schools.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about hiring freeze and it was clarified that DSS positions are considered critical. Thanks to Director Maggie Clapp and Program Manager Meghan Russ funding was increased for emergency rental assistance eviction diversion program in the amount of \$780,000 and \$650,000 from the City. Durham Pre-K received increased funding which is critical to families.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the priority list for childcare. Durham Pre-K asked whether they can be considered as a priority for childcare vouchers. Parents can't take advantage of Durham Pre-K because they need childcare for younger children. Chair Commissioner Jacobs requested an update or discuss the priority areas at the July Board meeting.

## **Director's Report- Director Maggie Clapp**

Director Maggie Clapp conveyed DSS Budget was reduced about \$1,143,392 which was 10% across the board which included reduction in mandated programs LIEAP and Tax Relief Program. An email was sent regarding the hiring freeze and copied DSS Board Chair, County Manager and Assistant County Manager to explain the significant challenges. It was based off the increase enrollment through Medicaid Expansion over the next two years. Durham DSS has reclassified positions and reduced the number of temporary employees. A hiring freeze will also affect other divisions within the agency. Finance has six vacancies and staff are working overtime preparing the budget. All the divisions were advocated for to be exempt so positions can be filled. Director Clapp is awaiting a response from the County Manager.

Director Clapp hosted Let's Chat with staff and received a lot of good questions. Staff reached out to after the meetings, extended appreciation and suggested continuing to have the chats.

Director Maggie Clapp mentioned the facility issues occurring in the complex. Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman and staff are working on the concern around cleanliness and making sure areas are stocked with needed items.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked for clarification relating to LIEAP because it is federally funded. Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth indicated the administrative portion was cut from a line in the budget for temporary staff. Funds were pulled down even though the line was cut, and it did not stop reimbursement. It is not cutting revenue, that line was just used for temporary staff. Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the Low Income Home Relief Program being cut due to funds not being utilized last year. Assistant Director Faircloth replied it is not necessarily cut from the county just less in DSS Budget. They are holding funds and if the allocation is spent it can be appropriated from the

general fund to the DSS budget. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about cutting salary for the hiring freeze. Approximately \$250,000 and also looked at overtime dollars. Whenever the County Manager suggests a hiring freeze, they have to put a monetary amount in place.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about temporary positions being reduced and the area that will be impacted. The impact will affect all divisions, leadership will continue to review.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs stressed the need to get clarification on the positions and thanked Director Clapp for the Question and Answer Session with staff.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved forward with the division reports. Chair Commissioner Jacobs welcomes Interim Assistant Director Latoya Chambers for Family Economic Independence.

### **Family Economic Independence (FEI) – Latoya Chambers, Interim Assistant Director**

Interim Assistant Director Latoya Chambers submitted a written report.

Program Manager Tonia Gay reported for FEI due to Interim Assistant Director Chambers on leave.

Program Manager Gay started with reminder everyone about the Hunger Awareness Kickoff. The food drive runs through June 14, 2024, and the distribution will be June 25, 2024, at the Human Services building from 10:00am to 3:00pm.

Child Care Subsidy is working with the Child Care Services Association on individual appointments with families and group sessions. Families are

being taken out to help select providers, showing them how to look at the ratings of the building and look at student feature ratio.

Food and Nutrition recertification for May was 97.83% which is above the 95% expectation.

Program Manager Tonia Gay acknowledged FEI staff for doing an amazing job.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs observed in the report 185 families are waiting for a provider which is a crisis. A message was received that headlined childcare breakdowns costing North Carolina \$5.65 billion in lost economic impact. Hopefully the state will come through for the childcare crisis.

### **Medicaid – Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason**

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason submitted a written report.

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason highlighted Medicaid staff participating in the Health and Wellness Event on June 1, 2024. It was a great opportunity to connect with the community and share information about Medicaid.

Interim Assistant Director Cason gave a shout-out to staff for passing the report card for timeliness the past four months. Special Assistance passed the report cards in both categories at 100%, great job. The Medicaid Expansion enrollment numbers reached 12,166.

### **Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) - Kimberly Lincoln, Interim Assistant Director**

Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln highlighted the theme words for the team are adjust and readjust. They are looking at quality and want to ensure that not only in service areas. QT staff have visited other counties to make sure assistance can be received in meeting training needs.

The Call Center is serving Durham County residents as best possible through the call center and looking at items that have come up. Training was set up to ensure call center staff are equipped with what they need and able to handle the system.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the main issues happening in the call center. There is an issue with some of the numbers, when you press numbers they may be assigned to another area and sometimes you are not getting through to anyone. Currently the system is being evaluated to see if adjustments are needed. Chair Commissioner Jacobs indicated that could be a technology issue. CCR the consulting firm noticed that in their assessment. Director Maggie Clapp mentioned that the contract was changed with CCR, they are going to continue to work with DSS.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged the work CATD is doing within the agency.

### **Child and Family Services (CFS) - Jovetta Whitfield, Assistant Director**

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield pointed out the Community Social Services Assistants will be recognized in June. They are the group of individuals supporting Child Welfare by transporting to and from business and monitoring visits, including weekends. Assistant Director Whitfield met with the Children Services Committee, and they studied that the child

welfare social workers workforce spend about 15% or more time is spent on transportation. Thanks to the CSSA for their service to DSS.

The LINKS celebration will be at Frankie's on June 18, 2024, from 2:00pm-5:00pm. DSS will be recognizing young adults 14 and up, their accomplishments along with graduates from high school and college. Board members are welcome to attend the event.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Whitfield.

### **Aging and Adult Services (AAS) - Valery Dambreville, Deputy Director**

Deputy Director Valery Dambreville submitted a written report.

Program Managers Lee Little and Meghan Russ were recognized for planning the first large Aging and Adult Services event in June for Elder Abuse Awareness Month. The color for Elder Abuse Awareness is purple and will be held June 15, 2024, from 9:00am-11:00am. Board members Jacqueline Beatty-Smith and Wendy Sotolongo are planning to attend the event.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Program Managers Meghan Russ and Lee Little for planning the event and including community partners.

### **Finance - Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth**

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth asked if the DSS Board had questions.

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth mentioned staff are working on new contracts for next fiscal year. Management is working on filling positions along with HR Analyst James Hart.



## **Business Operations - Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman**

Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman asked the Board if they had any questions.

Northwoods Traverse limited production is scheduled to begin next week. Supervisors and trainers will be first to start the new process.

Program Integrity's first year of having a tax intercept for funds of \$1.6 million and DSS will keep about 20%.

There are a lot of custodial concerns and that is something being dealt with by the vendor. They are having staffing struggles and a hard time acclimating to the increase in staff and the building. DSS is continuing to work with General Services to resolve any issues.

## **Vacancy Report - James Hart**

James Hart submitted the Vacancy Report.

As mentioned earlier, working to process selection packages across the agency.

There are concerns with the changes in benefits and the County has notified staff if they selected the premium plan they will be given an opportunity to transition to a different plan.

The vacancy rate is at a good level. HR Analyst James Hart attended the local government career expo at NC State and approximately 3000 people registered. Peer counties were in attendance and displayed positions available. Durham needs to maintain their ability to hire for positions not only to meet mandates, but it is a competitive market and with the benefits changing we need to attract qualified workforce.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Jame Hart for the report. The BOCC approved \$1,000,000 to help cover burden financially related to new benefits package. The County Manager advised they were working on a solution.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the vacancy rate. The vacancy rate is at 12% which is good considering the challenges faced with Medicaid Expansion and the new positions. The reclassification of positions and the analysis conducted by the Director along with staff shows we are at a good place. Internal promotions are still moving forward across the agency. Staff are moving into QAT trainers' positions and lead roles within the income maintenance area. Trying to keep abreast in case hiring freeze.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked the management team for attending the DSS Board Meeting.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved forward with the discussion of board policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

_____	_____
Chairperson	Date

_____	_____
Secretary to the Board	Date