

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Thursday, May 27, 2021

1:00 P.M. Virtual Budget Work Session

**MINUTES**

Place: Commissioners' Chambers, second floor, Durham County Government  
Administrative Complex, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, NC

Present: Chair Brenda Howerton, Vice Chair Wendy Jacobs, and Commissioners Nida  
Allam, Nimasheena Burns, and Heidi Carter

Presiders: Chair Brenda Howerton

**21-0348 ARPA Funding Planning Steps and Vaccine Equity Proposal Discussion**

Interim County Manager Claudia Hager provided the Board with the ARPA funding update. The presentation included information regarding key dates, the five primary ways counties may invest ARPA funds, GFOA American Rescue Plan Act Guiding Principles, grant compliance, the draft Guiding Principles for ARPA Fund Usage, recommended budget ARPA allocations for FY21-22, potential ARPA allocations for FY21-22, example ARPA fund use categories based on budget discussions and/or funding gaps related to COVID-19, and next steps.

Interim Manager Hager noted the American Rescue Plan allocation for Durham County was \$62,445,275, half of which would be received by the end of June and the other half would be received the following fiscal year.

Vice Chair Jacobs suggested adding the following to the draft Guiding Principles:

- Coordination with the City and DPS around mutually identified priorities or projects (e.g. Countywide broadband)
- Measurable goals that were community wide (e.g. workforce development); possibly partner with the City on these

Interim Manager Hager confirmed that some of the recommended budget ARPA allocations were reimbursable by FEMA. She discussed which expenses the County would seek reimbursement for.

Regarding whether there was enough staff and organization to keep track of all the current and upcoming State and Federal funding opportunities, Interim Manager Hager discussed how staff was tracking opportunities and ensuring compliance. She believed the current infrastructure for this tracking needed to be looked at to ensure coordination was being optimized.

Interim Manager Hager stated that the overall ARPA guidelines were the same for the City and County, but the Guiding Principles the County created may be slightly different than the ones the City created.

Commissioner Burns advocated for the County to focus ARPA funds on things the State would not be focusing grant funding on. She understood the importance of collaborating with the City and DPS but wanted the Board to be cognizant of the fact that each body was charged with different duties and the State was still determining how much would be allocated to which priorities. Interim Manager Hager noted that staff was having conversations with community partners and planning to identify funding gaps once State dollars were allocated.

Interim Manager Hager discussed the fund application process and noted it was a simple process and more details would be hashed out at a future meeting. Susan Tezai, Chief Financial Officer, provided more insight into the application process and noted the County already had everything in place and was ready to go.

Commissioner Burns announced that the application process for funds offered by the SBA went live the previous night.

Rodney Jenkins, Public Health Director, discussed the Vaccine Equity Proposal.

General Manager Joanne Pierce announced that the Durham County Public Health Department was the recipient of an award from National Association of Counties (NACo). The Board thanked Mr. Jenkins and his staff for their work and congratulated them on the award.

Vice Chair Howerton and Mr. Jenkins discussed the RFP in the proposal. Commissioner Burns expressed similar concerns regarding following established processes. She hoped a budget as well as measurable deliverables would be provided soon. She discussed the importance of not only providing funds but also being intentional. Ms. Pierce stated that staff would participate and have the necessary conversations to embed equity principles into this work and provide the measurable outcomes to support the proposal.

Mr. Jenkins provided the Board with an update on the pandemic and vaccination data.

Mr. Jenkins noted that he and the COVID vaccine operations team had questions about the proposal but were in support of the County moving forward with this.

Vice Chair Jacobs also looked forward to receiving more information regarding measurable outcomes and a budget for the proposal.

Interim Manager Hager announced two other NACo awards given to the County.

### **21-0349 DSS - Phase III Medicaid and Tax Relief Program Discussion**

Ben Rose, DSS Director, presented the Board with information regarding the DSS budget request and Medicaid Phase III.

Mr. Rose announced that DSS was removed from the State Medicaid Corrective Action in January 2021 and passed the Medicaid Report Card each month since April 2020.

Vice Chair Jacobs noted the DSS Board recommendation for the approval of the HOMES program and the City contributing funds for the cost of the administration of it. Interim Manager Hager confirmed the updated proposal would be provided to the Board and the City Council soon.

Interim Manager Hager explained the reasoning behind citizens being allowed to apply to only one tax exemption program even when they qualified for more. This was standard procedure and done by Mecklenburg County as well.

Dwane Brinson, Tax Administrator, discussed the tax program qualifications for the public's benefit.

Interim Manager Hager stated that current projections showed about 3,200 families would be helped at the 30 percent AMI level. She discussed the plan for staff to run analytics and determine whether the AMI could be increased—more information regarding this would be presented to the Board once available.

Vice Chair Jacobs voiced support for DSS's request for an Aging Adult Services Manager and an Account Tech III Manager.

Commissioner Carter voiced her support for the pilot, scaling up the AMI, and using ARPA funds for the positions needed for the administration of the HOMES program. She noted the City's property tax outreach and suggested the County piggyback the efforts. Commissioner Carter hoped staff or the DSS Board would consider including Habitat for Humanity homeowners who qualified under the AMI requirements but had not owned their home for more than 10 years.

### **21-0350 Early Childhood and Pre-K Discussion**

Cate Elander, Early Childhood Coordinator, provided the Board with an update regarding the Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP) and the Durham PreK.

Ms. Elander noted that conversations were occurring regarding the need to focus on a long-term funding framework for the Durham PreK.

Commissioner Carter advocated for adding additional funds towards the Durham PreK as there were many benefits to the community and measures the County tracked.

Commissioner Carter wondered whether there was a way for staff to help identify programs the County was already investing in that were working and provided important community support around mental health services/counseling (e.g. paramedicine program). Interim Manager Hager stated that staff was currently planning a coordinated conversation to provide the Board with a sense of current investments as well as some discussion about the Stepping Up Initiative work. General Manager Jodi Miller noted the discussion regarding behavioral health infrastructure was planned for the June 3rd Budget Work Session and Gudrun Parmer, Criminal Justice Resource Center Director, would be present to discuss the work around the Stepping Up Initiative.

**Directives:**

- **Ms. Elander to confirm to the Board whether the Wash and Learn program would continue to be funded.**
- **Interim Manager Hager to provide the Board with more clarity regarding what was in the budget related to early childhood supports and whether more funding was needed (through ARPA investments, if not County dollars).**

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tania De Los Santos", written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Tania De Los Santos  
Administrative Assistant