**Durham County Board of Social Services**

 **Regular Session Minutes**

**February 16, 2022**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022. The DSS Board meeting will remain virtual due to rising COVID-19 cases.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance: Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs, 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: Director William Rose, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy, Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman, Assistant Directors: Krystal Harris, Jovetta Whitfield, Rhonda Stevens, Janeen Gordon and Margaret Faircloth. DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, Kalindra Ellerbe, Lee Little, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Angela Bellamy, Susan Lee, Terri Reichert, Shontelle Smith, Lynn Thomas, Darlene Whitfield, Pamela Purifoy, John Kenion and Montrella Springfield.

James Hart, DSS Human Resources Analyst attended the meeting.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the February 16, 2022, DSS Board meeting to order at 3:03 pm.

**Public Comments**

No public comments

**Approval of the Agenda**

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

The agenda was unanimously approved by voice vote.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs Yes

Board member Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the Regular Meeting on January 19, 2022, were approved by the DSS Board.

Board member Janice P. Paul offered a motion to approve the minutes as written, and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

They were unanimously approved by voice vote.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs Yes

Board member Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Chair Report**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs did not have anything major to report and will comment during the reports. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned budget season and the omicron numbers trending down. The numbers around 28% the highest seen since March 2020. The numbers are down to 11% decrease in the positive rate. The goal is at least 5% or below which will have a big impact on every level.

**Director’s Report**

Director William Rose submitted a written report.

Director William Rose stated Public Health Director Jenkins reported at the department head meeting the number was down to 8% positive rate.

DSS is reassessing services to maybe start reopening several lobbies in the spring if the trends continue. There is a workforce group led by Kalindra Ellerbe analyzing the use of technology. Building safety within DSS practice is important. DSS has never closed, services have been provided in a different way. Returning to some normality after two years is welcoming.

Director William Rose conveyed a presentation will be given by the Business Operations later in the meeting.

DSS staff will present at the budget retreat on the Low-Income Homeowners Relief Program. Aging and Adult Services leadership are working on a PowerPoint. This will probably be a new business item on the March agenda since the DSS Board set the policy for the program.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon and Program Manager Lee Little will report on ERAP. A meeting was held prior to the board meeting with a consultant to discuss a housing strategic plan for DSS. The consultant is well qualified to assist with housing market. Director Rose will keep the Board informed.

Director William Rose expressed good things are happening and happy about the direction DSS is moving. New Business will be added to the agenda in March and April for discussion.

There will be information on the multi-disciplinary team in April. Director Rose and Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield will be meeting Dr. Snyder and Beth Gifford regarding the Duke, CPS evaluation and will bring information on the study. This has been a three-year project due to interruptions from Covid. This project which includes data has great opportunities for future research and grants, along with great partnership.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged the new initiatives and the ability to focus on other things. Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the Duke study? Director William Rose indicated the work has not been published and will probably take several months. DSS will be engaging in a few partnerships in child welfare that will benefit Families Moving Forward and Child Welfare Transformation.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs posed a question relating to housing.

Director William Rose specified the meetings with the consultant detailed a little internal review of what DSS entails, local and state housing and affordable housing and services Hopefully bring forward a strategic plan and some recommendations both to the DSS Board and eventually the BOCC.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs spoke about the Stepping-up initiative to reduce the percentage of people in jail with mental issues. The most important thing that was missing from the system is housing. It is difficult for people to do anything if they don’t have safe and secure housing.

Director Rose agreed with the importance of housing and stability. Affordable housing is an issue in many communities.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about a meeting with Anthony Scott at Durham Housing Authority. Is there an updated report relating to the vaccination rate of the residents? According to Director Rose updates have not been reported to the Durham Director’s Group. Director Rose forwarded a letter of support that was written for the project Durham Housing Authority had taken on with Durham Children Initiatives and DSS is a partner as well. A direct report has not been received. There was talk with Public Health about the vaccination rates which were low.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman talked about a student’s research project on homelessness in Los Angeles and how the County and State purchased recreation vehicles. Additional research showed RVs lined up and down the street to house the homeless. Now they are trying to bring in mobile facilities for mental health assistance.

Director William Rose commended the BOCC for the 300 and 500 project. This is needed to create more infrastructure needed for providing healthy housing. Affordable housing is hard to find and purchasing a home requires an enormous income. DSS leadership discussion with the consultant includes helping us to find our role and how to be more effective and efficient as an agency relating to housing.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Director William Rose for his oral, and written report.

**Vacancy Report**

HR Analyst James Hart highlighted the work staff are doing relating to the hiring process. The ability to maintain staffing levels and moving forward with the new created positions especially with challenging recruits. Positions have been filled and we continue to look at ways to enhance the process. Looking at ways to make positions more attractive to candidates. DSS Management and Hiring Team attended a training facilitated by UNC. DSS agencies talked about their processes and recommendations were received. Other larger counties are having the same challenges.

Recruitment is going well, and staff are moving. The main focus will shift to retention because increasing the number of active employees to a greater rate is essential.

The BOCC approved bonuses and the vacation buy back to see how that will affect staff staying at Durham County. We are looking at what DSS can do internally to retain staff.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs recognized HR is one of the most challenging areas and your work is really appreciated. Lateral movement opens vacancies, but staff are remaining at DSS.

Board member Janice P. Paul inquired about reclassifications listed on the report and upgrading positions to encourage more applicants.

James Hart conveyed it is two folded, a lot have been completed recently and through the budget process. Evaluating internal resources to meet other needs in the agency. Discussions have resulted in looking in either reclassified positions to meet those needs as opposed to going and requesting additional positions. Lateral moves are career steps for individuals as a result of reclassifications which serves a dual purpose.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked James Hart for the vacancy report and additional information.

**Family Economic Independence (FEI) – Rhonda Stevens, Assistant Director**

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens highlighted information related to Pre-K. A meeting was held to retrieve information about enrollment and distributed out as well. Saturday meetings hindered the distribution. A decision was made to have more frequent meetings to stay in touch with partners. Due to the pandemic meetings were delayed, but everyone was familiar with the Durham Guaranteed Income Pilot. An invitation was sent to have a representative from the program attend the monthly FEI supervisors’ meeting and present.

Another item is a pilot for NC for Help. This a pilot involving several surrounding counties to speak about chronic health issues for individuals in the community. A meeting was held to distribute information to DSS clients through the Career Center and other areas. Participation is needed in the study looking at some of the chronic health diseases. The meeting was very informative, and they are looking at serving 600 clients. This is a project with UNC, more information will come.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman asked about hiring for the supervisor and program manager positions. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens indicated one program manager position had been filled and recruiting for the other one. It has been challenging; however, a new hire is expected on Monday.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith congratulated FEI staff on passing twenty-two consecutive months of the Medicaid report card. Assistant Director Stevens will pass the congrats to FEI staff.

Board member Janice P. Paul stated FEI staff are doing a spectacular job especially given all the obstacles and challenges. Board member Janice P. Paul affirmed staff are very much appreciated and acknowledged.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs agreed with the acknowledgements from board members and delighted during the pandemic staff-maintained excellence.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about merging Child Care Subsidy with Pre-K to help parents with before and after school care with child care subsidy. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens responded the question came up during the meeting and there will be a follow-up to look closer at the priority list funded by a grant and the cost.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs informed the DSS Board that Pre-K is run by a governance committee consisting of early childhood educators and researchers. Child care is a big problem for working parents.

Board member Janice P. Paul moved back to recognition regarding FEI staff and hoping the division is not penalized during the budget. They continue to excel with a staff shortage, but this is not normal which adds large workload, stress and other challenges which should not be taken for granted. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens appreciates the recognition from the DSS Board and will share with staff.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman congratulated FEI and spoke about a family issue they are currently facing. DSS staff have assisted her, but what about others requiring help to complete Medicaid applications. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman thanked staff for their assistance and for services provided to the people in Durham.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs is on the County Audit Committee and there was only one finding for DSS which related to Medicaid. This was fantastic especially with staffing issues, pandemic, and staff out sick. Chair Commissioner Jacobs acknowledged the FEI Division.

**Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) – Krystal Harris, Assistant Director**

Assistant Director Krystal Harris submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris highlighted new hires on the Quality Assurance Team. Increasing training classes will be great for the agencies, but it becomes challenging for QAT when looking at providing training mentoring because of the capacity needed to support all the programs. Staff are doing their best to train everybody quickly and prepare them to go onto the floor.

It is good work with the new QC Tool that County IT is working on for economic services. Good work on services side, but it has been slow, now starting to pick up. Once complete it will be very helpful for staff to be able to utilize the QC Tool in an internet-based system instead of using spreadsheets. CATD is working very hard, and there is a lot going on but trying to keep up with pace.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged CATD staff for all the different functions they oversee in the agency.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman inquired about the position relating to internships. Assistant Director Harris has been unsuccessfully with finding someone to fill the position. There have been multiple incidents that delayed the process. People are not showing up for interviews and asking for high salaries. The supervisor title maybe the cause for the high salary request. The position will be renamed because it is actually a Social Worker III that will provide supervision for interns. The change can possibly bring more applicants. Vice Chair Holsey-Hyman suggested changing the name to Field Liaison.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris agreed regarding the position title and thanked Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman for the suggestion. Assistant Director Harris conveyed if an applicant is not hired during the current interviews, there will be definitely a shift to something different.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy added the particular situation can be used to highlight freeze on hiring impact and the ripple effect for month and years down the road because the hiring and recruitment landscape is different today than when the position was posted. If there are future situations which cause a hiring freeze, decreasing from a year to months would be more beneficial. It is shocking the position has not been filled. The amount of time and energy spent on one position is concerning.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman thought the field liaison could open doors for people doing field placement external supervision. Vice Chair Holsey-Hyman is willing to distribute to people doing external supervision in North Carolina and will continue to assist.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris did a survey before the holidays, asking internal employees inquiring about potentially providing supervision for interns and received responses from eleven people. She plans to meet with the Director and Deputy Director. Recruitment will continue until the position is filled.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith requested the information to pass on to the Mentor and Mentee Program.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked everyone for the team effort on this issue. Chair Commissioner Jacobs questioned agency-wide professional development listed on the report. This will be an opportunity to show appreciation for staff and the DSS Board will support this happening. Chair Commissioner Jacobs invited Deputy Director Williamson-Hardy to take the lead.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris looking at alternatives since everyone cannot get together. Social Work Month will be celebrated in March. Public Information Officer Pamela Purifoy is preparing recognition which will lead off recognition months.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about funds to assist with the recognition. Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy mentioned utilizing the County Stadium to plan an event for all staff.

The Executive Leadership Team presented supervisors a token of appreciation the week of Valentine which included a cake pop, appreciation message and poem.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs expressed gratitude to Assistant Director Krystal Harris and CATD staff.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield reported Child and Family Services continues to grasp legislative changes in addition to the child welfare transformation.

There are other things CFS involved with as well that is not part of Child Welfare Transformation. More information of Child Welfare Transformation will be added to the report in March upon receipt from NC Integrated Care for Kids (NCInCk). This is a multi-year grant working with families and children involved in-home and permanency planning. The front load is making sure services and needs are met to fit in with Families First model. This is not part of the State’s Child Welfare Transformation. It does not include all 100 counties; Durham is part of the pilot.

Child and Family Services are continuing to see turnover among staff. Throughout child welfare filling positions are challenging for various reasons.

There are some challenging cases that the DSS Board has been made aware of by Director William Rose. The challenges are increasing and puts a bad light on child welfare in the midst of trying to transform. .

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield and acknowledged keeping the DSS Board informed all the time. Chair Commissioner Jacobs expressed concern for staff due to challenging cases.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield mentioned numbers decreasing in foster care which shifts the funding from permanency plan over to in-home services and families to keep children in the home.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman inquired about donating items for Social Work Month. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs agreed along with Board members. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield thanked the DSS Board for their support.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith thanked Assistant Director Whitfield for the information relating to the partnership with Durham County Early Childhood Coordinator. The North Carolina Museum of History will hold an African American author session called Tarheel Tales. The author of the book is Tameka Fryer Brown. It is very important to share these books with children, youth, and parents.

Assistant Director Whitfield conveyed community partners and others have reached out to support youth in foster care. Someone sent Valentine cards to youth in foster care.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy shared giving gift cards to the social workers came to mind last year, but was not shared because there is a month for almost every type of work in the agency. Deputy Director Williamson-Hardy wanted the DSS Board to have all the information about how many months of recognition for the different categories of work.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman thanked Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy for the information.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs suggested DSS Board members contact the Director’s Office if they want to contribute by the end February.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs wished Child and Family Services the best with the ongoing challenges with vacancies.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked if the legislative changes will be reflected in the budget this year. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield conveyed a proposal for Families First will be in the budget.

**Aging and Adult Services (AAS) – Janeen Gordon, Assistant Director**

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon highlighted Senate Bill 105. The bill is making a drastic change in special assistance within in-home services. This will be reflected in the budget. The cap was lifted on number of individuals that can be served and there cannot be a waiting list. Four staff are working 130 cases and 74 people are on the waiting list. Legislation says anyone eligible basically can receive services which includes the general public. The program has to be reorganized for this to happen.

Staff have gone through all direct allocations for ERAP 1&2 and NC Pro for ERAP. The BOCC approved the contract with NC Pro for ERAP2 dollars. A number of applications are still waiting to be funded. Once those dollars are drawn down the plan is to move the remaining dollars into Eviction Diversion and Opening Doors programs to continue providing to the community longer to support evictions and people wanting to be rehoused due to homelessness. This will be another change for AAS and Crisis Services.

The Homeowners Relief Program has wrapped up. Another thing within the community, the cost of energy is increasing, therefore, CIP and LIEAP dollars are not going as far as the past. There is Covid and Care Act dollars available to help until depleted.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about running out of LIEAP dollars. Assistant Director Gordon replied a certain amount is given per family. Chair Commissioner Jacobs questioned communicating with the provider to re-evaluate within the context of the current economic conditions or inflationary costs. Assistant Director Gordon has not conversated with Duke. There is a small pot of County that can assist up to $200.00. Federal dollars used to help in Crisis Services and during the winter will not go as far this year.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens commented on legislative changes impacting eligibility in FEI because of determining eligibility for an individual.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs queried about the new requirement cap lifted and no longer having a waiting list. What funding is associated for these items. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman reported MAC and Medicaid administrative claiming to support the positions at 50/50.

Director William Rose stated definitely financial impact on the County with the increase in service. MAC funding is unlimited in terms of staff support.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked if reflected in this year’s budget? Chief Operations Officer Inman conveyed it is listed as a priority area. AAS staff plan to attend training to get a better way to estimate the impact for the County.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested the total amount spent for the Homeowners Relief Program. There were 197 applications approved. According to Assistant Director Gordon 198 applications were approved and 28 pending.

Total spent $141,000.14 for Homeowners Relief Program which was a lot less than what was allocated. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman pointed out in total for direct to client the County $750.00 and City $500.00.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon plans to regroup and debrief the program and make recommendations to Director Rose changes to support residents.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested providing the amount needed in the budget for the program. Director William Rose conveyed the line item 2 was underspent, which included some city dollars which is potentially for some reallocation which would assist in other areas where help is needed.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Janeen Gordon and Program Manager Lee Little for a great job.

**Business Operations (BO) – Kelly Inman, Chief Operations Officer**

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted a written report.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman introduced Angela Bellamy, Supervisor Child Support Services. Mrs. Bellamy is retiring after 28 years of amazing service in Child Support. Angela Bellamy actually has a total of 33 years which include other entities and has enjoyed her time at Durham County. Mrs. Bellamy acknowledged DSS for the great job they are doing and thanked the DSS Board. The DSS Board and DSS Attendees congratulated Angela Bellamy.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned the Locate Leaders in the report. The locate leaders assist with locating non-custodial parents. Yahira Santana, Wanda Boyd, Kay Johnson, Sonya Hawley and Willisa McGee are the Locate Leaders and were recognized by the DSS Board.

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth will present the Budget highlights to the DSS Board. A detailed copy will be attached to the DSS Board meeting minutes.

FY 23 Priority Requests include:

* Services mandated to support Families First
* Positions for mandated services to support Families First
* Positions to support Aging and Adult Services
* Positions for Agency-wide support
* QAT Positions to support quality assurance of Child Welfare
* Positions to support FEI
* Positions to support Child Support
* Services to Agency-wide support
* Positions to support AAS & Business
* Fleet vehicle replacement

Director William Rose commented DSS actually reduced spending requests substantially in pre-budget meeting. Positions were reduced to reclassifications strategies and reallocation of temp dollars.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman reminded everyone the budget was submitted on Friday and the States estimates were received Monday after the BOCC meeting. There is another budget meeting scheduled and the response will be based on the State estimates for special assistance to know what we need. The numbers will be tweeted on the County split number for special assistance.

Director Rose emphasized the need to account for that in the budget if there is an increase in services.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy referred to the conversation when HR Analyst James Hart was presenting on recruitment and retention and the question came up regarding so many reclassifications’ positions. That is being shared as part of our budget process, looking at internal positions and making the best decision on how to balance the need for FTEs, along with being conscious of the budget. DSS chose to reallocate a significant number of positions on the list.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs implied great, and it might be helpful and suggested a slide to show the due diligence DSS has done.

Director William Rose talked about temp positions versus permanent positions turnover and suggested moving forward and make permanent positions. The cost is neutral or there will be savings.

Assistant Director Faircloth indicated three new vehicles to support priorities related to Families First legislation and Senate Bill 105 for special assistance.

The reimbursement for the vehicles will be approximately 50%.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs suggested adding the information to give context and adding utilizing hybrids which is consistent with the County renewable energy plan.

Assistant Director Faircloth reported every allocation on the State level having problems spending. There are problems trying to get funds out to the counties. If we are running out of CIP funds contacting the State for additional funding would be an option.

There is an increase in Child Welfare and the family reunification has decreased.

Decrease in adult daycare, which probably was caused due to Covid. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman mentioned the impact on local providers per adult daycare.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs recommended making sure funding is not cut out for adult daycare. Director Rose indicated a lot of coordination with the Senior Center. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon reminded everyone about the capped amount of DSS clients that could go to the adult daycare and because of the cap that kind of lowered the amount of spending. People expired and some went into facilities which we dropped from 25 clients to 12. New clients could not be assessed along with the onset of Covid. Assistant Director Faircloth spoke on adult home specialist decrease. The adult home specialist monitors adult care homes for compliance which is mandated.

Chief Operations Officer Inman stated DSS reached maximum, so the reallocation based on the number really hurt DSS.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs suggested an explanation under each one to give context on why it decreased or increased.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth for highlighting the budget which is very complicated.

Director William Rose thanked Business Operations staff for putting the presentation together.

**New Business**

Director William Rose informed the board no new business today. Items will be added in the coming months.

**Unfinished Business**

No changes to Unfinished Business and Board Action Items

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted

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Chairperson Date

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Secretary to the Board Date