**Durham County Board of Social Services**

**Regular Session Minutes**

**June 15, 2022**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, June 15, 2022. The DSS Board meeting continues to be virtual due to COVID-19.

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

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Director William Rose, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy and Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman; Assistant Directors: Krystal Harris, Rhonda Stevens, and Margaret Faircloth

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, Kalindra Ellerbe, Lee Little, Darlene Whitfield, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Susan Lee, Quanesha Archer, Lynn Thomas, Christie McMillan, Pamela Purifoy, Ella Hargrove, Emma Perry, and Loretta Roberts

DSS Human Resources Analyst James Hart attended the meeting.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the 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 Janice P. Paul offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda and Board member Charles I. Mitchell 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 Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to approve an excused absence for Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith. Board member Janice P. Paul offered a motion to excuse the absence of Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The excused absence was unanimously approved by voice vote.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs Yes

Board member Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Approval of Minutes**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to review and approve the minutes from the regular meeting on May 18, 2022.

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

The minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs Yes

Board member Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Chair Report**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs informed the board members and the DSS staff that the Durham County budget was approved on Monday night, June 13, 2022 for over $780,000,000. It prioritized Durham County and Durham Public Schools staff making under $75,000/year to receive a higher cost of living increase. The merit pay scale was raised and there will be special incentives for FEI and Child Welfare new hires. The budget will also include $275,000 for foster care along with focusing and prioritizing funding for Durham Public Schools. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs announced that today is Elder Abuse Awareness Day at the BOCC meeting on Monday night, June 13, 2022 and thanked Director William Rose for sharing this information.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs will need clarification about some issues around the vacant board position then will move forward.

**Director’s Report**

Director William Rose submitted a written report.

Director William Rose introduced Ella Hargrove as the county intern that he is mentoring. She is working on her Master’s in Public Administration and participating in the county’s internship program with Assistant General Manager/Chief of Staff Drew Cummings.

Director William Rose thanked Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs and the BOCC for the excellent budget and for assisting with the challenges around recruitment and retention. Director Rose is excited about piloting potential sign-on bonuses for hard-to-fill positions and will be meeting next week to finalize this process by July 1, 2022 or soon thereafter. In the department head’s meeting this morning, there was a discussion about the legislative day that was held on June 14, 2022. Medicaid expansion is on the forefront as well as the state Medicaid foster care specialty plan. Director Rose received an email last week from General Manager Deborah Craig-Ray about the legislative goals for the department and the deadline to reply is June 24, 2022. He is focusing on Medicaid expansion, the state foster care Medicaid plan, funding for adult protective services and funding for child welfare. He will deliver the information to the board members next month. Director William Rose has joined the work group under the leadership of NC DHHS Deputy Secretary Susan Gale Perry regarding initiating discussions with directors about funding plans for child welfare.

Director William Rose informed the board members that an in-person supervisor’s retreat was held on June 1, 2022 and it was a wonderful gathering. The great committee included Director William Rose, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy, Assistant Director Krystal Harris, and Talent Development Coordinator Alanna Jones. This was an excellent feedback session with supervisors. Leadership will be meeting tomorrow, June 16, 2022 to debrief and focus on two or three goals and objectives about rebuilding the work culture and supporting retention.

Director William Rose notified the board members that the department will need to further assess pursuing the USDA grant and delay it until next year to build a more comprehensive plan and strategic planning around the issues involved. The grant focuses on systems and software and how to incorporate them into the LatinX strategic plan that was developed. There will be small steps taken over the next three months to work on the goal of engaging with community partners about improving access.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Director William Rose for his report and for serving as a mentor to Ella Hargrove. Chair Commissioner Jacobs welcomed Ella Hargrove and commended her for her background with DSS and her interest in continuing her education and leadership.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs noted that all of the assistant director reports were relating to moving from the COVID-19 crisis and starting to focus on professional development, the culture within the organization, self-care, and the vacancy crisis. Chair Commissioner Jacobs appreciates the work that everyone is doing and along with the board members will be looking forward to hearing about the department’s plan to build excellence soon. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned that employees will be compensated for on-call work. She also shared that there was a discussion with Representative Morey and Representative Alston about some alarming aspects of the NC Parents’ Bill of Rights (Don’t Say Gay bill) that the Senate passed. This bill states that if a child speaks confidentially to a student counselor that this information would have to be shared with their parents. Director William Rose thanked Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs for bringing this to his attention and he will do some research and speak with the advocacy committee about it.

**Vacancy Report**

HR Analyst James Hart submitted a written report.

HR Analyst James Hart thanked the board members regarding the budget and is very pleased to also have the sign-on bonuses for the hard-to-fill positions and the referral program. The exit interview information is highlighting the need for professional development in self-care. This retention aspect is major from staff that is leaving. The work that was done in the supervisor’s meeting was outstanding. The department is aiming to start utilizing the training from Dr. Earl Suttle again. HR Analyst James Hart appreciates everything that Durham County is doing to assist with the retention issue.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked HR Analyst James Hart for his report. She stated that the data looks overwhelming with the current vacancies, especially in child welfare. She appreciates him using the exit interview information. She is amazed looking at the performance measures at all the assistant director reports that staff is still doing incredible work despite the vacancies. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs expressed to HR Analyst James Hart to inform the board members of anything they can do to support him.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman inquired if HR Analyst James Hart had received some resumes from NC Central University students. HR Analyst James Hart replied that he has received a great number of resumes and many graduates have been hired.

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

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens thanked the board members for attending her virtual division meeting yesterday, June 14, 2022. Assistant Director Stevens wanted to highlight a discussion from the meeting relating to having a different approach to recruiting new hires and will pass this information on to HR Analyst James Hart. Her staff had many great ideas. Recognition awards were given out to some staff as well. She informed the board members that on June 22, 2022 her department will be delivering canned goods and other items to three local food pantry locations. Assistant Director Stevens thanked everyone that has been assisting her division. Food and Nutrition rates are not where they should be due to the direct response to the vacancies. There is a high volume of applications coming in and then numerous staff is submitting resignations. This is a statewide issue. The department is hoping that there will be some opportunities to help get staff in from other counties to assist with the work.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens for her report. She appreciated hearing the efforts that staff will be making around hunger due to food security being such a huge problem in our community. She attended the World Hunger Day event and saw the presence of DSS, and it was fantastic. She complimented Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens for 100% in Work First and Special Assistance programs and had 26 consecutive months for the Medicaid report card. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs pointed out that amazing things are happening within her division.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman also attended the World Hunger Day event and commented that it was good to see the presence of DSS there. She encourages her Bachelor of Social Work students to apply for the positions in Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens’ division as well.

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

Assistant Director Krystal Harris submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris highlighted that she submitted a recommendation for an internal candidate to fill the Intern Coordinator position and hopefully the candidate will be hired in the upcoming weeks. The candidate will be accepting interns in the spring of next year. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman offered her assistance if needed. Assistant Director Krystal Harris applauded her division for working extremely hard and supporting the programs in many areas. A great deal of staff is working overtime due to the increased volume of mail being received. The division is restructuring to bring on additional help from other parts of the Customer Information Center. Assistant Director Krystal Harris commended her staff for doing an awesome job daily.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Krystal Harris for her report. She acknowledged that it is exciting to see that her department is preparing for the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People training to be in person again. A Pride Proclamation was read on Monday night, June 13, 2022 at the BOCC meeting and the assistant director of the LGBTQ Center of Durham talked about their resources. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned that this could be a resource for staff. Assistant Director Krystal Harris responded that she would check into it.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

All of the program managers will be covering in the absence of Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield to address any questions or concerns. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs noted that although the division has 14 vacancies the performance measures are still being met. She complimented the division for managing numerous events during the month and thanked them for their hard work.

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

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon submitted a written report.

Program Managers Lee Little and Meghan Russ will be covering in the absence of Assistant Director Janeen Gordon. Program Manager Lee Little highlighted that the division is preparing for the Low-Income Homeowners Relief program that will start on August 1, 2022. Program Manager Meghan Russ recognized that today is Elder Abuse Awareness Day and there was a training session this morning. Adult Protective Services Supervisor John Margolis collaborated with Duke to sponsor the Elder Abuse Awareness Walk on Saturday, June 11, 2022. Program Manager Meghan Russ attended the walk along with quite a few staff from Aging and Adult Services. It was a great event and the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) in addition to other senior groups and community members was represented.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs applauded the division for building relationships while raising awareness and thanked them for participating in the event. Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the community resilience model. Program Manager Lee Little replied that this wellness initiative is in collaboration with Talent Development Coordinator Alanna Jones and the focus will be on strategies around building camaraderie and trust to support the staff. Program Manager Meghan Russ added that the purpose of the training will be to teach techniques to use for staff to operate in their best space. Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy acclaimed Program Manager Meghan Russ for her excellent description of the training and further stated that she is certified in this area. She expressed that this training allows each person to access their intrinsic tools to improve their well-being. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs said that this is fantastic news and is something that everyone will need. She looks forward to learning more about it. A second proclamation was read on Monday night, June 13, 2022 at the BOCC meeting proclaiming this as Resilience Week. Durham County has been focusing on the core values of Accountability, Commitment, Exceptional customer service, Integrity, and Teamwork & collaboration (ACE-IT).

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

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted a written report.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman reminded everyone that this is officially hurricane season and sheltering and disaster support is one of the requirements for DSS. The leadership team and appropriate personnel participated in a countywide Shelter Activation and Operation Tabletop exercise on May 23, 2022 to identify strengths and areas of improvement in the current shelter plan and procedures.

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth highlighted that the department is in the middle of the year-end close-out process with the state and county fiscal years. She announced that Christie McMillan has filled the Senior Accountant position. She has been a loyal staff member of the business office for 20+ years.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs congratulated Senior Accountant Christie McMillan and welcomed her to the new role. She inquired about the parking shuttles and the construction work that is beginning on 500 East Main Street. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman answered that the parking has been pushed back again and will go live on July 6, 2022. A new entrance has to be created for the visitor’s parking lot.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested to do some housekeeping with the Board Action Items in the next fiscal year. She also would like an in-depth analysis of the Director’s Data report and the trends over the past few years. Director William Rose suggested including the House Bill 630 State MOU dashboard because it will be a huge indicator of trends as well.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs adjourned the DSS Board meeting at 3:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Secretary to the Board Date