**Durham County Board of Social Services**

**December 21, 2022**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, December 21, 2022. 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, Margaret Faircloth, 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.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the December 21, 2022 DSS Board meeting to order.

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.

**Approval of the Agenda**

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

Board member Janice P. Paul moved for the acceptance and approval of the proposed agenda. Board member Charles I. Mitchell 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 revisions to the minutes received from October 19, 2022, approved by the DSS Board. The speaker’s name was corrected to Elizabeth Errant.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman moved approval of the minutes with the noted revisions. Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The revised minutes were unanimously approved through 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

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested a motion for the approval of minutes from November 16, 2022, regular meeting.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion to approve the November 16th minutes and Board member Charles I. Mitchell 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 highlighted the media coverage from Republican Governors asking for the public health emergency to be lifted by President Joe Biden. This request will have an impact on Medicaid recipients. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens will provide additional information during FEI’s report. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about the cold weather and the impact on people in the community. People are living in cars and camping in the woods which is not safe. Managers from Aging and Adult Services (AAS) will report later.

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 commented on the concern about Medicaid recipients. Interim Director Bradshaw forwarded information from the Washington Post dated December 2, 2022. Lawmakers are considering options to disassociate the suspension of Medicaid redeterminations from the requirements of the PHE with procedures in place to prevent mass coverage losses. Also, they could phase out additional federal Medicaid dollars available during the pandemic. The concerns have been discussed within the Directors’ Association. The Directors’ Association is advocating for the best procedures and provisions to be put in place.

Ms. Bradshaw shared that expanded budget requests are due to the County by January 13, 2023 so increased budget work will be underway immediately after the holidays.

She further commented on Disaster Readiness and stated Chief Operations Officer Kelly Ingram would provide information during the Business Operations’ report.

Comments were also provided in relation to challenges with retention of staff within the agency.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman inquired about staff transitioning to the holiday and the workload. Interim Director Bradshaw reported there is a lot of stress and anxiety and difficulty with the personal/work life balance and elaborated on various matters impacting staff - finances, family sickness/deaths, etc. She shared that this, while having to be accountable for timeliness and accuracy of their critical services results in pressure.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Director Bradshaw for the report and commented on the need for self-care among staff. She also thanked Interim Director Bradshaw for the information on Mobile Outreach Response Engagement Stabilization (MORES) program and the new Butner facility. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs met the vice chair of the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee that works at the new facility in Butner for youth. The new facility has 24 beds which is needed for keeping youth in the State.

Interim Director Bradshaw added around the growth of the adult population and the increase in younger adults being served (with many needs that are harder to meet). Youth are aging out of child welfare with an increase in behavioral and mental health needs yet a lack of proper care, resources, and services. This is a statewide crisis.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested the addition of adult services, youth services and public health emergency to the board action items.

Board member Janice P. Paul asked about protesting at the human services building or staff homes. Currently, nothing disruptive, and making sure the communication process continues to work. A small group was outside the building, but they were peaceful. There are communication strategies in place which include mass messaging to staff and a pocket guide with quick access when met with certain threatening circumstances.

**Family Economic Independence (FEI) – Rhonda Stevens**

LaToya Chambers reported for Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens.

Program Manager LaToya Chambers highlighted five positions in Applications have been filled. A third County Temp will be assisting with applications from Sampson County and staff from other divisions continue to help.

A virtual Division Training Day was held on December 8, 2022 and included, among other things, representatives from EAP sharing resources available for employees.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman asked about the background and characteristics of the five new hires and how many entry level vacancies remain open. According to Program Manager Chambers, experience isn’t always looked at because of the training available, however, stability, application completion, paying attention to detail and the ability to document cases are preferences. There are continuous postings for IMC II positions and vacancies are posted on the Durham County website.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about the applications and cases. There are approximately 800 pending applications. Normally four or five workers take applications with assistance from other programs. Applications may be missing information which requires a telephone call. Information requires verification which is an additional process. Applications continue to come in daily, therefore, you cannot forecast.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked the FEI team for keeping up with timeliness under all the challenges. The report mentioned voice signatures are allowed. Voice signatures for Medicaid started in November and clients can sign up to receive email or text reminders.

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

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason introduced Jennifer Moon, Customer Information Center Manager. Jennifer Moon comes from the State with a wealth of knowledge and experience. She is very excited to join Durham County DSS.

Program Integrity and Quality Assurance Team held a joint staff meeting in November. A great opportunity to reconnect in person since COVID.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason.

**Child and Family Services – Jovetta Whitfield**

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith thanked Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield for purchasing items for the children selected by the DSS Board for Share Your Christmas on her behalf.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield highlighted the engagement with Alliance Health on the MORES program. A meeting is scheduled for mid-January to begin work. It is a mobile crisis program available to youth, families and DJJ youth in Durham County. It is a specialized team families call instead of the general mobile crisis line. Services will be provided in Durham, Orange, and Wake counties. More information will be shared at a later date.

A division meeting was held in-person for the first time in two years. The theme was “Winter Wonderland Family Reunion”. New staff had the opportunity to congregate, staff reconnected and fellowshipped. Representatives from the Sheriff Department spoke on internal and external safety for child welfare staff.

Assistant Director Whitfield informed the DSS Board about a youth fatality. The youth in DSS custody had severe medical complications. Relocating the young man has taken two years due to the family living in another state. He had to be transported via ambulance because of his severe medical needs and, unfortunately, he passed days after he arrived with his family. He was medically cleared upon arrival and had just been seen by a doctor.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Whitfield for the report. The DSS Board acknowledged the fatality and recognized the commitment of staff to get the young man to his family before he transitioned.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield credited the supervisor and social worker for their perseverance on the case and traveling 11 hours to make sure the young man reached the destination and had the equipment needed.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about RAMS and CAP.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield stated a meeting is scheduled for January for both groups. The RAMS specialist is part of the child welfare transformation and will provide additional support to CPS. Durham was asked to be a pilot county for CAP program as well.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about publicizing and sharing public information relating to Durham being a pilot county for the State. DSS is involved in great opportunities which should be shared in the community. Assistant Director Whitfield responded Durham hasn’t done a good job and probably could do better. Interim Director Bradshaw mentioned the DSS Scoops newsletter provided by Pamela Purifoy, Senior Public Information Officer, and expanding information to the public. Interim Director Bradshaw suggested leadership connect and think about pinpointing someone in each section to oversee the process of sharing with Pam for these publications.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs spoke with the Director of Triangle Volunteer and Nonprofit Center and she commented on the partnership with DSS. Approximately 2000 families were served this year.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman thanked the DSS Board for assisting with Share Your Christmas.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs highlighted the work Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield and Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw accomplished for the progress with the after-hours challenge. Two after-hours units were created which include two supervisors and three workers for each unit. Positions were reallocated from CPS. One supervisor position has been filled and working to fill social worker positions. Chair Commissioner Jacobs applauded staff working together and being innovative.

**Aging and Adult Services – Program Managers Meghan Russ and Lee Little**

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon was out of the office.

Given the current weather forecast, Program Manager Lee Little talked about white flag night. This is usually declared 48 hours prior to the temperature getting 35 degrees or lower with precipitation, as well as 25 degrees without precipitation. The male location is 1201 E. Main Street and women reside at 507 E. Knox Street. Two local agencies involved with white flag night are Durham Rescue Mission and Open Table Ministries. Urban Ministries Shelter will be available and individuals can call DSS Coordinated Entry at 984-287-8313. There are additional resources for vulnerable adults which are first priority. Applicants receive a code and, based on the order received, they are designated to a hotel or shelter. The city can call for the street outreach on the white flag night if temperatures decrease. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about activation during the holiday. According to Lee Little, planning has been in place several months. Policies and procedures were revised in November and can be shared with the Board.

Interim Director Bradshaw commented on how to get information out via newsletters and email to staff in case clients call about shelters.

Program Manager Meghan Russ mentioned there was no information in the local media regarding white flag night. Interim Director Bradshaw emphasized the importance of having information available to staff to provide to homeless and vulnerable individuals in the community.

Program Manager Lee Little will connect with Pamela Purifoy for media outreach. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith pointed out virtual open houses to share information via webinar can be a good resource.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested contacted County Public Information and Office of Emergency Services. Public Information Officer Pamela Purifoy informed the Board, Alert Durham is the initiator of that type of information. Then everyone will coordinate and spread the information from that perspective.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about Durham having the longest waiting list in the State for the Special Assistance Program for adults. The wait list is approximately 75 for SA in-home services and 4 social workers are on the team that handle the program. Each social worker manages a caseload of 30 which is the maximum for the State. The program is changing and turning into an entitlement program where, if you are eligible, services should be received. It constantly revolves, clients come off and then more are added. Additional social workers are needed to move clients from the wait list.

Prudence Glover is the supervisor and plans to pull 10 clients off the wait list and add to the caseload in January. Interim Director Bradshaw questioned if staff will be assessing 10 at a time or purging the entire 75 on list -just to check and see if they need to remain on the list. They will be starting with 10 and mail out the letters because an application has to be completed. Interim Director Bradshaw suggested discussing off-line when Assistant Director Gordon returns to the office. Interim Director Bradshaw will share additional information with the Board at a later date. There are purges in place in SA In- Home, Home Centered Care and Meals on Wheels.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Lee Little and Meghan Russ for the report.

**Business Operations – Margaret Faircloth, Kelly Inman**

Assistant Director Faircloth attended the budget kickoff meeting. There is a lot of focus on reallocation of positions.

Jennifer Gonzalez is the new Finance and Business Analyst. She was unable to attend the Board meeting due to working on a project with IT Analyst and working with resolving audits, policies, and procedures.

A division meeting was held with staff for the first time and self-care was the focus. Staff was given the opportunity to reunite and meet new hires.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman added information relating to the Fiscal monitoring from the State; the ongoing disaster preparedness and plans for training and a letter from the Director’s office reinforcing commitment to sheltering for the Community; working with Emergency Management to organize a functional exercise; reviewing the continuity of operations plan (COOP) for supervisors next month with tabletop event at the end of January; the Alert Durham (through Everbridge) preparation for testing - messaging can be sent out to just DSS supervisors and isolated groups with the same technology.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Chief Operations Officer Inman and Assistant Director Faircloth for the report. The disaster planning is important and the budget is coming up - make sure there are enough resources and investment for staff.

Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw indicated that, with budget preparation, DSS will be looking at line items for travel and training and will forecast for the new FY with impending changes in mind, such as more staff gatherings and more travel for training.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy added we are at the place that that we can bring more of the staff back together with some basic precautions in place. So that's also something we definitely need to talk about doing this budget season, to move forward in the next fiscal year. The biggest challenge is going to be the parking.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman hoped that by December we would be talking about moving into the 300 block of parking. Engineering has not decided on definitive date, they have encountered a significant infrastructure issue with power in the parking deck. As soon as the information is received, the board, leadership team and managers will be informed. According to the email from engineering, there are unresolved utility conflicts at the intersection of Queen and Main Street and engineering contractors and inspection department are all working to resolve.

**Vacancy Report – James Hart**

James Hart, HR Analyst, highlighted a record recruitment year in terms of the staff hired. When you add all our new hires, our rehires, reinstatement and temporary staff totaled about 122 hires this year.

James Hart acknowledged Teffoney James, HR Technician. She processes all the backgrounds for selections that come through to ensure that we can move quickly on offers. DSS had 41 promotions this year.

In terms of getting the agency to a good place, some of the work that will be occurring is with reallocations. There are continuous listings for after-hours staff in addition to the work that has happened and establishing new units. Also, continuous recruitments for lead worker level positions in the FEI.

Applaud all the staff throughout the agency that have worked so hard, and continue to brainstorm through new ideas that we can carry into 2023.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman continues to advocate for DSS and mentioned the importance of completing applications accurately.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about speaking at the universities and encouraging students to complete applications properly because it could impact whether they receive the job. DSS has been contacted by universities for virtual career fairs and James Hart attends those. One of the steps in place on the front end of applications is to inform candidates of exactly what is needed to complete and for them to acknowledge that as part of the application process.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield mentioned relaunching the child welfare collaborative, there should be more information reported at a later date.

The DSS Board appreciated the context received on the vacancy report .

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked staff for their presence and wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday on behalf of the DSS Board.

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 remember 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 Janice P. Paul 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.

Respectfully submitted

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Chairperson Date

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Secretary to the Board Date