**Durham County Board of Social Services**

**November 16, 2022**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, November 16, 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. Board members: Janice P. Paul, Jacqueline Beatty-Smith, and Charles I. Mitchell.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman received excused absence.

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, Janeen Gordon, and 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, Quanesha Archer, 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 Attorneys Danielle Briggs was present.

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

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs 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.

Senior County Attorney Danielle Briggs reminded the DSS Board members about the revised agenda forwarded earlier.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith moved 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

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Approval of Minutes**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested minutes received from October 19, 2022, approved by the DSS Board.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith moved approval of the minutes with the noted amendment. Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The minutes were unanimously approved through voice vote.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**DSS Board Report**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs was prepared to speak about Share Your Christmas; however, all board members were not present.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield informed Board members instructions will be provided with request from families. The items are required to be returned to location where the families or social workers will pick up. Items can be dropped off at DSS if needed and they will be delivered to the Yates Baptist Church. Assistant Director Whitfield requested delivery to DSS on December 7, 2022. She will be on-site to accept the items. Board members will coordinate with the DSS Director’s Office.

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 first official meeting and gratitude was extended to senior management. Interim Director Bradshaw highlighted expectations for January 1, 2023.

Interim Director Bradshaw reported from various meetings such as the monthly 100 County Call and the NCACDSS Executive Board Meeting. There was discussion about the new budget estimates from the State which will be available in February. Also, Medicaid Expansion is a hot topic being monitored. This is getting quick support from the State to streamline eligibility procedures in order to adequately manage customer eligibility increases. Additional discussion included the Medicaid Admin reimbursement reduction from 75% to 50% and the expansion of SA In-Home Services eligibility.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw and emphasized the need for Medicaid expansion. With the challenges in the community with poverty, substance abuse and mental health, Medicaid expansion is very important, but will be overwhelming for staff.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs commended Interim Director Bradshaw for leadership during the transition and acknowledged the expertise, knowledge, and new ideas she brings to Durham.

**Vacancy Report – James Hart, HR Analyst**

James Hart reported vacancies increased in October due to continued promotions and other issues. Overall, approximately 100 new staff and 40 individuals have been promoted this year. Management staff are working to equip and support staff to adjust in their positions. Eighty or more individuals have separated from the agency. Promotions are causing vacancies in monitored areas and working to make sure appropriate support to services continue. Staff are retiring in critical areas, therefore, working to fill those positions urgently.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked James Hart for the information relating to vacancies. Chair Commissioner Jacobs agreed with the assessment of what is happening, and the exit interviews can be an important source of information.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith applauded staff for being aggressive in the recruitment and staffing area. Board member Beatty-Smith inquired about the recruitment bonus. James Hart stated there is a sign-on retention bonus for critical to fill position in Child Welfare and FEI income maintenance caseworkers II and III. There are increments implemented, which would be after six months probationary period effective in August. This will be tracked closer to February for results. This is communicated to new hires as a benefit. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith thanked James Hart for the information.

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

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens shared vacancies are being discussed in FEI and the term used is unwinding the programs, especially FNS and Medicaid. Programs are returning to previous structure before the pandemic. A date has not been established because the focus is on filling positions and training staff. Vacancies are being filled and hiring packets have been submitted.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about child care subsidy funding and information available to the community. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens indicated additional funding was received and spending has dropped noticeably. Meetings with staff looking at strategies to get the information out to the community. Flyers have been sent to partners and meetings to look at what can be done to spend money. A meeting was held with the State representative, and she agreed Durham was doing what’s needed. The strategy is to get more people for the services. A team is looking at how to connect more directly with individuals that might need services. There is no wait list. Funds received last month caused spending to decrease the coefficient.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy emphasized there is no waiting list. There has been a long span of coefficients and a wait list. Staff have worked diligently through wait lists which is a challenging process. As people come to agency seeking child care services needs are being met.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested connecting with the Early Childhood Coordinator for Durham County. There is a large listserv and network that can assist with getting the word out and additional resources. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens has been in contact with the coordinator.

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

Interim Assistant Director Cason recognized Program Integrity staff. October 2021, they received a report from the State regarding the USDA charge letter and the report was completed in October 2022 and submitted to the State. The deadline was met, so congratulations to Shelia Dorsett, Candice Leathers and the Program Integrity team for their commitment and hard work.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged staff for their work and meeting the required deadline.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs raised a question about different types of training. Public Health has someone offering free training related to dealing with stressful circumstances and ongoing support. The training is being offered to public health workers and they want to open the invitation to other County staff. Chair Commissioner Jacobs will retrieve additional information and forward to Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason and James Hart.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason.

**Child and Family Services – Jovetta Whitfield**

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield highlighted the crisis with the After-Hours Unit. Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw and Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield met and crafted a preliminary plan to present to staff to receive additional feedback. There are other options in that the temporary agency is working with DSS to identify individuals to assist.

Starting December 1, 2022, the State is transitioning with the tailored care management for youth in foster care who fall under the group of severe mental health issues, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse. It will not be for all youth, only those served by Alliance Health. Youth will be flagged automatically and there will be a handover with agencies working under fostering foster care health. The collaboration will include Caremark, CCNC and NC. The Medicaid transformation for foster care was pushed out to April 2023.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs recognized the achievements with the monthly visits within in-home visitation for foster families. Chair Commissioner Jacobs pointed out the new regionalization and questioned if this will be helpful in Durham County. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield shared it will be helpful for all counties. Staff will be on-site to assist with the transition. The challenge is getting the resources and manpower noted in the report. There are seven regions and Durham is in region three. Families will be transitioned first followed by child welfare transformation. The regional child welfare consultant will be on-site monthly. Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw added one significant issue with regionalization is challenge in hiring staff with institutionalized knowledge. Compensation still needs to be addressed – the State (overall) used to pay more than Counties but that has flipped over the years. This is in the CSF Regionalization report previously released and Directors have been advocating to change the pay structure.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Director Bradshaw for the information. In the past, a legislative meeting with state delegates educated them around issues to advocate for. Chair Commissioner Jacobs will be attending a legislative forum for NCACC and this is good while conversating with others. Chair Commissioner Jacobs touched on past legislative breakfasts hosted by Durham DSS.

Board member Janice P. Paul asked about how the DSS Board could support and encourage the legislature to allocate more money for human services.

Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw proposed drafting talking points and meeting with others. The Advocacy Committee for the Directors Association can provide information. The State does not provide enough administrative funds to counties.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs stated goals were submitted to the NCACC related to Families First and Child Welfare. Also, Aging and Adult Services for in-home services. Chair Commissioner Jacobs will have an opportunity to convey information to county commissioners

**Aging and Adult Services – Janeen Gordon**

One highlight, the consultant for the State mentioned the need to work on the wait list. Durham is one of the counties with the largest wait list in the State. Durham has 50 to 75 persons on the wait list. Calls are being received about obtaining help for people requiring special assistance the in-home program. There are other programs growing and funds are not available.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Janeen Gordon for the information and highlighted the focus on self-care while caring for others. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon stated it was an opportunity for staff to come together since the pandemic.

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

Assistant Director Faircloth reported continuous work through the single audit. There are findings with documentation and timeliness, however, the information has not been received in writing. Everything is in the auditor’s hands and the Board will receive an update at a later date.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman added budget discussions are forthcoming. Chief Operations Officer Inman recognized the work DSS Information Technology staff are undertaking.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw attendance at the budget retreat. The bond passed which means there may be a tax increase.

Chief Operations Officer Inman mentioned some of the initiatives around retention, holiday bonus and other things have about a $6 million dollar price tag. These items have to be considered in the budget process.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs expressed thanks to staff for attending the meeting and extended Thanksgiving Holiday greetings on behalf of the DSS Board.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs continued to the closed session.

The DSS Board will adjourn into closed session under NCS 143-318.11 (a)(5) To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (i) the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease; or (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract.

Board member Janice P. Paul motioned to move into closed session in pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes

NCS 143-318.11 (a)(5). Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved forward with a 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

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