

Durham County Board of Social Services

Regular Session Minutes

June 16, 2021

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, June 16, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. The DSS Board Meeting was 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, 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 and Janeen Gordon. DSS staff attending included: Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Kalindra Ellerbe, Lee Little, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Sharyn Flood, Quanesha Archer, Candice Leathers, Elizabeth Granby, John Kenion, Shontelle Smith, Lynn Thomas, Darlene Whitfield, Barbara Stage, KaShondra Young-Buckner and Loretta Roberts.

James Hart from Durham County Human Resources attended the meeting.

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the June 16, 2021 regular meeting to order.

Public Comments

No public comments

Approval of the Agenda

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to review and approve the amended agenda adding the closed session. Board member Janice P. Paul amended the motion to add the closed session to the agenda and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The agenda as revised 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

The minutes from the regular meeting on May 19, 2021, were approved by the DSS Board. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith 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		
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 Report

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked all the staff for their continued great work. She commended Director William Rose in taking a lead on the ERAP issue and writing a letter to the Chief District Court Judge to receive approval for a local moratorium extension. The Board of County Commissioners approved a budget of over \$700M on Monday, June 14, 2021 with \$60M of new spending and more than \$6M on additional spending including the original recommended budget for direct investments in the community. The DSS requests were all funded including the two additional positions utilizing ARPA funds. The Tax Grant Program will be handled by DSS and any resident who has lived in Durham for at least ten years and making

30% area median income (AMI) or less will be qualified. The program has an allocation of \$750,000 and will pay up to 50% of the applicant's taxes or \$750 whichever is less.

Vice-Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman, Board members Jacqueline Beatty-Smith, Janice P. Paul and Charles I. Mitchell expressed their gratitude and acknowledged the staff's awesome work.

Director Report

Director William Rose submitted a written report.

Director William Rose thanked the board members for their very kind words and support along with the Board of County Commissioners and General Managers. Audit season is underway, and the kickoff meeting will be in two weeks with the County single auditors. Director William Rose stated that the department is very grateful to the Board of County Commissioners for a wonderful budget. There is a 3% cost of living increase for all the staff effective July 1, 2021. In addition, the Merit Plan has been reinstated. The County is moving toward a one-time anniversary date for employee performance evaluations. The Board of County Commissioners has been reviewing plans for further tools in recruiting positions that are difficult to retain and fill. The two ARPA-funded positions will be supporting Aging and Adult Services with an Accounting Technician and a Program Manager. The other ten positions are established except for the Audit Compliance Manager. The position numbers will be issued on July 9, 2021.

Parking Garage Project

Director William Rose updated the board members that Phase II will be effective on June 21, 2021, with employees parking at 410 W. Chapel Hill Street and catching the bus to work. The main library will extend parking until June 28, 2021 to assist with the transition. The staff was notified on June 15, 2021. The 410 W. Chapel Hill Street lot and the N. Roxboro Street parking deck will be the designated places for employee parking for the remainder of the parking garage construction. Staff riding the bus will need to communicate with their supervisors if any delays or issues arise. The Choose to Move benefit will also be an option if staff would like to walk from 410 W. Chapel Hill Street to the Human Services building. The department has been working very closely with Marie Inserra in Human Resources and the parking team regarding potential Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requests. These individuals will meet with Marie Inserra for an assessment and will receive a special placard for authorization to park in the designated ADA spaces at the N. Roxboro Street

deck. A possible concern might be an increase in ADA accommodations and meeting the parking need. This situation will be monitored. The department met with the General Manager and Human Resources on June 14, 2021. Marie Inserra stated that the department must comply with the ADA Law. The department is looking to provide incentives for carpooling and will hold weekly or monthly drawings for prizes. Remote work schedules will remain in place to reduce the footprint in the building.

Property Tax Subsidy Program

Director William Rose wanted to alert the board members of the policy side regarding the Property Tax Subsidy program. The residents will not be eligible if they are currently receiving other tax exemptions. The Tax department cannot be involved in administering this program due to a conflict of interest. The lawyers wanted the DSS Board members to oversee the authority of this program. Director William Rose informed the County Manager that under general statutes the board members cannot approve any policy. The department will make the recommendations for policy modifications and share them with the board members for endorsement. The Board of County Commissioners has the authority to approve funding. The department will receive three positions for this program and will have the first planning meeting with the Tax department in about two weeks. The Tax department will also be utilized to verify the information. Director William Rose is recommending building the software in concurrence with implementing the program. The applicants can apply at the office or complete a fillable application on the DSS website. The program will need to be mobilized by mid-September or in October to begin accepting applications. The modifications can be made in November potentially if needed. Director William Rose stated that the department is happy to obtain this program in assisting the residents.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs wanted to emphasize that this is a welfare program under the United States Constitution relating to tax assistance and must be administered by DSS. The community has been advocating for this program for a long time and is very excited. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs supports the program and is asking the public to be patient with the process. Director William Rose stated that Assistant Director Janeen Gordon has agreed to take on this program. The eligibility will be determined by tax records and verifying that the income is 30% AMI. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon added that the tax assistance program will be a part of the crisis and emergency services.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

Director William Rose had a very successful meeting with Judge Evans accompanied by housing advocates, attorneys, magistrates, and landlords. Judge Evans was extremely understanding and is an advocate for making the Eviction Moratorium extension. The extension will initially be for 60 days with the ability to extend to 30 days. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon has a large team working on the ERAP applications. The department has currently received over 3,000 applications with some being duplicates. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens added three more Income Maintenance staff and any employee in the FEI division can volunteer for overtime to assist with processing. The department will be hiring more temporary staff in Aging and Adult Services to assist as well. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman has permission to hire a temporary in Accounting to assist with check writing and authorization of benefits. The electronic deposits are gradually being paid due to manually working on the applications. The payment system and software are in testing mode and have experienced numerous glitches with functioning properly. The goal is to pay 50% of the benefits by the end of August at the latest. The primary focus is on the high-risk applicants that are facing homelessness. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon brought some really good ideas to the table during the meeting with the court system while discussing the future of homeless services and the support needed. The group will continue to meet regularly.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon added that her division has been working closely with the non-profit partners in reaching out to the underserved, Latinx and refugee populations. A huge effort has been focusing on preparing the landlords for the upcoming tenant/landlord agreements. There has been a collaboration for input in the tenant/landlord agreements to ensure that concerns are heard and to prevent barriers to assisting the clients.

Director William Rose commended the IT staff and the software developers that volunteered to join the community informational seminar last week and answered numerous questions. Director William Rose thanked Assistant Director Krystal Harris and her staff for dealing with the customer service side regarding the ERAP applications. Director William Rose also thanked Technology Support Analyst Felecia Cameron for working directly with the non-profits and troubleshooting. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman added that the partnership and teamwork despite the roadblocks have been exemplary. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired if there is a time frame for distributing the funds. Director William Rose answered that the department does not have a time frame. The ERAP II funds have also been secured. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs is excited to hear more about the long-term re-envisioning role of DSS with partnerships and the Latinx strategic plan.

Vacancy Report

Human Resources Analyst James Hart provided a report.

Human Resources Analyst James Hart commended the staff on their excellent work in filling vacancies especially in the high turnover areas like Family Economic Independence (FEI) and Child and Family Services (CFS) after the hiring freeze. The strategies in place will assist with the continuous recruitment and move expeditiously. There will be approximately 30 new hires over the next two months. There have been a tremendous amount of promotions and new additions to certain units that are exploring pilot programs. The approval of the new positions will impact the vacancy rate and will be added to the report. The department also has tenured staff that will be retiring. James Hart praised the management team for working to acquire the organization's pre-pandemic numbers. Human Resources will continue to support the programs from a hiring perspective.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked James Hart for his great work and all the staff involved. She acknowledged and is excited to hear the emphasizing of internal promotions and new opportunities for the existing staff. She also mentioned that there will be salary increases for some county positions including DSS. James Hart expressed that the Merit Plan and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will positively affect the staff and keep the department competitive in the market. He is grateful to the Board of County Commissioners and everyone involved in getting the 3% cost of living salary increase approved.

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

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens commended the division for their continued tremendous work. A waitlist priority document was provided for the board members. Child Care services started a partnership with Durham Housing Authority (DHA) in the Job Plus program to provide support to help the residents become self-sufficient. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens asked the board members for approval to add a new item to the priority list to serve twenty-five children that come through the program. The Child Care Priority policy will be sent to the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) for review. Director William Rose added that the program has been trying to get the grant for three years. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired if the Job Plus program is with the Triangle Literacy Council. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens replied that this is a different program.

Director William Rose stated that this is a federal workforce development grant that offers \$750,000 over five years and works directly with DHA residents. Program Manager Candice Leathers expressed her excitement for this development opportunity and creating more collaborations throughout the community. She is excited to support the families in a different capacity. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs added that this program will transform lives in the community. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs questioned if a board vote is needed to approve the revision to the Child Care Priority policy. Board member Janice P. Paul inquired if the board should approve or endorse and asked Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs. Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs answered that the board has the authority to prioritize the categories. Board member Janice P. Paul offered a motion to approve the waitlist policy for Durham County Child Care services as revised on June 16, 2021. Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The waitlist policy 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 Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs applauded the 14-month Medicaid Report Card approval.

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

Assistant Director Krystal Harris submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris highlighted that Quality Assurance and Training (QAT) has some staffing concerns and is grateful and appreciative for the nine positions approved for the fiscal year 2022. The team is thankful to Director William Rose, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy, Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman, the Board members and the Board of County Commissioners for the support and approval of the needed positions. The new hire notices are coming in and the department is facilitating virtual training and mentoring. The additional help is very beneficial and QAT will continue to support the programs in the agency.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Board member Janice P. Paul inquired if there have been any changes in calls or a need to change the responses since schools have to some extent returned to in-person. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield replied that the reports are consistent. Director William Rose shared an article with the Board that focuses on the inconsistencies of the system across the state. Durham County has a lower degree of foster kids due to the upstream services. Director William Rose commended Shontelle Smith for running an excellent In-Home Services system to keep kids out of care to some degree. The department is dealing with House Bill 630 and the transformation in the next few years. Child and Family Services will be changing to a preventative model and trying to take fewer kids into custody. Board member Janice P. Paul commended the foster care staff on home studies and the nurturing and supportive foster parents in the program. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired if the department would be handling the Domestic Violence Grant. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield answered that due to the grant deadline being July 1, 2021 and having the experience of doing the DV Grant and what it requires the department is unable to take the lead and apply at this time. The department is currently dealing with House Bill 630, Families First, the transformation, Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP), Durham ACEs Resilience Taskforce (DART) and other initiatives. Child and Family Services will partner and support them and will be prepared when the next grant opportunity arises. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield for her staff's great work.

Aging and Adult Services (AAS) – Lee Little, Program Manager

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon shared a huge achievement that the department advocated with the Durham Partnership for Seniors to reconsider the wages per unit for In-Home Aides and have a requirement to increase their pay. This is part of the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) submission that will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners soon. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs commented on the increased wages and hopes that there will be a shift in the lower-paying jobs for working families. Board member Janice P. Paul applauded Assistant Director Janeen Gordon for continuing to take on new programs and initiatives. May was Older Americans Month and the Elder Abuse Awareness Walk was held in Raleigh on Saturday, June 19, 2021 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. The walk will bring attention to the

fact that older adults are silently enduring abuse and neglect. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired if a proclamation was done for Older Americans Month. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon answered that the proclamation was done at the beginning of May. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs reiterated that Assistant Director Janeen Gordon was innovative with the town hall accompanied by the Triangle Apartment Association with over sixty landlords attending. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs stressed the importance of building relationships and thanked Assistant Director Janeen Gordon for all her hard work and efforts.

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

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted a written report.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman reported that the department is in the eleventh month of the fiscal year. The target is 92% for expenditures and 80% for revenue. The current trend is low at 72% for expenditures and 60% for revenue due to the rental assistance being combined in the budget. The department is working with Finance to separate the data. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman commended the Business Operations staff for their hard work and executing other important needs for the county.

Unfinished Business

Board Action Items – No updates

COVID-19 Updates –

Director William Rose discussed the current business operations due to the parking situation. Re-opening the lobbies would require more staff to return to the office regularly. The HHS visitor parking lot construction will start in December. The leadership team has been discussing how to handle this process. The focus is to ensure that the Durham County citizens are informed and can access services. Director William Rose acknowledged the barriers of the phone system. There will be more virtual interview rooms on site. Director William Rose will inform the Board members of more details and recommendations in July and August. Mask requirements are still in effect in the building and screenings for employees and the public are ongoing. Director William Rose added that the vaccination rates are great for Durham County. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs said that we will have 300 units of affordable housing efficiencies one, two and three-bedroom apartments. Durham County employees will be eligible to apply for these apartments.

Child Care services will be across from Durham Housing Authority (DHA) to benefit employees and a grocery store as well. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs stated that Durham County will benefit after the construction is complete in two years. She looks forward to hearing the creative solutions the leadership team develops. Director William Rose stated that the leadership team discussed having a 15-minute update on critical topics and for 30 minutes participate in an enjoyable interactive training at next month's meeting.

Closed Session

Director William Rose invited Jovetta Whitfield, Elizabeth Granby, Barbara Stage and Kashondra Young-Buckner to the closed session. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested a motion to adjourn to the closed session and read North Carolina General Statutes § 143-318.11 (a) (1) To prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to the law of this State or of the United States, or not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. She referenced N.C.G.S. § 7B-302. Board member Janice P. Paul made a motion to approve the closed session. Vice-Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman seconded the motion.

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 Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Respectfully submitted

Chairperson Date

Secretary to the Board Date