

February 27, 2024

The Alamance County Social Services Board met for its regular monthly meeting on this date. The meeting was held at HSC Building (1<sup>st</sup> Floor) 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC with the following in attendance were: Mr. Timothy Britt, DSS Board Chair; Ms. Tyronna Hooker, DSS Board Vice - Chair; Commissioner Craig S. Turner, DSS Board Member; Ms. Candy Snyder, DSS Board Member; Dr. Darrell "Bud" Warner, DSS Board Member; Ms. Candice J. Gobble, DSS Director; Ms. Danae Pickard, Economic Services Division Director; Ms. Lynette Wellons, Assistant Director of Services; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney; Ms. Virginia Hunker, Fiscal Officer; Mr. Robert Ring, HR Director; and Ms. Heidi York, Alamance County Manager were present.

Timothy Britt, DSS Chair opened the meeting.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Consent Agenda: Timothy Britt, DSS Board Chair**

January 2024 items on the consent agenda approved. Dr. Darrell Warner made motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner Craig Turner.

**Staff Reports:**

**Fiscal: Virginia Hunker**

	JANUARY 2024	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$7,129,284.00	64%	\$6,483,320.00	47%
EXPENDITURES	\$12,020,477.00	48%	\$11,388,362.00	44%

**Fraud: See report –**

Unit	January 2024	January 2023	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$19,355.87	\$743.00	\$138,895.09	\$27,111.34

**Services – Ms. Lynette Wellons/Assistant Director of Services -**

Assistant Director Wellons reported we are gearing up for Social Work Appreciation month for DSS Social Workers. We have a month of volunteering, build moral and fun and games for Social Workers.

## **Adult and Family Services -**

No report.

### **Child Support – (Statistical Report Information) – see report.**

Unit	January 2024	January 2023	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$871,145.24	\$863,596.41	\$6,162,352.29	\$6,034,853.09

### **Child Welfare –**

No report.

## **Economic Support: Ms. Danae Pickard**

Ms. Danae Pickard, Economic Services Division Director reported on the following:

### **Food & Nutrition (FNS) –**

New Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (S-EBT) Program will start soon. Congress created this new program through USDA to provide food dollars during the summer months to qualifying low-income families with school children. This program, named “Sun Bucks” will help close the hunger gap when children are on summer break and not getting nutritious school meals. Starting in Summer 2024, States can provide \$120 per child to families with eligible school-age children for them to buy groceries, similar to how FNS benefits are used. SUN Bucks will work hand-in-hand with other available NC nutrition assistance programs.

NC Division of Health and Human Services has submitted its 2024 SUN Bucks Program Plan to USDA for approval. NCDHHS will work in partnership with NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to work together to implement the SUN Bucks program.

### **Medicaid Expansion –**

Medicaid applications have leveled off and the Medicaid Team has continued to implement measures to handle them influx and pending applications. We have gone from 2,148 pending applications at our highest in January to 1,412 as of February. We continue to trend in the positive direction.

Ms. Pickard added DSS hosted a small employee Valentine Event for staff with the ever famous “grits bar and coffee punch”. We have some other employee engagement events coming up in March in line with St. Patrick’s Day. We continue to make intentional strides to boost morale in the midst of all the challenges at Social Services. These events may seem small but we have received a lot of positive feedback from staff around these interactions and how it has made them feel welcomed and part of the DSS family.



## Operations – Director Candice J. Gobble

### Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of January 31, 2024

<b>Vacancies</b>	25
<b>New Hires</b>	8
<b>Interagency Transfers</b>	1
<b>Resignations</b>	2

## Director's Report – Candice J. Gobble, Director–

Director Gobble presented Recruitment Proposal requested at January Board Meeting. Director Gobble presented the following:

AC DSS has shown a continued need for SW I/A&T and SW III applicants. Over the last three years, these SW units, whose responsibilities revolve around the safety and well-being of our communities most vulnerable populations have been plagued with significant vacancies.

These vacancies greatly impact service delivery and increase the liability to the county as a whole. Vacancies further result in current agency staff carrying the weight of additional caseloads, leaving little work/life balance, stressful work days and ultimately leading to burnout and retention challenges.

### **Current Vacancies for SW III/SW I/A&T = 12**

#### Recruitment Strategies –

1. Implement initiative to regain competitiveness in the current market for SW I/A&T and SW III positions.
  - Currently Alamance County ranks **8** of **10** in starting salaries within our surrounding counties

<b>County</b>	<b>Starting Salary</b>
Durham	\$64,093.00
Orange	\$60,420.00
Chatham	\$59,377.00
Guilford	\$56,426.00
Person	\$55,255.00
Randolph	\$55,018.12
Forsyth	\$54,828.00
<b>Alamance</b>	<b>\$52,394.00</b>
Rockingham	\$52,286.95
Caswell	\$50,745.24

- Add an additional \$5,000 to current pay grade (115) bringing totals to \$57,394.00. This change would move Alamance to **4** of **10**.
- Adjustments would be needed to pay grades of supervisory positions to avoid compression.
- Current staff members with less than 1 year of service would move to new minimum.
- Current staff members with greater than 1 year of service should be moved on track to meet midpoint by 6 years of service.

**Total Cost = \$319,696 (include fringe)**

2. Complete additional internal work to bring all current staff members on track to meet midpoint by 6 years of service.
  - Recent compensation study created a new pay schedule which allows employees the opportunity to achieve midpoint at 6 years.
  - 17 staff members with 6+years of service in position are not at midpoint of their current pay grade.
  - 38 staff members with less than 6 years in current position are not on track to meet midpoint by their 6<sup>th</sup> year of service.
  - Once all current staff are on track for meeting midpoint, any merit increases received will continue salary movement.

**Total Cost = \$140,063 (includes fringe)**

3. Launch new Social Worker Recruitment Campaign
  - 6-month internet campaign – partnering locally with Alamance Billboard
  - Updates to current DSS website providing link to apply.

**Total Cost = \$4,500 (monthly campaign and website updates)**

Continued presence at surrounding college job fairs:

- Recent attendance at UNCG
- Upcoming attendance at UNC Job Fair
- Updates to current job postings – providing statements of community impacts.

Caseload discussions ensued for Child Welfare – the State recommends 10 cases per caseload and currently Alamance caseload is 50 cases per caseload. We continue to do 3-month check-ins with new staff (Program Manager conducts) to hear what staff are reporting – training needs, etc.,

Director Gobble added DSS would like to go with proposal #2 to bring all current staff members to meet midpoint.

County Manager York stated the County continues to work with market study to see what it would take for retention and recruitment to be competitive within EMS/Detention and DSS.

**Question: Are you able to incorporate the information into your salary line?**

*No – all salary information has to be submitted by the County into MUNIS system.*



**Question: Why isn't this request in DSS budget presentation?**

*All adjustments to salaries would have to be figured out by County HR in MUNIS. We are not able to make those changes and/or adjustments.*

**Question: The additional \$5k to be added to pay grade – what does look like?**

*It would be 3% every year to salary grades within 3-year period.*

**Question: Are all adjustments in the salary number?**

*Staffing numbers would increase by \$500k. Director Gobble shared DSS receives 50% to 75% reimbursement for services, which totals up to \$30 to \$40k in Federal/State reimbursement.*

**Action:** Chairman Britt made motion to present DSS recruitment proposal to County Manager – motion seconded by Dr. Darrell Warner.

**New Business:**

**FY 25 Proposed DSS Budget – Director Gobble and Virginia Hunker**

**Social Services History –**

The overall objectives of the Alamance County Department of Social Services are that of protective, preventive, and rehabilitative services, as well as reinforcing and sustaining the normal pattern of living, whenever possible. The department promotes the general welfare and safeguarding of children, the elderly and disabled adults from abuse and neglect. Through our services, the department works to encourage self-sufficiency and promote personal responsibility.

Alamance County DSS is a Level II agency with responsibilities for:

- Child and Adult Protective Services
- Child Support Administration Services to Adults and Families
- Eligibility for Public Assistance Programs to include Work First, Medicaid, Special Assistance, Food and Nutrition Services, Energy and Subsidized Child Care
- Community sheltering in the event of natural or man-made disasters

**Mission of AC DSS –**

ACDSS is a committed partner within our community in providing hope, encouragement and responsive services to our customers.

**Budget Components –**

- Staffing
- Operations
- Capital Outlay
- Services
- Revenues

**Staffing –**

### Staffing Totals for FY 25 = \$18,485,472.00

- Compensation Study Adjustments
- Service Awards for 5+year Employees (Total of 81 employees over 5+ years of service) – they each receive \$100 per year of service
- Non-Permanent Salaries Totals
- Fringe, Health and Dental
- Per Diem (DSS Board)
- Worker's Compensation

### Staffing Highlights –

#### Increase to Staffing = \$91,772

#### Reclassifications

- CSA II to SW I
- (3) PA III to IMC I

#### New Positions -

- PT to FT On-Call (Adult Services)
- PT to FT On-Call (Child Welfare)

#### Non-Permanent Salaries – (These are the Energy and Perm to Temp positions)

- Increase of \$174,582

Director Gobble added we have the following acceptance rate of reports which results in cases:

Adult Services	64%
Child Welfare	68%

#### Question: Why are you only asking for 2 new positions? Could you ask for more?

*We could but we have current vacancies and have space issues to consider.*

#### Question: Is the \$174,582 local cost?

*This is the local cost not Federal cost.*

### Operational Highlights

#### Operational Totals for FY 25 = \$1,766,662.00

- Translation Services (Court documents & Deaf/Hard of Hearing)
- Additional Cameras on Premises
- Pre-Service Design (Child Welfare – possibility of \$3100 per staff)
- Vehicle Maintenance and Usage (37% of vehicles are 10+ years old)
- Daily Travel – (Contract staff due to not able to use agency vehicles)
- 9.5% increase to utilities

- Increase to Current & New Contract for Guardianship Services (140 Persons Under Guardianship; we are encountering younger clients who have MH needs) We are contracting with Empowering Lives and transferring cases, when possible.
- One Vehicle for Fleet Update
- E-Courts – New Filing system within court system (Filing fees)

## **Services Highlights**

### **Services Totals for FY 25 = \$4,900,901**

- Decrease to Pass Through Funds with New Energy Portal
- Work Number Contract Renewed with Significant Rate Increase (\$51k increase from last fiscal year)
- New Foster Care Rates (84% IV-E) \$225k increase
- New Kinship Care Reimbursement - \$3k month (\$44k) – State pushes kinship placement
- CAP Backlog and Current Caseloads -
- Unreimbursed APS - \$75k budgeted used \$150k last year – currently at \$138k (We use In-Home Aids when there are placement issues and waiting on Medicaid)
- Child Support Contracted Services – (Deputies to serve petitions and the majority of the staff are veteran staff; salaries higher)

## **Budget Summary**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 25</b>
Salaries	\$18,485,472
Operations	\$1,726,662
Capital Outlay	\$40,000
Services/Programs	\$4,900,901
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$25,153,035</b>

<b>Revenues</b>	<b>FY 25</b>
Federal	\$9,642,792
State	\$816,557
County	\$102,532
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$10,561,881</b>

## **Revenues**

### **Revenue Totals for FY 25 = \$10,548,725**

- Bridge Funding for Medicaid 75/25 Admin Ending
  - Bridge Funding for FFPSA Ending
  - No Significant Changes to Child Welfare or Adult Services Allocations
  - Energy Portal Decreases Pass Through Funding (\$1.5 million decrease in Energy Funds)
- We don't anticipate receiving APS Essential Funds and ARPA (FNS) next fiscal year



### Next Steps of Budget Process

- Enter Budget Totals in County MUNIS system
- Meet with County Manager on March 21, 2024 for Budget Proposal
- County Manager Recommended Budget presented to County Commissioners on May 20, 2024
- Board of County Commissioners Approve Budget in June 2024

**Action:** Motion made by Tyronna Hooker, Vice Chair of DSS Board to approve budget and seconded by Candy Snyder. Board approved budget to move forward to County with vote 4-1 with the one no vote due to recruitment proposal not included in budget.

### Announcements:

None

### Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, March 26, 2024** at DSS – Professional Board Room located on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor at 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow  
Trinity Burt

Danell Wain

Samuel Hobbs

Campbell Sings

W. G. [Signature]

Date Approved: 3-26-2024