

January 23, 2024

The Alamance County Social Services Board met for its regular monthly meeting on this date. The meeting was held at HSC Building (1st Floor) 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC with the following in attendance were: Ms. Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair; Ms. Tyronna Hooker, DSS Board Member; Mr. Timothy Britt, DSS Board Vice-Chair; Commissioner Craig S. Turner, DSS Board Member; Ms. Candy Snyder, 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. Cheryl Ray, County HR Director were present.

Heidi Norwick, DSS Chair opened the meeting.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda: Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair

December 2023 items on the consent agenda approved. Timothy Britt, Vice-Chair made motion to approve and seconded by Tyronna Hooker.

Chair Nominations:

Chairman Heidi Norwick nominated Timothy Britt as Chair of DSS Board due to this will be her last official meeting due to term has ended. Chair Heidi Norwick made motion and seconded by Tyronna Hooker.

Action: Unanimous vote approved Mr. Timothy Britt as Board Chair.

Vice-Chair Nominations:

Chairman Timothy Britt nominated Tyronna Hooker as Vice-Chair of DSS Board. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Craig S. Turner.

Action: Unanimous vote approved Ms. Tyronna Hooker will serve as Vice-Chair.

Oath of Office:

Ms. Carmen Morrow, Clerk to DSS Board administered Oath of Office to Ms. Candy Snyder. Ms. Snyder's term will expire June 2026.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Director Candice Gobble

	DECEMBER 2023	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$5,825,403.00	52%	\$4,954,686.00	42%
EXPENDITURES	\$9,995,390.00	40%	\$9,663,443.00	37%

Ms. Virginia Hunker reported on the **2nd Quarter FY24 – Financial Report** (See Handout)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Federal	\$4,823,473	Staffing	\$7,339,542
State	\$ 569,648	Operational	\$ 477,724
County	\$ 432,281	Services	\$2,178,124
Total	\$5,825,403	Total	\$9,995,390

As of 12/31/2023 – Alamance County Social Services has been reimbursed 58% of amount expended.

New Funding Allocations:

The Department of Social Services has received additional allocation of Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) funding from the NC Department of Health and Human Services to support the issuance of LIHWAP payments (\$169,036) and LIHWAP administrative costs (\$2,355). There is a previously established line; therefore, DSS is requesting the budgeted amount to be modified to reflect the additional allocation received at upcoming County Commissioners meeting.

DSS also received Medicaid Expansion funds approximately \$157k for administrative costs to help with the needs associated with Medicaid Expansion.

Child Welfare and Adult Services received additional funding that had a positive impact on reducing County spending in the following expenditure lines:

460035 CHILD WELFARE - CARDINAL	\$2,919,848	\$237,465	0%	\$2,682,383	0%
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These funds have been used to pay for interim support needs, as well as enhanced placement rates. During the current fiscal year, we have used these funds to cover \$304,286 of expenditures that would have otherwise resulted in the use of County funds.

497440 APS ESSENTIAL SERVICES	\$41,644	\$29,069	70%	\$12,575	30%
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These funds have been used this current fiscal year to pay for Personal Care Services which includes: In-Home Aides, Life Alert Systems or Adult Day Care. The unit has also been able to

use these funds to pay for prescriptions and housing support such as payment to facilities until Medicaid has been approved. The total cost for this current fiscal year is \$29,069 that has been expended which would have otherwise resulted in the use of County funds.

In Child Welfare, there has been a steady increase of children in DSS custody over the past few years which resulted in line item increase.

497550 FOSTER CARE (STATE-R&B	\$722,000	\$608,323	84%	\$113,677	16%
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The difference of these line items is determined by eligibility and added with the increase of kinship payments for room & board which became effective December 2023, the line item continues to increase.

497570 TANF/IV-E-FOSTER CARE	\$391,000	\$184,319	47%	\$206,681	53%
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Fiscal Updates:

- State Budget estimates will be available February 15, 2024
- Effective December 31, 2023, all CCU Medicaid Expansion funds have been utilized.

Coming Soon:

- DSS Budget will be presented to Board Member at February DSS Board meeting
- DSS Budget will be presented to County Manager in March

Lapse Salary as of 12/31/2023	Comp time costs as of 12/31/2023	Overtime Paid Out as of 12/31/2023	Contract Employee Payout as of 12/31/2023
\$462,624	\$43,147	\$16,718	\$254,048

Fraud: See report –

Unit	December 2023	December 2022	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$18,655.48	\$1,605.00	\$119,539.19	\$26,368.34

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

Adult and Family Services -

Assistant Director Wellons reported on recent assault on one of Adult Services SW III in the field. The staff person has received strong support from direct supervisor and program manager of Adult Services. Program Manager put steps in place to avoid one on one in the field for any crisis visits – staff will partner with each other. Debrief has taken place with leadership team in regards to incident to see what we can do in the future to prevent any future assaults.

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

Unit	December 2023	December 2022	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$856,883.22	\$868,811.60	\$5,291,207.05	\$5,176,256.68

Child Welfare –

Assistant Director Wellons reported we currently have Child Welfare Program Manager vacancy. We are currently focusing on Foster Care and children out of county in Foster Care placements across the State. We are launching an initiative to bring children back to home county. We have the Foster Care Licensure Team in the field hosting recruitment events. We have entered into contract with WXII on advertisement to do “blast” for recruitment for Foster Care and other activities are planned as well.

Assistant Director Wellons reported on disruption of placement for one foster child who is currently in the hospital for the past three weeks. We have secured placement at PRTF – where we hope child can stay until 18th birthday which is July 2024. We are currently working with Level II and Level III facilities to secure “Alamance Bed” to avoid any Blue Cottage stays. We continue to figure out the logistics, etc., more to come.

We will attend Job Fair at UNC School of Social Work in the next coming weeks (all three Program Managers will attend from Child Welfare and Adult Services).

Economic Support: Ms. Danae Pickard

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

Energy –

The season has started with Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) with one-time vendor payments for households over the age of 60 and disabled. We currently are accepting applications for all other customers effective January 1. We will process all applications until March 31 or until all funds have been exhausted.

Medicaid Expansion – We have experienced an increase in applications post expansion. The number of applications pending speaks to workload as follows:

As of 1/12/2024 – 2160 pending MAGI (Modified Adjusted Gross Income) which is 286% increase since last year (559 applications). 1140 of the 2160 pending applications are from FFM (Federally Facilitated Marketplace) increased as well.

Medicaid Applications –

December 2023	December 2022
1216	886

DHHS will start at State Media Campaign on February 1st regarding Medicaid Expansion. There will be special focus on workers in child care, retail, construction and other lower wage industries. Media tactics for digital advertising: Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, streaming radio display, streaming TV ads, YouTube, etc., Traditional media will also be used such as TV, radio, print and outdoor advertising. The campaign will run in English and Spanish.

Question: Were the numbers what you anticipated for Medicaid Expansion?

No – the numbers are lower than anticipated for Alamance County and Statewide. DHHS has reported over 100k phone calls about Medicaid Expansion.

Federally Facilitated Marketplace (FFM) –

NC has passed to be a Federally Facilitated Marketplace Determination State – NC Medicaid will begin to accept FFM Determinations on February 1, 2024. This change will allow the FFM to make the eligibility determination for individuals who apply for coverage through FFM and whose eligibility is determined following modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) rules. This change means NC residents who apply for Medicaid through the Federal Marketplace ([HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov)) and are determined fully eligible for Medicaid by the FFM will no longer require an eligibility determination by the local Department of Social Services (DSS) caseworker. Once NC Medicaid receives notification of eligibility, NC FAST will review the case to determine which full MAGI benefit program the individual qualifies for and will send the appropriate final notice of eligibility to the individual.

Alamance County DSS staff will start training today on this new process. Traditionally open enrollment ends mid-January, now information will push enrollment all year, if possible. Anyone eligible for Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) – enrollment in these plans are available year-round, both for people who are newly eligible due to a change in income, and for people who were already eligible, but not yet enrolled.

Question: Who is responsible for applications that are processed by FFM and if there are paybacks for any mistakes?

Answer: We are not sure how DHHS will handle any paybacks if processed through FFM.

Food & Nutrition Services –

We continue to see increase pre-COVID 2019 applications 8,671 to post-COVID 2023 12,873 applications (48% increase).

We are in great shape with timeliness for FNS applications.

Operations – Director Candice J. Gobble

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of December 31, 2023

Vacancies	23
New Hires	6
Interagency Transfers	0
Resignations	5

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

Director Gobble reported on budget process – met with all DSS Program Managers regarding the needs of the agency. County Commissioners will meet on Monday, January 29, 2024 to discuss County budget. Director Gobble reported DSS Budget will be presented at February DSS Board meeting. DSS Budget will be presented once approved by DSS Board to County Manager on February 21, 2024.

Director Gobble reported on County Compensation Study. The County Commissioners approved the Compensation Study at January 16, 2024 County Commissioners meeting. The Board approved the implementation of the first phase of the market salary study. The first phase of the market study looked at 1/3 of our county workforce to determine whether Alamance County's pay was competitive. This first third included all of the positions in the Detention Center, EMS, and Social Services. The county hired Baker Tilly as the consultant to complete the study.

What is a market study?

This study compares Alamance County's salary grade minimums, midpoints, and maximums with 12 similar and/or competing counties ("the market"). Salary data was also included from three labor bureaus providing additional analysis and evaluation of pay plans.

Focusing on EMS, Detention and Social Services, 76 job classifications were analyzed and we had 94% with suitable matches in the market, meaning that there were exact job classifications/positions to compare to within other counties.

On average, the data showed:

- EMS salaries were 2.7% below market at the minimum (4.0% below market at the midpoint)
- Detention salaries were 3.6% above market at the minimum (3.2% above market at the midpoint)
- Social Services salaries were 1.6% below market at the minimum (4.6% below market at the midpoint)

When averaging all of the positions, Alamance County is about .5% below market at the minimum of the salary schedule (2.6% below market at the midpoint). Baker Tilly used this information to make recommendations for adjustments and developed a new pay structure aligned to 100% of the market. Grade assignments for all positions in the County were reviewed based on the new pay structure. The data showed that 79% of employees were within the new pay ranges, 7% were above the new pay range (meaning they are being paid above the maximum of their pay grade) and 15% were below the market pay.

The findings of the study and three options for implementation were presented to the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the third option.

What is Option 3?

In addition to resetting the salary structure and adopting new grade assignments, option 3 involved first moving all employees to the new minimum of their new assigned pay grade within the new structure. Additionally, all benefited FT and PT employees (except those paid above the maximum of their position's assigned grade), will receive a .5% increase for each year of service within their current position, capped at 6 years or an increase of 3%. This additional increase helps us with compression issues where new hires and tenured employees might be at the same salary. It is important to note that no employee's pay will be decreased regardless of where they are within their assigned salary range.

Individual letters will be forthcoming to all employees. The market adjustments are effective January 1st and will be included in January 25, 2024 paycheck.

The County will also host Zoom sessions to provide this information in a more interactive and informative manner.

The letters will have one of the three messages listed on them:

1. **Market Adjustment Determined:** If there is a market adjustment calculated for an employee, the letter will provide that adjustment along with the new compensation. Additionally, the letter will provide the new grade assignment of their position.
2. **Less than a Year of Service & at Minimum of Grade:** If the employee has been within their role less than 1 year (perhaps a new hire with the County, a new promotion, transfer, reclassification, etc.) and is already at minimum of the pay grade, the letter will provide them this information. The letter will also detail out the new grade assignment for their position.
3. **Employee Earning Over Maximum of Grade:** If the employee is already earning above the maximum of their salary grade the third communication will communicate this as well as provide the employee with their position's assigned pay grade. Even if the employee is earning more than the salary grade there will be no deduction or decrease of salary.

Director Gobble reported the State has released a new Statewide Plan that is calling for one LME/MCO for all 100 counties. There will be an RFP out soon for the providers interested in applying.

Commissioner Craig Turner proposed motion of with the budget cycle to focus more on Social Workers and how to fill every vacancy within those SW positions. Commissioner Turner requested Director Gobble come up with proposal to present at February Board meeting to be included in DSS budget proposal to County.

Motion made by Commissioner Craig Turner and seconded by Chair Tim Britt.

Action: Director Gobble will present at February Board Meeting.

Thank You Presentation:

Director Gobble presented Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair with plaque for outstanding service from July 2017 – December 2023. The plaque stated: “Thank you for your tireless efforts, unwavering support and your dedication to our mission”.

Tim Britt, DSS Board Chair thanked Ms. Norwick for her caring heart and having a servant heart. Supervisor who will retire at the end of November with a plaque as she is retiring from Alamance County Social Services with 22 years of service. Director Gobble thanked Ms. Price for her tireless efforts, unwavering support and her dedication to DSS Mission.

New Business:

Human Resources Overview – Bob Ring, DSS HR Director

Mr. Robert Ring, DSS HR Director presented the following:

Social Services has struggled for years with vacancies – we are making progress. Social Services has 231 FTE.

Year	# of Vacancies
January 2023	48
January 2024	27

Hiring Activities:

- Applications Received = 2,062
- Interviews Conducted = 282
- Hired = 113

Turnover:

Unit	# Separated	# Employees	Percentage
Child Welfare	21	53	40%
*Economic Services	25	104	24%
Adult Services	13	24	54%
Child Support	11	18	61%
Administration	2	32	6%

- Economic Services is your largest unit within Social Services.

Reasons for Separation:

- Other Employment = 18
- No Reason Given = 11
- Released from Probation = 10
- Family Reasons = 7
- Termination = 5
- Other = 21 (Not a good fit, work load too heavy and/or going back to school)

Question: What's the released from probation?

Answer: These reasons vary – such as staff not able to catch on to the work; attendance issues.

Question: What are the separations involve similar work between Child Welfare and Adult Services Social Workers?

Answer: Yes, the work is similar but the amount of FTE for Adult Services SW is smaller unit.

Discussions ensued regarding the pay scale for SW in other Counties, the caseload size and quality of life as valued by staff. DSS caseload size and managing of the high-risk client is different from the State. We prefer our SW staff to see high-risk clients at least 1x per week – we exceed the mandate. There are system issues that are statewide as it pertains to mental health services for Children as well as Adult.

Evaluations/Check-Ins:

- 3 Month Check-Ins
- 6 Month Evaluation
- Annual Evaluation

Mr. Ring reported we have changed the 3-month check-in process from meeting with HR to staff meeting with Program Managers of the unit to have face-to-face interaction. We created 9-month check-in with new employees with HR.

We have established Trainers for each unit and since the inception of trainers we have seen a decline in resignations due to training as a reason. We currently have staff included with Guilford County DSS as it relates to Medicaid Expansion training.

Question: Is there a MH component in the check-in and evaluation meetings?

Answer: For SW, there is a tool that is used and all questions are asked of all employees. The questions are as follows: Personal Component, Self-Care, how can we support you? Etc.

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, February 27, 2024** at DSS – Professional Board Room located on the 1st Floor at 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Timothy Burt

Carmen Snyc

[Signature]

Danell [Signature]

W. G. [Signature]

Date Approved: _____

2-27-2024