

# HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD



## Board Members

Mr. John Blalock  
Ms. Pamela Corbett, MA  
Mr. John Davenport, Jr., PE  
Dr. James Doub, OD  
Dr. Palmer Edwards, MD  
Dr. Calvert Jeffers, Jr., DVM  
Dr. Charles Massler, DDS  
Ms. Heather Parker  
Dr. Linda L. Petrou, PhD  
Ms. Sharon Pettiford, RN  
Ms. Sharon A. Rimm, LCSW  
Dr. Peter Robie, MD  
Dr. Ricky Sides, DC  
Ms. Claudette Weston  
Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt, Commissioner

## Chair

Mr. J. Phil Seats, R.Ph., MBA

## Vice Chair

Mr. Fleming El-Amin, County Commissioner

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING MINUTES February 2, 2022

### Board Members Present

Mr. John Blalock, Ms. Pamela Corbett, Mr. John Davenport, Dr. James Doub, Dr. Palmer Edwards, Mr. Fleming El-Amin, Dr. Calvert Jeffers, Dr. Charles Massler, Ms. Heather Parker, Dr. Linda Petrou, Ms. Sharon Pettiford, Ms. Sharon Rimm, Dr. Peter Robie, Mr. J. Phil Seats, Dr. Ricky Sides, Ms. Claudette Weston, Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt

### Board Members Absent

### Staff Present

Ms. Shontell Robinson, Ms. Elizabeth White, Mr. Joshua Swift, Mr. Gordon Watkins, Ms. Lorrie Christie, Ms. Tanya Donnell, Ms. Amanda Clark

### Guests Present

### Call to Order

On Wednesday, February 2, 2022, the Forsyth County Health and Human Services Board held its regularly scheduled bi-monthly meeting virtually. The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Mr. J. Phil Seats at 5:30 p.m.

### Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed by all.

### Consideration of Board Minutes for December 1, 2021 and January 19, 2022

The minutes from the December 1, 2021 Health and Human Services Bi-monthly Virtual Board Meeting and the minutes from the January 19, 2022 Special Board Meeting were reviewed. Mr. Seats requested a motion to approve both sets of minutes. Dr. Massler made a motion to approve both sets of minutes. Dr. Robie seconded the motion. A quorum was present. The motion carried and both sets of minutes were approved with 13 votes in favor.

## **Deputy County Manager's Comments – Ms. Shontell Robinson**

*(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)*

### **Weaver Plant Fire**

Ms. Robinson reported that DSS and Public Health are staffing an emergency shelter. Due to the fire at the Weaver Fertilizer Company plant which is located on North Cherry Street, a shelter has been opened in partnership with the American Red Cross. It has been recommended that approximately 6000 citizens evacuate the area. By definition under emergency management, DSS is responsible. When mass sheltering is needed, DSS is responsible for overseeing them.

In the beginning, this was an evacuation site. The team decided a shelter was needed last night. It is located in the Education Building at the WS Fairgrounds. There are 2 DSS staff members around the clock and 1 to 2 Public Health Nurses. The American Red Cross has provided 2 to 3 people as well. There have been a couple of good Samaritan citizens who have provided families with hotel stays through Thursday, 2/3/22.

Ms. Robinson commended Ms. Gayle Swain, DSS's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, for the great job she is doing. Ms. Robinson also gave kudos to the FCDSS and FCDPH teams for doing a fantastic job and getting the site up and running.

### **New DSS Director Announcement**

Ms. Robinson announced that Ms. Christine Dowdell has been selected to become the next Forsyth County DSS Director. She will begin on February 28, 2022. She comes with a lot of experience through her work state-wide. Ms. Robinson reported that she will be posting for the Deputy Director position soon. Ms. Robinson is appreciative that Ms. White is assisting to help with a smooth transition.

### **Board of Commissioners Resolution**

*Resolution encouraging all residents and visitors in Forsyth County to wear face coverings indoors, receive vaccination and booster shots, and to protect themselves and our county from the spread of COVID-19*

Ms. Robinson has shared the resolution with the HHS Board via email. It will be presented to the FC Board of Commissioners tomorrow, 2/3/22 for approval. This is 99% of what the Board of Commissioners have already passed. This resolution has been tweaked to incorporate the Health & Human Services Board into it. Mr. Seats asked if the number of death statistics have been updated. Mr. Watkins responded that they have been updated from the September stats.

### **Federal Vaccine or Weekly Testing Mandate**

Ms. Robinson reported the Supreme Court blocked the Federal OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) requirement of vaccinations. Forsyth County has halted the efforts to require vaccinations. Human Resources is still collecting the status of employees' vaccinations

on a voluntary basis. County wide, approximately 75% of staff has been vaccinated and approximately 25% has not. If the Federal Government makes any changes, Forsyth County will comply accordingly.

Ms. Corbett asked if the recommendation for Cure Violence has been completed. Ms. Robinson responded that she will send a copy of the assessment report to the HHS board. Ms. Robinson stated that it was recommended for our community. It will be taken to the Commissioners meeting tomorrow, 2/3/22, during the ARPA discussions to determine whether or not it will be supported by the majority of the board. If the majority supports then the next steps will be taken. Ms. Corbett asked if there was anything the HHS board can do to help. Ms. Robinson responded that she would like to give some thought to this offer. The Cure Violence staff presents directly to the Commissioners. There were some questions in regards to the success of the program. Commissioner Martin had a lengthy conversation with one of the researchers out of a university in New York who has been really neutral about the Cure Violence model. The researcher was not supportive of the terminology “evidenced based” because he did not feel like as a researcher there was enough supporting data. He shared that the term he would use is “promising and valuable” for the community. He feels that it is an alternative to law enforcement not anti-law enforcement.

#### **Interim Director of Social Services Comments – Ms. Elizabeth White**

*(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)*

#### **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**

Ms. White reported this project started a collaboration in April of last year between the City of WS and Forsyth County. The city expended all of their funds near the end of December 2021. Forsyth County is now serving city and county residents. Between the city and county over 21 million dollars has been spent. Approximately 1.3 million dollars still remain.

#### **Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)**

Approximately 600 million dollars was received for this program. This program addresses citizens in 3 priority levels 1) citizens who have been disconnected, 2) citizens in danger of being disconnected and 3) citizens just needing assistance. Prior to exhausting all funds, priority groups 1 and 2 were able to receive assistance. The state is considering making this an annual assistance program.

Mr. El-Amin asked how many individual clients were served through the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAWP). Ms. White responded that she did not have the data on hand but will be glad to send it at a later date. Ms. Robinson responded that as of Thursday, 1/28/22, 956 clients have been served.

#### **Food and Nutrition (FNS)**

The waivers that the federal government applied last year ended January 1, 2022. Cases that were given a waiver prior to last year will now have to recertify, which will increase the amount

of mail coming into the agency. Due to vacancies, this will cause staff to have to ramp up in order to get all reviews done timely. The state has decided to use a staggered approach which will require 50% of the cases to be audited. These will be cases with odd numbers.

### **Budget Prep**

The year end estimates have been completed. Currently working on budget request for the upcoming year which can not be completed until after February 15, 2022 which is when the state revenue allocations will be released.

### **Vacancy Update**

The division directors have been working hard to fill positions. Forty-one staff have been hired since October 2021. The managers are conducting group interviews in order to help fill the positions more expeditiously.

Mr. El-Amin asked how many vacancies need to be filled in order for DSS to be at full capacity. Ms. White responded that the majority of vacancies are in Economic Services and Family & Children's Services. Ms. Robinson responded that the last time she reviewed the vacancy status it was approximately 80 vacancies.

### **Director of Public Health Comments – Mr. Joshua Swift**

*(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)*

#### **COVID Update-Forsyth County**

Mr. Swift reported there were 432 new cases in the last 24 hours. Forsyth County almost reached 1000 cases 14 days ago; averaged 683 cases per day for the last 14 days. Total deaths are 697. There were approximately 15 to 20 deaths in November, 25 to 30 in December and 60 plus in January. In the last 14 days, cases totaled 9,557. The positive percentage has decreased to 36.1%. Over age 18, 71% of the population is fully vaccinated and 75% have received at least one dose. As of today, cases are down 49% (lab confirmed), deaths have increased by 83% in the last 14 days.

Atrium Wake Forest has 236 people hospitalized in their system and 111 are in Winston-Salem of which 80% of those are unvaccinated. Novant Health has 192 people hospitalized in the triad of which 91% are unvaccinated/under vaccinated.

Cases per week were at an all-time high of 8,000 two weeks ago. Although cases are high the downward trend continues.

### **Vaccination Status**

Vaccination status continues to increase. The vaccination clinic is open at Public Health and they have been seeing 50 to 60 people per day.

Mr. Swift reported that Public Health is working with state vendors and the 2 hospital systems here to try to make more testing available. Testing is available at Bowman Gray Stadium by Atrium Health, Southeast Plaza Shopping Center by Mako Medical, Hanes Mall Circle by Novant Health, and at Galilee Missionary Baptist Church and Union Baptist Church by StarMed Healthcare.

Mr. Swift also reported that every time he and staff speak with the media they are heavily promoting the testing availability. They also promote testing via social media.

Mr. Swift issued a press release: Public Health will distribute At Home test kits on Saturday, February 2, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. This test distribution is in addition to what individuals have received from COVIDtest.gov. They will allow 4 kits per vehicle. They will also issue N95 face masks, surgical face masks and hand sanitizer.

### **Under 5 Vaccine Pfizer**

On Tuesday, 2/1/22, Pfizer submitted their package to the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) for approval. Anticipated delivery is late February to early March.

Ms. Rimm asked Mr. Swift if his definition of being fully vaccinated is 2 shots plus a booster shot. Mr. Swift responded that this is the state's definition, 1 dose of Johnson & Johnson or 2 doses of Moderna or Pfizer means fully vaccinated. The state only gives the raw numbers of individuals who have had a booster shot; however, the population can be broken down by age group; for example, age 18 and older and 65 and older.

Ms. Rimm also asked Mr. Swift if he had feedback on why an individual would get a single vaccination and not get the second and the booster. Mr. Swift responded that some individuals got the first dose so they could get the gift card. Mr. Swift shared that any dose is better than no dose at all and once you receive the booster it greatly reduces any complications.

The CDC (Center for Disease Control) is using the term 'up to date' because some may have had the first shot and are waiting for the assigned timeframe to get to take the second shot or booster.

Dr. Massler asked what criteria is met for a death to be defined as a COVID death. Mr. Swift responded that he would have to speak with his Epidemiologist who handles the vital records and death certificates in order to be sure how the death is coded.

Mr. El-Amin asked how the public will be notified regarding the COVID test kits and masks give away. Mr. Swift responded that a press release has been sent to all of the media outlets in the community and it has been added to social media pages. Mr. Swift will also present the information at the Commissioners meeting on Thursday, 2/3/22 followed by a media question and answer segment. Ms. Robinson shared that an email distribution list is used which consists of several churches, neighborhood organizations and several other contacts. Ms. Robinson stated that she will send the information to the HHS board so they can help circulate as well.

Mr. El-Amin shared that he has often seen the president of Cone Hospital promoting the level of seriousness of the need to wear a mask; however, he does not see presidents from the hospitals in this area doing that type of marketing. Mr. El-Amin asked Mr. Swift if he has seen this type of marketing. Mr. Swift responded that he and Ms. Robinson have had regular meetings with the leadership from Novant and Atrium. Ms. Robin respond that recently Atrium, Novant and Cone

held a joint conference.

Mr. Seats asked if the COVID data that is shown daily is from the previous day. Mr. Swift responded that the best way to collect the data is by the 14-day total to compute the 14-day average. The data is usually published between 12:00-1:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## **New Business**

### **HHS Board Duties and Responsibilities – Attorney Gordon Watkins**

*(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)*

#### **Health & Human Services Board Duties**

The board adopts rules and regulations to address health issues. You can create rules that are more stringent than the State's rules, but you cannot create rules that are less stringent. You can't act where the State has preempted county action. For example, one county decided that they wanted to regulate smoking and the State did not agree. This is enforced by the Health & Human Services Director & staff. The majority of the board's role is to be more of an advisory board.

- Fees may be adopted for department services based on the director's recommendation.
- Assure compliance with laws
- Recommend new programs
- Occasionally hear appeals of local rule violations
- Perform regulatory health functions required by law; act as agent of State as required
- Recommend a Human Services budget to the Board of Commissioners
- Review HHS programs; quality assurance and improvement
- Advise local officials through the County Manager
- Perform public relation and advocacy
- Protect the public health as required by law
- Develop dispute resolution procedures for contractors and clients
- Advise and consent the county manager regarding choice of a director

#### **Duties of the Director**

- Appoint staff of the consolidated human services agency with the county manager's approval
- Administer State human services programs
- Administer human services programs of the local board of county commissioners
- Act as secretary and staff to the consolidated human services board under the direction of the county manager
- Plan the budget of the consolidated human services agency
- Advise the board of county commissioners through the county manager
- Perform regulatory functions of investigation and enforcement of state and local health regulations, as required by State law

- If the HHS board were to pass a new rule, it would still be up to the staff as to how it is enforced. Violations of the rule would result in a misdemeanor charge.
- Act as an agent of and liaison to the State, to the extent required by law
- Appoint, with the county manager's approval, an individual that meets the requirements of G.S. 130A-40(a), local health director

### **What the Board Doesn't Do**

- Hire or fire the director of employees
- Perform the director's tasks
- Administer or create programs
- Run the day-to-day operations of the agency
- Perform investigations or enforcement
- Manage agency employees
- Approve the budget
- Spend money

### Statutory References:

NCGS 153A-77; NCGS 130A-39; NCGS 130A-43; NCGS 108A-15.1

Ms. Corbett asked for an example of the board creating a rule. Mr. Watkins responded that there are many statewide health rules that may not be stringent enough for Forsyth County. The board could adopt a more restricted rule if they felt it was needed; however, that does not typically happen. When it comes to enforcing the rules, the state will defend state rules, not rules made by the board. There is a 10-day notice period before the board can adopt a rule. The notice has to be given to the clerk to the board of commissioners and it has to be published in the newspaper available to the public for 10 days. Ms. Whisenhunt asked if the hearing is required to be open to the public. Mr. Watkins responded no. Ms. Rimm asked if the notices were published in other forms of communication other than the newspaper. Mr. Watkins responded by law all notices are to be published in the newspaper and they are also added to the county website.

Mr. Seats and Mr. El-Amin thanked Mr. Watkins for attending the meeting.

Ms. Robinson shared that since COVID and now a community shelter has consumed so much time, this year she hopes to focus on other non-related COVID things.

### **Opioid Epidemic – Ms. Amanda Clark, Public Health Educator II**

*(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)*

Ms. Clark shared that her working job title is Substance Use Health Educator. Most of the job focus is community outreach and technical assistance and some mental health related issues.

Opioid Crisis is also known as the Overdose Crisis. It is currently in its 3<sup>rd</sup> wave which involves Fentanyl or other synthetic or man-made opioids. Fentanyl is a very powerful opioid

- 80 to 100 times stronger than Morphine

- Has been added to various drugs including opioids and non-opioids
- Cocaine, Molly, Xanax and Cannabis found specifically in Forsyth County

Forsyth County follows closely to most national trends

Overdose deaths prior to 1999 were not tracked. Once the data starting being tracked, it was discovered that overdoses we increasing every year (1999-2019). The increase was 1000%.

### **Forsyth County EMS Overdose Responses**

- 2018: 1,131 doses of Naloxone given to 746 patients
- 2019: 847 doses of Naloxone given to 587 patients
- 2020: 1,162 doses of Naloxone given to 769 patients
- 2021: 1,354 doses of Naloxone given to 897 patients
- 1/1/22-1/27/22: received 52 overdose calls

The overdose response data above does not include the cases where Naloxone was given by Lay persons. Nationally, in 2019 there were 72,000 overdose deaths and in 2020 that number jumped from 72,000 to 92,000. Most were due to some type of opioid.

EMS (Emergency Medical Services) tracks the overdose calls that come in and the amount of Naloxone doses provided to patients. Naloxone is the overdose revival drug that will bring someone out of an overdose. There are several ways to get Naloxone since there is a state standing order in North Carolina. You can get it from pharmacies without a prescription. Also, you can get it from other agencies around the county i.e. Public Health, Twin City Harm Reduction at no charge. More Naloxone is given than overdoses because Fentanyl is so powerful it takes more than one to revive someone. According to EMS it may take 3 to 4 doses of Naloxone to revive some individuals.

Ms. Clark shared a tool by the name of OD Map that she uses for presentations and community work. It gives a visual representation of where overdoses are happening in the community. The tool can be manipulated to specific timeframes and each symbol identifies where people died and/or lived. The color coding identifies if Naloxone was given and how many doses were given. Through the pandemic FC EMS recorded 1939 suspected overdose calls and administered Naloxone 1279 times and 41 people passed away.

Ms. Clark reported that she runs the FROST (Forsyth Reginal Opioid & Substance Use Team.); This is a community coalition that is working to address substance use across various factors. Ms. Clark also hosts Naloxone and overdose response training in the community. FROST also coordinates with City Lights Ministry to provide Camp Heal. It is a day camp for youth who have been affected by drug use in the home.

### **FROST Initiatives 1/2020-Present**

Ms. Clark has started several initiatives since she started with Public Health. She has encouraged law enforcement to collaborate with the Green Tree Peer Center, packaged Narcan kits, attended community events to provide education and resources, provided overdose response training, distributed Naloxone at the jail, substance use research with High Point University, stigma reduction media campaign and recovery to work employer surveys.

Goal #1: Harm Reduction /Primary Overdose Prevention

- On the front lines of overdose crisis



- Reduce deaths and keep people healthy
- Includes safe-use supplies, Naloxone distribution
- Endorsed by NC DHHS, best practice

Goal #2: Stigma Reduction

- Affects all aspects of life
- Provide more education
- Change social norms: public health issue rather than legal

Goal #3: Update Crisis Response

- Co-responder models can ease the burden of law enforcement
- Needs to be less clinical/institutional, more person/relationship centered
- Need more crisis resources available 24/7

Goal #4: Better Access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

- Need more access to medication treatment & mental health services
- Proven to be the most effective path (especially for opioids)

Ms. Whisenhunt complimented Ms. Clark and thanked her for what she is doing. Ms. Whisenhunt expressed that she would like for the HHS board to explore ways to help and get the community involved. She invited Ms. Clark to figure out what the board can do. Ms. Clark thanked Ms. Whisenhunt. Ms. Weston shared that she echoed Ms. Whisenhunt's response. Ms. Weston asked why can't the county or city appoint a mental health commission and include the hospitals. Ms. Weston also commended Ms. White for doing a great job at FCDSS.

Ms. Robinson announced that the county expects to receive Opioid settlement dollars. Ms. Clark has been instrumental in assisting with planning what that will look like. Also, there is an internal team working and an external team working with both hospitals. DayMark, Mobile Integrated Health, and Partners.

Mr. Watkins expressed appreciation to Ms. Clark. He reported that he has been working with a group for two years negotiating with the North Carolina Department of Justice regarding the Opioid settlement and that 85% of the dollars will go to North Carolina counties. Every year a community meeting is required with the all stakeholders to address how Opioids should be handled in the next year. The settlement was reached on 1/26/22. Mr. Watkins anticipates that the funds will be released from April through July of this year.

Ms. Pettiford asked if there are any community navigators that act as liaisons to help people get back on track. Ms. Clark responded that there are programs that offer peer support or/and case management to hold them accountable. There is nothing coordinated by the county or city. This has been a topic in the Opioid settlement fund discussions. Ms. Pettiford offered her assistance with this effort and thanked Ms. Clark for all she has done.

Ms. Whisenhunt shared more about the Stepping Up program. It is a national program that started with women who have been incarcerated, now men are included. This program works with them while they are serving their sentences and follows them for one year after their sentence is completed. Ms. Whisenhunt also shared that the program has been successful for most and they have graduations after the one-year mark is completed.

Ms. Rimm asked if law enforcement is calling the mobile crisis team to go out with them. Ms. Clark responded yes. She shared that she has gone out on rides along with most of the first responding agencies in the county. Mobile Integrated Health informed Ms. Clark that 50 to 60

percent of their calls are specifically because one of the law enforcement agencies requested assistance. Ms. Robinson shared that they are considering adding a social worker to the Mobil Integrated Health team.

Mr. El-Amin asked Ms. Clark if she has seen an increase or decrease in Meth Labs in Forsyth County. Ms. Clark responded that Meth is on the rise but has not taken over the Opioids at this point.

### **HHS Board 2022 Initiative(s) – Mr. J. Phil Seats, Chair**

Mr. Seats shared that most of the board members want to move past COVID and get to other business of the board. Mr. Seats opened the floor up for discussion regarding new programs. He stated that he could see the need to bring the FROST program and the Cure Violence program together which would require a group of people, and defined goals

Ms. Whisenhunt suggested starting with the Opioid crisis. Mr. Blalock agreed and stated that it is a great suggestion; however, with COVID not totally going away the board needs to consider the reality of being able to handle the new things.

Ms. Robinson stated that the board's ideas are welcomed because the county will receive the Opioid dollars so this crisis needs to be further addressed. The board needs to look at other ways this crisis can be addressed beyond Ms. Clark and FROST. A good starting point would be for the board to attend the FROST meetings with several agencies across the county. They are very active.

### **Committee Update**

#### **Legislative Update -- Dr. Linda Petrou**

Dr. Petrou reported that Legislature is in Pro Forma waiting for the Supreme Court to rule on the redistricting arguments that were heard today. The ruling could be confirmed by the end of this week or the first part of next week. Then legislature will have to redistrict again and then adjourn for the year. They are remaining open longer in order to handle the redistricting. They will close and return for the spring session.

Ms. Rimm shared that she saw the Forsyth County Connections. She complimented Ms. Robinson on how she was so articulate and poised and impressive.

Ms. Rimm also shared that she was on the "Next Door" app and ran across a post from a gentleman who asked why there are no jobs with good benefits that pay well. He also stated that he had a degree. The Forsyth County Environmental Health Director replied to the gentleman and told him what to do.

### **Adjourn**

Mr. Seats asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Jeffers made a motion and it was seconded by Mr. El-Amin.

SR/tmd

Next Virtual Meeting: April 6, 2022-5:30 p.m.