

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD



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Ms. Heather Parker

Vice Chair

Mr. Fleming El-Amin

Board Members

Mr. John Blalock
Ms. Carmelita Coleman
Dr. James Doub, OD
Dr. Palmer Edwards, MD
Dr. Brooke Griffith, Psy.D
Dr. Calvert Jeffers, DVM
Dr. Charles Massler, DDS
Dr. Linda Petrou, PhD.
Dr. Sharon Pettiford, DNP, RN, CNRN
Ms. Sharon Rimm, LCSW
Dr. Peter Robie, MD
Mr. J. Phil Seats, R.Ph., MBA
Dr. Ricky Sides, DC
Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt, County Commissioner

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

MINUTES

April 2, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ms. Heather Parker, Chair
Mr. John Blalock
Ms. Carmelita Coleman
Dr. Palmer Edwards
Mr. Fleming El-Amin (virtual)
Dr. Brooke Griffith (virtual)
Dr. Calvert Jeffers (virtual)
Dr. Charles Massler
Dr. Linda Petrou (virtual)
Ms. Sharon Rimm (virtual)
Dr. Peter Robie
Mr. J. Phil Seats
Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt (virtual)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dr. James Doub
Dr. Sharon Pettiford
Dr. Ricky Sides

GUESTS PRESENT

Forsyth WINS Members - Mr. Calvin Clements, Pastor Curtis Friday, Mr. Terrell Harris, Mr. Torrence Martin, Mr. Artemis Peterson, Mr. Christopher Smalls, Ms. Velma Terry, Mr. Nate McNair

Call to Order:

On Wednesday, April 2, 2025, the Forsyth County Health and Human Services (HHS) Board held its regularly scheduled bi-monthly hybrid meeting. Ms. Heather Parker, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Denise Price
Ms. Christa Smith
Mr. Joshua Swift
Ms. Ronda Tatum
Ms. Lorrie Christie
Ms. Tanya Donnell
Ms. Amber Humble
Ms. Nihya Payne
Mr. Adam Pendlebury
Ms. Sherita Sutton
Ms. Annie Vasquez

Moment of Silence:

A moment of silence was observed by all.

Consideration of Minutes:

The minutes of February 5, 2025, HHS Board meeting were reviewed. Ms. Parker moved to accept the minutes with one change to the last page, to change the next meeting from June 4, 2025, to April 2, 2025. Dr. Peter Robie made a motion to approve, and Dr. Palmer Edwards seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment Period: No comments.

Forsyth WINS: Mr. Joshua Swift shared that Dr. Edwards was at a Public Health Leaders Conference and got to meet the Forsyth WINS team. Mr. Swift introduced the team members and thanked Ms. Sherita Sutton, who is the County lead. The City and County both provided ARPA funding to Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods to administer the program.

Pastor Curtis Friday thanked the Board for the opportunity and gave a preview of what the team does, who they are and all the positions. Pastor Friday shared that they follow Forsyth WINS, an evidence-based model for Cure Violence. They have four violent interrupters that have already been trained. They have two outreach workers that gather the participants. The team helps them find jobs, housing, whatever help they need. Most of the team have other credentials and have been doing this type of work for a long time. Pastor Friday reported that they currently have 13 participants – they had 28 but some have graduated. He added the goal is to have a continuous cycle of graduating participants and accepting new ones. He stated the team is “boots on the ground” and connects participants to other organizations, such as Goodwill, as needed. They have been operational for three years and got really busy the past two years.

Board members had lots of questions and were very engaged and impressed with the team and all the great work they are doing out in the East Winston-Salem, beat 222, community.

Ms. Denise Price thanked the Forsyth WINS team for coming and extended an invitation for them to come back and have some informal interaction. Ms. Price encouraged Board members to participate in the Forsyth WINS community events.

Deputy County Manager's Comments: Ms. Price reported the following updates (see complete/detailed handout on file in the Administrative Binder):

Welcome – Ronda Tatum, Interim Behavioral Health Services Director: Ms. Price thanked Ms. Tatum for rejoining the team following her retirement, serving in the interim Behavioral Health Services (BHS) Director role, as they continue to recruit to fill the position.

Federal Funding Update: Ms. Price shared there have been some early reductions related to COVID dollars. This was expected to happen at the end of May.

Engineer Board Position: Ms. Price reported that the position is not filled yet, as no applications were received for the position. Ms. Price asked the Board to please continue to encourage people, if they are interested, to apply. They will continue to recruit for the position, through the Manager's Office.

FY25 and 26 Budgets: Ms. Price reported that departments were asked to identify opportunities to reduce FY25 spending and/or to increase revenues for the next four months to reduce fund balance use. Ms. Price added it was challenging but departments came forward with some ideas.

Ms. Price shared that the County has historically counted on salary savings resulting from vacancies to reduce use of fund balance. We are doing a good job of bringing people in and our vacancy rates are down.

Dr. Charles Massler announced he will be leaving the Board at the end of his term. He asked Board members to help recruit interested people to apply for the board seat. His term ends in the fall. Ms. Price added they will start recruiting for that position early. Dr. Massler said he has enjoyed being on the Board and hopefully, he contributed.

Department of Social Services (DSS) Director's Comments: Ms. Christa Smith gave the following updates (see complete/detailed handout on file in the Administrative Binder):

- Vacancy rate is holding steady at 6.4%
- March – National Social Work Month – theme is Social Work: Compassion + Action. County Commissioners recognized all Social Workers, at their March meeting. Social Workers are across all HHS departments.

Adult Services: Ms. Smith reported adult wards are trending down – have 169 adult wards. They have seen some policy changes about how wards come to DSS and the diligence that the magistrate's office needs to make a determination that the guardian, as last resort, which is DSS, is the one that needs to be appointed. Waiting to see that is where recent implementations may start to trend upwards, there may be a bit of a backlog with them doing their due diligence. They are watching that number to see if it continues down or not.

Family and Children's Services (Foster Care): Ms. Smith stated they are seeing an upward trend. They were close to dropping below 200 but trending back upwards – at 232 youths in foster care as of the end of February. There are policy updates on both sides of the service line and the State is working hard to improve these. Ms. Smith stated they are excited about the changes being put in place.

Path NC Update: Case Management System – delayed to June 2nd.

Economic Services Division

Food and Nutrition – Meeting and exceeding the Federal and State mandate of 95% timeliness for Forsyth County residents to access benefits (95% of applications processed within the timely net guideline). Expedited applications process within five days and cards are sent overnight to people. Ms. Smith stated these are trending really well.

- Collaborating with Public Health, WIC Program and the City of Winston-Salem to host a

series of educational classes about WIC and Food and Nutrition Services. The first class was March 27, 2025, at Carl Russell Recreation Center. There will be more in the series throughout the year.

- **Low Income Energy Assistance Program** – wrapping up – administered about \$1.6 million dollars – assisted over 4,600 households.

Medicaid Services – Processed 2,554 new applications in March – average processing time is 30 days – 95% processed timely. Ms. Smith stated that as per the Medicaid Director, there is a potential of \$27 billion in Medicaid cuts to NC (proposed over the next 10 years). NC Session Law 2023-7 where Medicaid Expansion will discontinue if Federal match falls below 90%. Feds to do an update to their formula of what their match will be. Currently the individuals served through Medicaid in Forsyth is 116,114, which is a significant number of our population. Current number receiving Medicaid Expansion in Forsyth is 24,460.

Child Support Services: Ms. Smith reported that collections are nearing \$14.7 million this fiscal year – on target to meet total collections goal. On track to meet ongoing support payment to arrears goals. Exceeding goals for cases under order at 92.13%.

Staff Recognitions:

- Ms. Adrienne Francis collected a single case payment of \$13,501.58 to satisfy the arrears.
- Ms. Danisha Espy collected payment of \$7,681 on one case.

Ms. Smith reported they will soon be fully staffed.

Department of Public Health (PH) Director's Comments: Mr. Swift gave the following updates (see complete/detailed handout on file in the Administrative Binder):

- Continue to monitor measles across the U.S. Will be having a tabletop exercise to review response protocols.
- Monitoring H5N1 cases across the U.S. Over the past 3 months we have seen less cases in commercial flocks.
- Monitoring the federal budget situation. We receive \$8 million in state funds and 90% is federal funding that passes through the States.

Billing: Clinical is actively billing Aetna and Cigna insurances – plan to onboard Medicare and Blue Cross in the next month.

Environmental Health – Preparing for pool permit season – adding an additional, authorized, On-Site Wastewater Environmental Health Specialist to assist with inspections.

WIC – State funding has increased for the upcoming fiscal year due to the program's increase in participation rates. Participating in three community baby shower events to promote WIC services to eligible clients.

Forsyth County Infant Mortality – In collaboration with community partners, the Forsyth County Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition announces a significant decrease in Forsyth County's infant mortality rate – dropped from 8.8 in 2022 to 6.8 in 2023 which is below the NC State rate of 6.9 for 2023.

Behavioral Health Services (BHS) Interim Director's Comments: Ms. Tatum reported the following (see complete/detailed handout on file in the Administrative Binder):

Peer Support: Mr. Jose Perez is rotating his office hours and going to libraries talking to people – seeing an increased need for housing and food resources. We expect to see that continue to grow.

EMS Overdose Responses February 2025 – Ms. Tatum stated of the 39% or 50 calls for the month, alcohol was the primary substance and not any other drug. There were 120 call that came from 17 zip codes – 27101 had the highest number of responders, at 34 – 27105 was the next highest, with 18. In the age range from 4-17, the substances were gummies, marijuana, alcohol and other substances.

Stepping Up: Ms. Tatum reported that staff are preparing to move on April 4th and hopefully Behavioral Health staff will be on the second floor of the Highland Avenue Center, on April 7th. She reported that numbers are staying stable – steady in both men and women. The men are about a 3 to 1 ratio to women and are doing very well in the program.

Mental Health Court: Ms. Tatum shared they are trying to start working with probation and parole customers. She stated it has been a challenge with the legal system, but Ms. Amber Humble's group is still working hard to try to increase the numbers. Ms. Tatum feels it would be a big benefit to the program.

Behavioral Health Services Budget: Ms. Tatum reported on the FY2026 budget recommendations for Behavioral Health Services. She highlighted: the funding sources available for BHS; year-end estimate; revenues; expenditures; and net county dollars (see complete/detailed budget presentation on file in the Administrative Binder).

Public Health Budget: Mr. Adam Pendlebury reported on the FY2026 budget recommendations for Public Health. He highlighted: changes to NCDHHS agreement addenda funding; revenues; expenditures; net county dollars; and enhancement requests (see complete/detailed budget presentation on file in the Administrative Binder).

DSS Budget: Ms. Smith reported on the FY2026 budget recommendations for Social Services. She highlighted: revenues; expenditures; net county dollars; enhancement requests; and capital requests (see complete/detailed budget presentation on file in the Administrative Binder).

New Business:

FY25-26 Fee Schedules: Mr. Pendlebury presented the FY25-26 Fee Schedules. He highlighted:

- The proposed update to the QuantiFERON test
- Fee Schedule Modifications
- Fees and Service Eligibility Policy

Ms. Parker asked for motions to approve the recommended budgets, fee schedule, and eligibility policy as follows:

Dr. Robie made a motion and Mr. Fleming El-Amin seconded, to approve all three budgets presented (Behavioral Health Services, Public Health and Social Services). The budgets were approved unanimously and will now go to the County Commissioners for review/approval.

Mr. John Blalock made a motion and Dr. Charles Massler seconded, to approve the FY25-26 fee schedules for Public Health. The fee schedules were approved unanimously.

Dr. Massler made a motion and Dr. Edwards and Mr. El-Amin seconded, to approve the eligibility policy for Public Health. The eligibility policy was approved unanimously.

FROST Committee Update: Mr. Blalock publicly recognized everyone there for the great things being done for the committee in the community. He acknowledged Ms. Annie Vasquez and stated she is a big part of that and thanked her for everything she does. Mr. Blalock reported the next FROST meeting is May 14th – the location to be determined. He will send the information out to Board members.

Legislative Committee Update: No report.

HHS Board Member Shadowing – Moment of Reflection: No report.

Adjourn:

Ms. Parker asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Blalock made a motion, and Dr. Massler seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.

DP/lgc

Next Meeting: June 4, 2025 - 5:30pm