

January 24, 2023

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, Chair, DSS Board Chair; Dr. Ernest Eason, DSS Board Member; Commissioner Craig S. Turner, DSS Board Member; Ms. Candice Gobble, Director; Ms. Lynette Wellons, Assistant Director of Services; Ms. Jamie Hatfield, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. Wendy Roberts, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. Danae Pickard, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. LaPorscha McCullough, Adult Services Program Manager; Mr. Robert Ring, HR Director; Ms. Angela Cole, Child Welfare Program Manager; Mr. Jason Cole, IT Director; Ms. Rebecca Lambert, Child Welfare Program Manager; and Ms. Jamie Hamlett, Attorney were present.

Heidi Norwick, DSS Chair opened the meeting.

Public Comment:

None

Oath of Office:

Commissioner Craig S. Turner sworn in for the Oath of Office as new DSS Board Member. Effective term – January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026.

Consent Agenda: Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair

November/December items on the consent agenda approved. Dr. Ernest Eason made motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner Craig Turner.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Ms. Candice Gobble

	DECEMBER 2022	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$4,954,686.00	42%	\$6,806,321.00	52%
EXPENDITURES	\$9,663,443.00	37%	\$8,751,333.00	38%

Director Gobble presented the 2nd Quarter Financial Report – (See Full Report)

Expenditures – YTD	Revenues – YTD
Budgeted: \$25,908,104	Projected: \$11,806,708
Expensed as of 12/31/2022: \$9,663,443 (37%)	Received as of 12/31/22: \$4,954,686 (42%)

Alamance Co. DSS is trending upwards with the following:

- Daily Travel: 118% (due to trainings and contract staff daily travel)
- Child Support IV-D: 107%

Alamance Co. DSS received additional Food & Nutrition ARPS Funds from NC DHHS: \$100,199.00. These funds were given with 100% reimbursement in FNS but we only receive 50%.

We have determined we will use these funds to implement call center and hire additional temporary staff to work in FNS and/or Medicaid. Director Gobble reported she has met with County Manager Heidi York regarding hiring of temporary staff. We continue to meet to solidify the plan for temporary staff. We are hopeful that staff who come on board we will be able to move over as permanent staff fully trained.

We also received VAYA Funds in lieu of using unreimbursed DSS lines: \$56,756

Lapse Salary as of 12/31/2022	Comp Time Costs as of 12/31/2022	Overtime Costs as of 12/31/2022	Contract Employee Payout as of 12/31/2022
\$978,809.29	\$56,062.62	\$18,023.00	\$107,702.00

The State has implemented a New Energy Payment Portal during this Energy season. All Energy payments will now be issued by the State. There are a few exceptions such as wood and kerosene vendors who will continue to receive payment directly from DSS. We have seen issues with vendors registering with the new State system, especially the large vendors such as Duke Energy and Piedmont Gas. This will impact all of the energy services: Crisis Intervention (CIP), Low-Income Energy Assistance (LIEAP) and Low-Income Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP).

With the State implementing the payment portal – this will impact Alamance Co. DSS as it relates to reimbursement. We will not be able to code those hours back to State and receive funding.

Question: When does the FNS ARPA funds have to be used?

FNS ARPA funds must be used by the end of fiscal year (June 2023).

Question: Can the FNS ARPA funds be used for staff bonuses?

Yes

Question: Have you received a lot of Energy applications since we have not had a hard winter?

Yes – we have exhausted the majority of our energy programs. We have completed exhausted the LIHWAP program as well as CIP funds. We currently have LIEAP funds which are not used for any crisis situations. The disabled/elderly population received automatic LIEAP payments due to pandemic.

As of January 1, the LIEAP program was open to all citizens. We received 500 applications the first week of January (4 days).

Director Gobble reported on the new Budget Process for next fiscal year. DSS will need to give all information to County Manager and she will present the information. We will not be involved

in a day-long process with presenting directly to County Commissioners as we have done in the past.

Fraud: See report –

Unit	December 2022	December 2021	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$1,605.00	\$1,321.00	\$26,368.34	\$47,891.26

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

Assistant Director Wellons reported on Leadership Training that has occurred monthly with services (Child Welfare, Adult Services & Child Support) supervisors. The group has decided they would like to continue to meet on a monthly basis to continue to gain training tools. Assistant Director Wellons reported we recently started the same Leadership Series with Economic Services supervisors and Program Managers.

Assistant Director Wellons we are researching recruitment information to help with recruitment. These tools will show virtual reality experience of what Social Workers experience in the field. They will be able to experience a home visit and we will include as a part of the interview process. We are hopeful this will help potential employees understand the day-to-day of what could potentially happen on the job.

Assistant Director Wellons reported on the placement issues all Social Services are experiencing across the State. There are inadequate placement beds at every level of care. Assistant Director Wellons referenced the seven children that Guilford County is currently housing at their local office. Assistant Director Wellons reported we have one child still at hospital awaiting placement and ready for discharge now. We continue to see an increase amount of reports who need higher level of care that is available in Children as well as Adults.

Adult and Family Services Program Manager: LaPorscha McCullough

Ms. McCullough continued the conversation of the placement issues for Adults. Unfortunately, Adult Services does not have the pots of funding that Child Welfare receives. Adult Services reports have increased as well – we are receiving more from law enforcement that ever before – the reports show dual diagnosis and other mental health issues as well as legal issues.

Ms. McCullough reported we experience “road blocks” daily with placement issues, but our Guardianship SW Supervisor, Kailee Morrow, works very closely with our Adult Facilities and has secured placement for these individuals. We recently had to pay \$500 per day for 3 days to secure placement for individual.

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

Unit	December 2022	December 2021	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$868,811.60	\$859,741.80	\$5,176,256.68	\$5,201,786.19

Child Support –

No report.

Children Services Program Manager: Ms. Angela Cole/Ms. Rebecca Lambert

Ms. Cole reported Child Welfare Supervisors continue to be in rotation to ensure cases are being worked. We currently have four assessors in rotation. We have three new staff and two supervisors in rotation.

Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the recruitment of social workers. Bob Ring, DSS HR Director added since July 1, 2022, Child Welfare interviewed 35 potential candidates. We hired 9 of the 35 candidates.

Economic Support: Ms. Jamie Hatfield/Ms. Danae Pickard/Ms. Wendy Roberts

Ms. Hatfield reported the Federal Public Health Emergency is coming to an end very soon. Throughout the pandemic, DSS has continued to conduct eligibility re-determinations; however, most beneficiaries did not have coverage terminated or reduced per federal guidance. Our Medicaid Teams (Family & Children’s Medicaid and Adult Medicaid) were faced with vacancies, the staff worked strategically to complete as many reviews each month and any untouched cases were auto-extended by the system. Effective April 2023, a re-determination must be completed over a 12-month period for every re-certification due.

Ms. Hatfield reported the following statistics:

Time Period	# of Medicaid Recipients
January 2020	41,835
December 2022	49,437

There was an increase of + 7,602 recipients in two-year period. With the increase, we will see an average of about 633 additional re-determinations each month. The Medicaid Unit (Economic Services) is one of the highest vacancies at DSS, including one of the two Adult Medicaid Supervisors resigning effective today. Ms. Hatfield reported we have been able to utilize staff in different areas based on the need of the work, allowing us to focus on applications that were increased due to the FFM (Federally Facilitated Marketplace) Open Enrollment and the changes in the FFM program. We will have to shift back to ensure we meet the requirements of recertifications.

Ms. Pickard reported the following regarding Food & Nutrition Services. Since March 2020, FSN recipients have received maximum allotments for their household as an additional monthly supplement on top of their normal benefits. For the State of NC that meant an additional \$150 million federal dollars each month went into our local economy.

In December 2022, Alamance Co. DSS issued \$8 million in Food & Nutrition Benefits, with \$3million being additional supplements. Without the supplements issued, it still puts Alamance County DSS at about \$3 million more than Pre-COVID issuance. applications. The additional

supplements will end February 2023. We are working through multiple avenues to communicate this change to all of Alamance County citizens who receive FNS benefits.

Ms. Pickard reported we currently have 5 vacancies in Food & Nutrition unit. There is a sense of urgency with the vacancies due to waivers ending soon. The FNS application numbers continue to increase as well as re-certifications. We see on an average around 1,800 applications per month vs. 1000 per month Pre-COVID.

Food & Nutrition Application Statistics:

Application Timeframes	# of Applications
7/1/2020 -6/30/2021	7399
7/1/2021- 6/30/2022	8072
7/1/2022 - 1/22/2023	5980

Ms. Pickard reported the following regarding Energy Programs:

We currently only have one energy program running - Low-Income Energy Assistance (LIEAP) Program. We anticipate more Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) funds as soon as the issue with the new Energy Payment portal is up & running. As discussed before the new Energy Payment Portal has created some challenges with payment vendors. We continue to receive a large amount of phone calls from recipients that were approved for Energy Assistance and the checks have not been received as of yet.

Energy applications continue to increase – we are close to surpassing last year’s numbers:

Application Timeframes	# of Applications
7/1/2020 -6/30/2021	1082
7/1/2021- 6/30/2022	7007
7/1/2022 - 1/22/2023	6040

With the increase of Energy applications, our current part-time staff are working diligently. With the 1000 hr. County rule – we have had to utilize temporary staff to assist with the amount of applications.

Ms. Roberts reported on the following:

Economic Services Vacancies –

Economic Services Unit	# of Vacancies
Application & Processing Team	2
On-Going Re-Certification Team	12
Training Team	1
Supervisor	1

Ms. Roberts discussed the State has released two new policy updates that caused DSS to review all pending applications to ensure the new policy was added to application.

We are gearing up for the NC Health Choice program to end April 1, 2023 as well as the yearly income modification, which is reviewed to adjust the Federal Poverty limits.

The training team continues to gear up training materials with the PHE coming to an end. All Economic Services staff will need to be retrained with policies. We have been inundated with Work First (Cash Assistance) applications since this feature was added to E-Pass. The State has recognized that appropriate description for the program was misleading for clients, but if an application has been entered into the E-Pass system, all counties will need to work the application.

With the new temporary staff, we will bring on in Economic Services – the State restricts what temporary staff are allowed to do due to position is non-merit based. We are being creative a hope to offer a temp to permanent staff solution. We are sending staff to Alamance Community College to attend the NC FAST Class in hopes of recruiting potential candidates.

Operations – Ms. Candice Gobble, Assistant Director of Operations

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of December 31, 2022

Vacancies	45
New Hires	4
Interagency Transfers	1
Resignations	3

We currently have 47 vacancies as of January 24, 2023. With 233 positions at DSS – we have an 20% vacancy rate.

We have hired 32 staff since July 1, 2022 – 29 are still at DSS.

Separation Report (Quarterly):

Unit	Number of Separations	Reason for Separation
Child Support	2	Other Employment – 2
Adult Services	3	Work Environment – 1 Other Employment – 2
Child Welfare	7	Other Employment – 4 Work Environment – 1 Family Responsibilities – 1 Work Responsibilities – 1
Economic Services	4	Other Employment – 2 Work Environment – 1 Unknown - 1

Child Care: Candice Gobble

No Report.

IT Report: Mr. Jason Cole

Mr. Cole reported the DSS has scanned 247,564 documents into the Document Management System since December 7, 2022.

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

Director Gobble reported DSS Management Team will have a retreat to brainstorm session on How do we partner? And discuss Mission and Vision. We will roll out these topics to Leadership Team also. This will be the start of a Leadership Training series taught by Drake Maynard, JD.

Drake Maynard who formerly worked with Office of State Personnel who knows DSS policies. Mr. Maynard is owner of Maynard HR Consulting company. His company provides human resources consulting services to public employers. Specializing in the areas of policy development and administration, employee relations, training and coaching for supervisors and managers.

This will be a 5-month series that will include trainings on the following:

- Managing Effectively
- Difficult Conversations & Conflict Resolution
- Problem Solving/Managing Generational Differences
- Basic & Advanced Employee Relations
- Managing in Compliance

Director Gobble reported she will host “Birthday’s with DSS Director” each month with staff providing small snack and conversation.

Director Gobble reported we recently combined our DSS Orientation (Carmen Morrow) and Onboarding for new staff. The day long training covers the following topics: DSS Orientation (DSS Culture), Onboarding (Director Gobble), Trauma Informed Series (Mary McGinty Shaw) and DSS Way (Robert Ring).

New Business:

DSS Shelter Presentation: Carmen Morrow

Ms. Morrow, DSS Disaster Coordinator presented the following:

Brief History:

In the event of any disaster, Alamance County Social Services staff are required to man disaster shelters. According to NC General Statute – 166-A – NC Emergency Management Act. This is not unique to Alamance County – the statute applies to all 100 counties.

Alamance County DSS would operate under Mass Care ESF-6 – shelters may be opened for a variety of reasons. DSS would coordinate with Emergency Management to provide temporary shelter, mass feeding, distribution of relief supplies and disaster welfare information.

Based upon the County’s Hazard Analysis – these situations/emergencies may require sheltering:

- Severe Winter Storms (Most common)
- Tornadoes
- Floods
- Hazardous Material Accidents
- Fires
- Hurricanes (Most common)
- Earthquakes
- Terrorist Events
- Damaged Lifelines (phone, power, gas events, etc.)

Alamance County has elected to manage and operate its own shelter(s) in the event for any shelter/mass care events. Alamance County would utilize the American Red Cross as an alternative, if needed. Alamance County DSS is the lead agency.

Alamance County primary shelter site: Fairchild Recreation Center located at 827 S. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC. (Graham Recreation Center is the normal site – undergoing renovations currently).

Disaster Shelter Training/Career Ladders –

All staff at Social Services must complete the ICS 700(b) course through the FEMA Emergency Management Institute within 30 days of employment. This course provides training on resources for personnel who require a basic understanding of the National Incident Management System.

Alamance County Social Services has the following Disaster Coordinators:

Staff	Position	Course(s)/Training
Carmen Morrow	Disaster Coordinator	IS-100, IS-120, IS-230, IS-700(a), IS-700(b), IS-800(c), IS-300 (3 day in-person training), IS-400 (2 day in-person training), American Red Cross Trainings, Shelter Fundamentals, Mass Care Trainings
Shea Malpass	Co-Disaster Coordinator	American Red Cross Trainings, Shelter Fundamentals, Mass Care Training and IS-700(b)

Jason Cole	Co-Disaster Coordinator	American Red Cross Trainings, Shelter Fundamentals, Mass Care Training and IS-700(b)
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In 2017, Alamance County Social Services requested Disaster Shelter Career Ladder for all staff. Alamance County Government approved the \$500 career ladder (added to base pay) for all DSS staff who complete the IS-700(b) course.

Shelter Team Coverage –

The complete Shelter Team Coverage is made up of the following Community Partners:

- Alamance County Health Department
- Alamance County Environmental Health
- Alamance County Sheriff’s Department
- Alamance County Maintenance
- RHA (Mental Health)
- Twin Lakes

DSS has a total of 11 teams with a team leader assigned to each team. Each team is responsible for 12-hour shifts (7am – 7pm) or (7pm – 7am). Most recently team leaders participated in Mobilization Exercise with Emergency Management and other community partners.

Shelter Events – (2018 – 2023)

Hurricane Florence – (2018)

Alamance County assisted the American Red Cross with Congregate Shelters (large open settings such as churches, schools & community centers) in September 2018.

There were three congregate shelters opened between September 13, 2018 – September 19, 2018:

- Lamb’s Chapel
- Fairchild Recreation Center
- Graham Recreation Center

Total # of Shelter Hours Opened	168 Hrs.
Total # of Days Worked for DSS Teams	11.5 (Teams rotating 12 hr. shifts)
Total # of Evacuees Served	105 residents + 51 Civil Air Patrol
Total # of DSS Staff Hrs. Worked	536.92 Hrs.
Total # of DSS Staff OT Hrs. Worked	653.36 Hrs.
Total FEMA pay received for OT Hrs.	\$16,060.97

During Shelter Operations, Alamance County DSS remained open to serve the citizens of Alamance County, as well as on-call services and shelter teams rotating in & out shelter duties.

After-Action Report (Lessons Learned from Hurricane Florence) –

Pros	Cons
Trustees from ACSO to assist with staging of shelter operations	Red Cross – not enough staff/food contracts
Mental Health Provider On-site	Elevated risk of sex offenders (Out-of-County residents)
Rapid Response in changing needs (opening additional shelters)	Interpreters
Community Donations	Proper Storage/Refrigeration
Pre-Planned Shelter Meetings	Training of Staff at Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

Tropical Storm Michael Shelter Operations – 2018

In October 2018, Alamance County was included in the State of Emergency for Tropical Storm Michael. Although we did not officially open any shelters, Emergency Management assisted on water rescues and Social Services did provide hotel rooms.

Alamance County DSS completed 994 Food & Nutrition Replacement applications for replacement benefits. Alamance County DSS assisted Wayne County DSS with completion of D-SNAP (Disaster Food Stamp) 1,700 applications within 9 days to assist with backlog.

COVID Pandemic – (2019 – 2020)

During the pandemic, Alamance County shifted to DSS as being the primary lead at any shelter operations. We moved to “Non-Congregate” Shelters (hotels, motels). No shelters were opened during this period.

In June 2020, NC Department of Health & Human Services announced Child Welfare/Adult Services Social Workers would be designated as First Responders. With Social Workers deemed as first responders, we were able to request additional PPE for the critical access workers who continued to work in the field during Pandemic.

Embers Motor Lodge – (2021)

Embers Motor Lodge burned down on December 19, 2021. There were 35+ residents impacted. All residents were evacuated to Graham Recreation Center. DSS provided “non-congregate” sheltering with reserving hotels for one-week, with American Red Cross providing Visa gift cards that would provide for an additional week.

Hotel	# of Residents served	Total Cost
Maple Hotel	16 residents	\$5200.00
Quality Suites	15 residents	\$9900.00

Alamance County Health Department assisted with the medications for the families impacted. We provided case management until February 2022. First Baptist Church of Graham donated various gift cards totaling \$2935.00. Each family received many gift cards to help with food and/or clothing.

Alamance County DSS completed DSS-1678 Replacement/Supplement affidavits for those residents who received FNS benefits (at least 20 applications were done on-site).

After Action Report –

Issues	Solutions
Communication issues with event – No Incident Command Established	Meetings created with EM with all other community partners and other municipalities regarding shelter operations
Not able to reserve rooms with existing P-cards (purchasing cards) due to limits	P-cards established for Disaster Services for DSS and EM with higher limits
Difficulty with finding hotels due to extenuating circumstances	Established a list of hotels within County with State rate
Medication & Medical Equipment issues – eye glasses, oxygen and walkers	Health Department established contract with Total Care Pharmacy for medication issues

Wind Storm/Frigid Temperatures – (2022)

Alamance County Shelter Operations teams begin meetings on December 22, 2022 to discuss the upcoming Wind Storm where Duke Power predicted multiple power outages. Hotel Rooms were reserved to avoid opening up congregate shelters - (10 rooms reserved). DSS and Emergency Management assisted residents through December 25, 2022.

We assisted 11 families with hotel rooms:

Quality Suites – 10 rooms (one-night stay)	\$1003.66
Best Western – 1 room (3-night stay)	\$260.10

All residents were from City of Graham.

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, February 28, 2023** 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.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Date Approved: _____