

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 MINUTES February 3, 2021

Board Members Present

Mr. John Blalock, Ms. Pamela Corbett, Mr. John Davenport, Dr. James Doub, 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

Mr. Fleming El-Amin, Dr. Palmer Edwards

Staff Present

Ms. Shontell Robinson, Mr. Joshua Swift, Mr. Victor Isler, Ms. Tanya Donnell, Ms. Lorrie Christie

Guests Present

None

Call to Order

On Wednesday, February 3, 2021, the Forsyth County Health and Human Services Board held its regularly scheduled 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 January, 6, 2021

The minutes from the January 6, 2021 Health and Human Services Virtual Board Meeting were reviewed. Mr. Seats requested a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Massler made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Davenport seconded the motion. A quorum was present. The motion carried and the minutes were approved with 15 votes in favor.

New Business

In light of the COVID pandemic and the additional workload that has been placed on DSS and PH staff i.e. running testing and vaccine sites, Mr. Seats proposed that the Health & Human

Services Board temporarily meet bi-monthly until this crisis eases unless an urgent matter arises. Ms. Robinson has been providing updates to the Commissioners on a regular basis.

Mr. Seats expressed appreciation from the HHS Board for all of the hard work that has been done for the community. He shared that if Ms. Robinson, Mr. Isler, and Mr. Swift had less distraction in preparing for a board meeting it would give more time to fight the pandemic.

Ms. Weston and Mr. Blalock expressed their agreement and support for this change. Before the board voted, Ms. Rimm wanted to hear from Ms. Robinson, Mr. Swift, and Mr. Isler to make sure this decision will not create extra work for them.

Ms. Robinson shared that the meetings seem to come around fast and there is a lot happening behind the scenes. Ms. Robinson also shared that she, Mr. Swift, and Mr. Isler have been working at the vaccine clinics while trying to keep other responsibilities afloat. She feels that a bi-monthly meeting will not create more work, it will alleviate a small portion of the workload. COVID is a recent factor, which is what they are updating the board on now, and if there is anything urgent from the previous month they will be sure to update the HHS Board. Ms. Robinson shared that it would be helpful to meet bi-monthly and she appreciates Mr. Seats' sentiment. Mr. Swift shared that there is a lot of work going on and it would be helpful to meet bi-monthly. Mr. Isler shared that operationally things are moving quickly and he feels that this would be a good process if the board chooses to meet bi-monthly.

Mr. Seats also shared that the reports given to the board between the meetings has been outstanding and Mr. Swift provides a thorough update at the County Commissioner's meeting which you can see on Channel 13 at 2:00 p.m. weekly on Thursdays. Ms. Robinson shares this weekly update with the board in her weekly report.

Ms. Whisenhunt made a motion to approve the Health & Human Services Board temporarily meeting bi-monthly until the pandemic eases up and Dr. Petrou seconded. The motion carried; the temporary bi-monthly HHS Board meeting was approved with 15 votes in favor. The new temporary schedule will be April 7, June 2, August 4 of 2021.

Ms. Whisenhunt shared that she has seen how hard staff have been working and gave a special thanks to the Board for agreeing to temporarily meet bi-monthly. She also agreed that Ms. Robinson does a great job with providing updates and special meetings can be called if needed.

Announcements

Dr. Robie announced and congratulated Mr. J. Phil Seats on being appointed to serve on the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee of the State Health Plan. In that role, he will be involved in making new medication decisions and how the medication will be tiered for the 727,000 people on the state health plan. Mr. Seats thanked Dr. Robie and shared his appreciation for the opportunity to work alongside a great group of people. He expressed that it is an honor and he is looking forward to it.

LME/MCO Disengagement Process (Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations)

In order to make sure the residents of Forsyth County have the best care possible, the plan is to continue with the disengagement from Cardinal. Ms. Robinson will be submitting her recommendation in the Commissioners' next meeting cycle. Since this is a public meeting she cannot discuss details now. All notices have to be in place and she will need to finalize things

with new LME/MCO. Ms. Robinson will have a more detailed update for the next board meeting. She will also add it to her weekly updates as soon as it is finalized.

Vaccination Partnership with Novant and WFBH

Ms. Robinson reported that Forsyth County is engaged in a partnership with Novant Health and Wake Forest Baptist hospitals re: vaccine operations. The media release regarding the collaboration was forwarded to you via email.

Currently, Ms. Robinson and Mr. Swift are meeting with Jeff Lindsay, EVP and COO of Novant; Dr. Pam Oliver, EVP and President of the Physician Network at Novant; Dr. Kevin High, President of Wake Forest Baptist Health. The meeting is held weekly on Fridays to discuss what is working well, ways to work together in terms of going out to historically marginalized populations, and media collaborations. The group is in the process of pre planning for a mass vaccination event where everyone can work together when much larger doses of the vaccine arrive. They are also working on a process to transfer doses to each other so appointments do not have to be cancelled if one of the sites run out.

Forsyth County is only scheduling vaccine appointments based on the vaccine commitment from the state. The notification is issued on Thursday nights. The appointments open up on Friday or Saturday for the following week.

Ms. Robinson reported that she, Dr. Oliver and Dr. High signed a joint letter which was sent to Secretary Cohen to reiterate that this partnership is working together for the community.

Director of Social Services Comments – Mr. Victor Isler

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

USDA Approval of Telephonic Signature

The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) is working with the state to review the data management infrastructure regarding NCFAS in an attempt to extend the telephonic signature process which is helping with reducing foot traffic in the building. Due to state system issues, it is likely that it will not extend past February 20, 2021.

The team is in the process of figuring out what that traffic will look like in the agency. There are approximately 200 applications for Food and Nutrition and Medicaid every week. For now, the agency remains open to ten people in the lobby at a time in order to socially distance.

Social Services Legislative Priorities

The North Carolina Directors Association for DSS is reviewing these priorities. The state had a 10% increase as it relates to adult wards. The association is looking for additional funding for adult guardianship.

The REDA (Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit) is a new audit that has been issued by the federal government. The goal is to make sure there is a \$5,000.00 cap per case on potential paybacks.

Regarding Medicaid eligibility errors, when you look at the expense of individuals being in an assisted or long-term care facility, the chargebacks could amount to \$30,000 plus on a monthly

basis. Prior to this audit, there was a partnership with the state to help absorb some of the error costs.

Also looking at Medicaid Transformation to figure out how to advocate appropriately regarding a seamless process for service delivery for the foster youth as well as the adult wards. The team is advocating locally and on the state level.

Emergency Rental Assistance (REAP)

Forsyth County has received approximately 4.1 million dollars and the City of WS has received approximately 8 million dollars from entering into a partnership together. This is federal funding to be used for emergency rental assistance in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The city has issued an RFP (Request for Proposal) in order to secure a vendor for the process. Individuals have to fall at 80% or below the average medium income. What that looks like for a family of 3 is around \$30,000.00 a year at the 50% level. The 80% level is around \$48,000.00. Based on the guidelines; the funds can go towards arrears or can be paid forward.

Next Steps

There is a committee of DSS and City of WS staff from their Community and Human Relations area working together to plan the guidelines regarding paying arrears.

Based on the number of 41,000 households who could be potentially eligible, the plan is to review and pay arrears first. Other targeted areas will be reviewed. Marketing will begin soon. The projected deployment date is 2/28/21.

Capacity internally, DSS is extremely busy with the LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program) which provides assistance with heating expenses.

The goal is to use the 10% of the 12-million-dollar allocation which is approved for administrative costs to leverage contractors to assist this city and county partnership.

Dr. Robie asked why the entrance into homeless shelters has not increased since the pandemic began including the recent two months of winter weather. Mr. Isler responded work has been done in partnership to prepare and Public Health has done an excellent job in consulting with the shelter in a preventative way to help mitigate the numbers.

Ms. Robinson responded that the county has committed to reimbursing hotels for homeless individuals who need to quarantine and the numbers have been minimal. Ms. Robinson will provide data in her next weekly update.

Dr. Robie shared that he is incredibly impressed with the low numbers and it should be a compliment to Public Health and the Forsyth County for doing a fantastic job when taking care of the homeless population.

Mr. Seats asked how many criteria have to be met to be eligible for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program? Mr. Isler responded that the criteria have to be met and the program is funded by the federal government. Income and arrears are taken into consideration.

Mr. Seats asked what happens if an individual is below 50%? Mr. Isler responded that it is households at 80% of the area median income or lower.

Director of Public Health Comments – Mr. Joshua Swift
(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

COVID-19 Update

In the last 14 days there have been 2,784 cases, which is an average of 199 cases per day. Total deaths from March 2020 to date is 281. The media shows cases dropped by 500 which is incorrect data due to Fast Med Urgent Care Centers across the state had a huge data dump. These numbers have thrown the average count off.

Vaccine

The total vaccines given to date has broken the 20,000 mark (including the first and second doses). Yesterday 1,283 doses were administered at the Winston-Salem fairground vaccination site. The mobile intergraded health for emergency medical services gave 62 doses in long-term care centers

- The first 7 days at the fairgrounds approximately 8,000 doses were given; the average per day was 1,100; included in this average are the 700 doses given on 1/24/21 which was the opening day.
- There was a state push for all of the first doses to be administered on 1/27 which allowed for an additional 538 to be given.
- For the five remaining days, the average was 1,348.
- As of the 1/6/21 Health & Human Services board meeting, 2,221 doses had been given.
- The clinic has been in operation for 6 weeks.
- The first doses were given on 12/22/20.
- The vaccine sites were closed for 5 days during the time frame.

The categories changed on 1/14/21. There are larger groups between 1 & 2 which include adults 65 and older, health care workers, long-term staff, and residents. There has been a lot of discussion re: front line essential workers which includes teachers and law enforcement. Some counties have moved forward. Specific guidance has been given to the local health directors association and the county managers of DHHS to remain in the assigned groups.

There are over 55,000 individuals in Forsyth County who are 55 years of age and older. Mr. Swift is working with the vaccine management system to produce a report. The report will show the demographics of the individuals who have been served including the counties where they reside. He has spoken with individuals from Brunswick County, Boone, Charlotte, Raleigh and individuals from other states. The state has given a specific directive that people cannot be turned away. Anyone is eligible if they fit into this category and they can go to any vaccination site. Guidance from the state has not been given regarding moving to Phase III

Doses given to Forsyth County residents at Novant Health, Baptist Hospital, and FC Public Health; 46,269; of that 35,000 first doses and 11,200 were second doses. This information can be found on the state's dashboard. You can also find testing, case counts, and vaccine information there.

Twelve to thirteen hundred vaccines are being given per day. Mr. Swift's team continues to look for ways to improve the process. The first vaccine appointment is at 8:30 a.m. and the last appointment is at 6:00 p.m. The goal is to open the doors at 8:15 a.m. Appointments are not taken more than 30 minutes ahead of their time. The appointment schedule is based on 14 to 15

appointments per 5 minutes. Appointments cannot be stacked. The estimated capacity for first and second doses is 10,000. A six-day week would be 1,666 per day. The system is set up to handle a large capacity but right now, Public Health is only receiving 975 doses per week. If at least 75% of Forsyth County residents receives a vaccination, herd immunity could be reached. Note: both Moderna and Pfizer are fragile unlike the flu vaccine.

FPCPH is working with the City of WS regarding marketing and media. Mr. Swift has asked them to create a graph that will show a step-by-step process and also how many staff are required in giving one shot. Mr. Swift confirmed there are 10 to 12 staff, between the vaccine being drawn down to the monitor after the shot is given.

Vaccine Equity Goals

- 45% be given to historically marginalized populations
- Population in Forsyth County:
 - 56.3% White
 - 27.5% Black
 - 13.3% Hispanic

Mr. Swift has requested that the state provide the demographics of the people who are served by the vaccine clinic that will also identify the Forsyth County residents. Ms. Robinson organized a meeting with Mr. Swift, Mr. Edwin Marshall who is the new clinic director, and Senator Lowe to discuss outreach. As a result of that meeting, a vaccine event will be held at Shiloh Baptist Church and it will include 6 to 8 other churches within a one-mile radius of the church. It may take a while to finish group 2. As it is now, group 3 will open up for essential workers of any age (18 to 64).

Todd Luck who is the PIO (Public Information Officer) for Forsyth County is working with Ed McNeal who is the PIO for the City of WS. They are releasing media content and working with a media company to secure adds on billboards, buses, radio, television and social media. Some of the information will be geared towards how the vaccine works, side effects and scheduling doses. NCDOT has joined WSTA to assist in transporting individuals to the vaccine clinics.

Mr. Blalock asked if the 75% vaccinated goal represent population vaccinated through the health department and other providers? Mr. Swift responded that it could also be individuals who are residents of Forsyth County and go to another to receive the vaccine.

Mr. Blalock also asked what is the rate-limiting step of the vaccine supply and what may be causing it and can anything be done to help? Mr. Swift responded, the week of January 24, the state was allocated a total of 125,000 doses. FC Public Health received 2,100. The week prior to, 5,000 doses was received. Mr. Swift reached out to the state to request more vaccine and assistance from the national guard Mr. Swift is estimating that the allotments for the next 2 to 3 weeks may be low, and that is due to the federal government looking at larger states and hotspots.

Mr. Seats asked how are people defined as essential workers? Mr. Swift responded that it is not as defined as groups 1 and 2 and that it could be anyone who works outside of the home. Mr. Swift is hopeful the state will provide the tiers in the group.

Mr. Seats shared that he was very impressed with the execution and implementation of the logistics that Mr. Swift and his team have put in place and he was even more impressed with the positive attitudes and smiles that the staff had. Mr. Swift responded that it is a joint effort and expressed his appreciation to Ms. Robinson, leadership and other departments for assisting.

Dr. Robie asked what happens to the dose if someone misses their appointment? Mr. Swift responded that a staff member is on a computer all day and reviews the appointments by the hour and as the time gets closer every minute. There is a bare minimum by the end of the day. Before the end of the day there is a call list by category used.

Hospital Update

Mr. Blalock reports that the hospitals are in much better shape regarding hospitalizations than they were a month ago. Last month, the Wake system had approximately 200 COVID patients a day. Cases doubled since the month prior to that and the projection was that 270 beds would be needed by mid-February. Fortunately, that scenario did not play out. The count stayed around the 200 level for a couple of weeks and then started to decline. The total positive cases today are approximately 125. The percent of the patients that required ICU care was around 20%-0% which improved from the prior month from 25-30% range. Baptist and Novant share a communication and it shows similar trending. Both systems continue to monitor the demand while making necessary adjustments. The only concern is there may be some form of spike in the future related to the variants that are showing up.

Legislature – Dr. Linda Petrou

Dr. Petrou reported the House and Senate are still organizing the committees. Senator Joyce Krawiec will be the chair of the Health Committee in the NC Senate. They are working on several things but have not begun any hearings.

Old Business

None

Adjournment

Mr. Seats asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Jeffers made motion to adjourn and Dr. Massler seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

SR/tmd

Next Meeting: April 7, 2021-5:30 p.m.