

**BRUNSWICK COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
November 25, 2024 6:30 p.m.**

- I. CALL TO ORDER/SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS:** The regular monthly meeting of the Brunswick County Health and Human Services Advisory Board was called to order by Dr. Allen Williams at 6:32 p.m. in the Health Services Boardroom.
- A. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Dr. Williams asked for public comments. There were none.
- B. SPECIAL PRESENTATION:** Dr. Williams asked if there were any special presentations. Ms. Browning introduced Rachael Baldwin as Health Services Employee of the Quarter and praised her for the amazing job she does. Rachael's co-worker nominated her saying that she is very caring and always has a positive attitude.
- II. REGULARLY OCCURRING ITEMS:**
- A. ATTENDANCE:**
1. The following members were present:
 - Dr. Allen Williams
 - Mr. Marty Cooke
 - Mr. Hubert Reaves
 - Dr. Travis Pickens
 - Dr. Justin Asbury
 - Mr. Gene Ward
 2. Members absent:
 - Mr. Chip Carroll
 - Ms. Cindy Carver
 - Dr. Lauren Gallagher
 3. Staff members present:
 - Cathy Lytch, Health & Human Services Executive Director
 - Robby Hall, Social Services Director
 - Rich Ohmer, Social Services Deputy Director
 - Anita Hartsell, Veteran Services Director
 - David Howard, Health Services Director
 - Danny Thornton, Environmental Health Director
 - Cherie Browning, Director of Nursing
 - Lyle Johnston, EMS Deputy Director
 - Marjorie Rayl, Quality Assurance Specialist
 4. Guests present: None

- B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Minutes for the monthly meeting held on **July 22, 2024** were reviewed. Dr. Williams asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. There were none. **Mr. Reaves moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Cooke seconded the motion. The vote to approve the minutes as presented was unanimous. (Closed)**
- C. AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS:** Dr. Williams asked if there were any adjustments to the agenda. Ms. Lytch asked that agenda item IV. A Social Services Director be moved up to introduce Robby Hall before moving forward. **Mr. Ward moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Cooke seconded the motion. The vote to approve the agenda with the aforementioned change was unanimous. (Closed)**
- D. STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:**
- 1. VETERANS SERVICES:** Ms. Hartsell reported that each year, based on inflation trends, the Department of Veterans Affairs provides a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for VA disability benefits. The new 2025 COLA will be a 2.5% increase in benefits which takes effect on December 1, 2024. Due to VA benefits being paid after a month is over this increase will be seen in recipients' January 1, 2025 payment. **(Info)**
 - 2. CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION TEAMS:** Ms. Browning reported the team met on November 12th with no system problems identified. She also shared a handout, as part of the Safe Sleep Pilot, which offers a free training for first responders to reduce sleep-related infant deaths. Ms. Browning will continue to provide updates on the pilot. **(Info)**
 - 3. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:** Mr. Thornton noted that Wastewater Protection Program staff continue to work on meeting the goal of a 4-week turnaround for applications. Currently, the oldest file is 9 weeks out. Staff completed 49 site evaluations, issued 48 improvement permits, and 41 construction authorizations, and inspected 32 private wells, and sampled 45. Staff continues to work through the new 18E rules as some are being amended and clarified. Beginning January 1st, all wastewater systems with risers must have a secondary safety mechanism installed that stops children from falling into the septic system if the lid is broken or missing. Installers are responsible for installing the devices and EH staff must approve them. Mr. Thornton announced that the Food & Lodging program is now splitting the fiscal year into thirds instead of quarters. During the first third of this new fiscal year, staff completed 100% of inspections and are on track to do the same in the second third. Staff performed 217 inspections, made 84 site visits, reviewed 8 plans and issued 42 permits. There has been an increase in year-round pools which require a second inspection within the year. **(Info)**
 - 4. HEALTH SERVICES:** Mr. Howard thanked Ms. Browning and Barbara Jackson and their teams for a very successful flu/COVID vaccination season. They offered vaccines to children, those who are uninsured, and the elderly. Mr. Howard noted the new full-time interpreter position has been very successful. He is proud of the staff who have volunteered to assist in Western North Carolina and the others who may still go as efforts continue. **(Info)**

5. **NC LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:** Mr. Howard added to Mr. Thornton's report that in the past year there have been many clarifications, work changes, etc. in Environmental Health. Accreditation is also in the process of being reworked and condensed from 147 activities down to 40 to make it more streamlined. Mr. Howard also noted the Child Fatality Prevention Teams are being reorganized at the State level. **(Info)**
6. **HHS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT:** Ms. Lytch discussed the changes made to the phone system at DSS. The phone menu has three options. Customers will always speak to a person. Since the change, there has been fewer complaints. **(Info)**
7. **SOCIAL SERVICES:** Mr. Ohmer discussed the State – County MOU which outlines DSS program performance measures. Staff continue to exceed the State requirements. Mr. Ohmer also reviewed the number of assessments and evaluations staff have completed in October. DSS is very thankful of various community members, neighborhood associations, local companies and individuals for “adopting” families and providing gifts and assistance for the holidays. Mr. Hall reported that households containing a person aged 60 and above or disabled persons receiving services through the Division of Aging and Adult Services are potentially eligible to receive benefits from the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) from December 1st through December 31st. Any household can apply to receive benefits from January 1st through March 31st, or until funds are exhausted. Applicants can apply through EPASS or staff will come out to homes of people that need assistance. Mr. Hall was proud to report that DSS staff helped Western North Carolina with their first call center that assisted 53 counties and was operated by 14 staff who answered 17,897 calls. **(Info)**
8. **PUBLIC HOUSING SERVICES:** Ms. Lytch reported that last year Brunswick County Habitat for Humanity selected one of the Section 8 recipients to receive a Habitat home which they will be moving into in a couple of months. Public Housing staff is partnering with Habitat for Humanity to host an information session on Tuesday, December 3rd at 5 p.m. Habitat for Humanity does not have a waiting list. Ms. Lytch noted that Fair Market Rents have caught up with current market rates. The HUD Foster Youth to Independence program is helping to prevent young adults from becoming homeless as they age out of Foster Care by issuing a special voucher. HUD has released a press release about the program that provides \$30 million available to PHAs. Brunswick County Public Housing is listed as one of the recipients of funding. **(Info)**
9. **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES:** Mr. Johnston reported that EMS has onboarded a new EMS Data Analyst and one of two new Community Paramedics. He has also advertised for a case worker who will serve as the Access & Functional Needs liaison and provide case management services for the community paramedic program. Mr. Johnston shared that a new charting system will go live on December 16th. Mr. Johnston reported his staff assisted other counties after Tropical Storm Debbie, Hurricane Helene, and PCT8. **(Info)**

III. OLD BUSINESS:

- A. **VACANT HHS ADVISORY BOARD POSITIONS:** Ms. Lytch noted an engineer and pharmacist are needed to fill vacancies. Interested parties may apply on the county website. **(Open)**

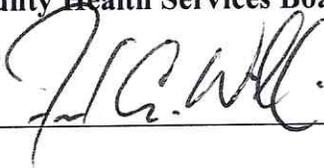
IV. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. **SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR:** Ms. Lytch introduced new DSS Director Robby Hall who was the director in Richmond County. He holds a Bachelors in Psychology and Masters in Health Administration. **(Info)**
- B. **TROPICAL STORM DEBBIE:** Ms. Lytch noted that staff opened a shelter for one day. The storm produced 10 tornados state-wide. **(Info)**
- C. **PTC #8:** Ms. Lytch announced that two shelters were opened during CTC #8 as rescue centers, Staff assisted approximately 100 individuals. In some places in the county there were 24 inches of rain. The county was closed from 11 a.m. Monday to 12 p.m. Friday. **(Info)**
- D. **CHILD FATALITY AND PROTECTION TEAM:** Mr. Howard discussed changes in the Child Fatality Prevention system that became law via the 2023 Appropriations Act. An office within the State is being created and the team structure reworked so that any protection activity will be brought into the Child Fatality Prevention Local Team. As a first step the County Commissioners are to choose whether Brunswick County works as a single county team or part of a multi-county team. Staff recommends remaining a single county team and asked the Board for a recommendation. **Mr. Cooke made a motion to recommend to the Brunswick County Commissioners that Brunswick County remain a single county Child Fatality Prevention Local Team. Mr. Ward seconded the motion. The vote to recommend to the County Commissioners that the Child Fatality Prevention Local Team remain a single county team was unanimous. (Open)**
- E. **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' SPECIALTY PLAN:** Ms. Lytch announced the State has selected Blue Cross Blue Shield as the provider of the children and family specialty plan. This is a statewide plan for youth in foster care. A single plan will allow for faster access to services when children are placed outside of the county. The plan is expected to be in place by July 2025. **(Info)**
- F. **APPROVE HHS ADVISORY BOARD 2025 MEETING CALENDAR:** Ms. Lytch reviewed the 2025 Advisory Board Calendar and asked for feedback. **Mr. Reaves made a motion to accept the 2025 Health and Human Services Advisory Board Meeting Calendar. Mr. Cooke seconded the motion. The vote to accept the calendar as presented was unanimous. (Closed)**

- V. **BOARD INPUTS:** Mr. Cooke noted that this would be the last meeting for Scott Milligan, Personnel Director, due to his retirement in January. Scott has worked for Brunswick County for 33 years. **(Info)**

VI: ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, **the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m. with a motion by Mr. Cooke. Mr. Ward seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

The next BCHHS Advisory Board meeting will be held on **January 27, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Brunswick County Health Services Boardroom.**


_____ Chairperson


_____ Secretary