

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF GUILFORD COUNTY  
WORK SESSION**

Greensboro, North Carolina  
April 18, 2019

The Board of County Commissioners met in a duly noticed Work Session at 3:00PM in the Blue Room located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Old County Courthouse, 301 W. Market St., Greensboro, NC.

**PRESENT:** Chairman Alan Branson, presiding; Vice Chairman Jeff Phillips; Commissioners Alan Perdue, Hank Henning, Melvin “Skip” Alston, Carolyn Q. Coleman, J. Carlvana Foster and Kay Cashion (in at 4:55PM).

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Justin Conrad.

**ALSO PRESENT:** County Manager Marty Lawing; County Attorney Mark Payne; Deputy County Manager Clarence Grier; Robin Keller, Clerk to Board; Ariane Webb, Deputy Clerk to Board; Heather Skeens, DHHS-Social Services Division Director; Merle Green, DHHS-Public Health Division Director; Karen Fishel, Human Resources Director; Harley Will, Finance Director; Cynthia Barnes-Phipps, MWBE Program Director; members of the staff, community and media.

**I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Branson called the meeting to order at 3:22PM and welcomed those present.

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. SOUTHEASTERN WORKFORCE ANALYSIS REPORT ON GUILFORD  
COUNTY CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

Heather Skeens, DHHS-Social Services Division Director, introduced the new Children’s Services Division Director, Sheila Stokes, and recognized Children’s Services program managers for their hard work. She also thanked Economic Services Division Director, Sharon Barlow.

Skeens introduced the presentation and noted it was a high-level overview of the vendor’s analysis. She stated they would return with specific requests and descriptions of additional work needed during the next year.

Sarah Vidrine with Southeastern Workforce Strategies, LLC, introduced the analysis and their assessment of barriers to reunification. She explained the three (3) types of barriers identified by the study: systemic, communication and family. Vidrine shared the systemic barriers included

DSS staff carrying heavy caseloads, challenges with communicating policy and a need for post-reunification services. She noted Guilford County experiences higher rates of continuances than peer counties.

Chairman Branson left the meeting at 3:27PM.

Vidrine explained the communication barriers included: concerns with visitation and opportunities for shared parenting relating to out-of-county placements; availability of community resources such as, affordable and safe housing; and a lack of shared understanding of DSS mandates and processes.

She reviewed the family factors impacting reunification and shared their recommendations, which included greater collaboration with the court system and a thorough case file review to identify potential internal and external factors that could potentially affect reunification.

Commissioner Coleman questioned if the study recommendations included greater involvement by extended members of the impacted family.

Vidrine confirmed the need to disseminate the message of families and potential options for placement to a broader audience.

Coleman questioned the long-term goals for children entering foster care.

Skeens stated adoption is considered a long-term option for some children, while reunification is an option for others. She shared the agency's goal is to safely reunify children with their parents, if possible, versus adoption. Skeens clarified that a level of permanence must be attained for DSS to close the case.

Commissioner Foster questioned if there are services available for families to make permanence decisions without involving DSS.

Skeens stated there is no current funding available for foster care prevention, however; they do offer services to assist families with addressing other related issues.

Commissioner Foster requested a breakdown of county funds used to cover the "half-board" rate.

Skeens stated they can provide this information, but as they currently do not track those dollars, they will research and provide the data at a later time.

The Board discussed the training and advocacy involved in kinship placements becoming certified foster homes.

Chairman Branson returned to the meeting at 3:57PM and subsequently turned control of the meeting over to Vice Chairman Phillips. He left the meeting at 3:58PM.

Commissioner Perdue questioned the amount of involvement between the court system and families. He requested the average number of continuances per child.

Vidrine shared some of this data was available through the local Guardian Ad Litem program.

Skeens noted the continuance rate is approximately 82% of all cases. She explained DSS just received this data during the prior month and spoke to the need for further review. She confirmed staff hold quarterly meetings with court system advocates, which has allowed them more access to this data.

Vice Chairman Phillips questioned when the Board would receive this information.

Skeens shared their intention to return in May to answer the Board's questions and provide this information. She reviewed Phase II of the project and noted it would include a request to coordinate and facilitate quarterly court collaborative meetings, case file reviews and an internal steering committee. Skeens stated the cost of this phase would be approximately \$200,000.

Commissioner Coleman questioned this year's foster care campaign and asked if recruiters were still presenting to and working with local churches.

Skeens confirmed the two (2) foster care recruiters continued to meet and work with local churches.

Robert Lee, DHHS – DSS program manager confirmed staff are focusing on rural churches during this calendar year.

Commissioner Coleman suggested providing training to the Human Services Advisory Committee who could assist in promoting foster care placement at community and church events.

## **B. REVIEW OF GUILFORD COUNTY TOBACCO CONTROL HEALTH REGULATIONS**

Merle Green, DHHS-Public Health Division Director, introduced the recommended policy revisions. She reviewed the current policy and its limitations, along with the next steps to implement changes.

Commissioner Alston questioned the potential for a legal challenge to these new regulations.

County Attorney Mark Payne noted the need to clarify the policy and eliminate any uncertainty to avoid a legal challenge.

Commissioner Coleman expressed concerns with a policy developing a policy that was too restrictive and questioned if designated smoking areas would be maintained for citizens and staff.

Green confirmed designated smoking areas would be maintained, and spoke to the need to evaluate each building and their available outside space. She presented comparisons of peer county tobacco policies and discussed options to extend tobacco-free policies to County grounds and parks.

Commissioner Alston questioned the option of designating the policy as a Board of Health regulation versus a County ordinance.

Payne explained the differences and noted the Board's ability to easily amend an existing Board of Health regulation versus creating a new County ordinance.

The Board discussed potential motion language and policy options.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Skip Alston, and seconded by Commissioner Alan Perdue, to direct staff to prepare a Board of Health regulation for tobacco-free buildings.**

Commissioner Perdue spoke to the need for additional language to ensure the clarity of the policy. He recommended including nicotine and aerosol devices in the defining language and including parking structures as tobacco-free areas.

Commissioner Coleman questioned if the Old County Courthouse was included under existing guidelines, as the facility houses the county's Board of Health.

Payne stated he would research and follow-up with the Board on the response to these questions.

Vice Chairman Phillips clarified the motion on the floor.

The Board discussed the motion on the floor.

Chairman Alan Branson returned to the meeting at 4:40PM.

Robin Keller, Clerk to Board, re-read the motion on the floor.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Skip Alston, and seconded by Commissioner Alan Perdue, to direct staff to prepare a Board of Health regulation for tobacco-free buildings.**

**VOTE: Motion carried 6 – 1**

**AYES: Alan Branson, Jeff Phillips, Alan Perdue, Melvin "Skip" Alston, J. Carlvena Foster, Hank Henning**

**NOES: Carolyn Q. Coleman**

**ABSENT: Justin Conrad**

### **C. DISPARITY STUDY INFORMATION AND COST ESTIMATES**

Chairman Branson resumed control of the meeting.

Deputy County Manager Clarence Grier introduced the topic and invited Cynthia Barnes, MWBE Program Director, to share her presentation.

Cynthia Barnes-Phipps, MWBE Program Director, stated the goal of the presentation was to provide additional information on disparity study options. She shared that this type of study analyzes the market area and the availability of qualified MWBE contractors.

Barnes-Phipps discussed studies conducted by comparable jurisdictions and offered her assessment of the County's current program. She confirmed the County does not capture sub-contractors and sub-consultant data.

Commissioner Cashion arrived to the meeting at 4:55PM.

Barnes-Phipps noted a disparity study could cost between \$300,000 - \$400,000 and shared she had received two (2) quotes from vendors within this range.

Chairman Branson questioned why certain entities conducted multiple disparity studies.

Barnes-Phipps noted studies typically span five (5) to seven (7) years, resulting in the need to conduct multiple studies across jurisdictions.

Commissioner Coleman questioned if the vendor who conducted the study could utilize existing data from local jurisdictions, thereby reducing the overall cost.

Barnes-Phipps stated some of the data could be used, but noted the need to conduct an analysis specifically for Guilford County. She shared the need to conduct a manual recovery of hard-copy data that had not been reported to the state since 2009.

Commissioner Coleman questioned if participation data from prior projects would be of benefit to the potential study vendor.

Barnes-Phipps shared Guilford County likely has higher participation numbers than what has been previously reported, as sub-contractors and design work had not been included in calculations.

Commissioner Perdue thanked Barnes-Phipps for her presentation and questioned if it would be more effective to complete an internal analysis of data prior to conducting a study.

Barnes-Phipps confirmed that an internal analysis would be best practice and noted she is currently reviewing raw data and developing processes for reporting. She stated the review of sub-contractor data would be time-consuming and the County's priorities would determine the time allocated to each area under review.

Commissioner Alston expressed his willingness to freeze all capital spending until a study was completed. He spoke to the need to determine the capacity of vendors available to conduct this type of study and noted the scope of work could be limited by this available capacity.

Barnes-Phipps stated the scope of the study could be limited to a vendor analysis in the market area, with options to utilize existing data from studies conducted by City of Greensboro and Guilford County Schools, which would result in a lower cost.

Commissioner Alston shared his support for an external analysis of the market area, in addition to an internal review of existing data by County staff. He questioned the need for additional staffing to conduct a timely review and reiterated the need to focus on an external market analysis.

Commissioner Coleman expressed her support for moving forward with contracts if a construction manager at-risk methodology was utilized. She questioned if local graduate students could assist with research for the internal review and noted the need audit all data collected, to ensure the information was classified correctly.

Barnes-Phipps stated many entities conduct follow-up studies as business ownership changes, to ensure MWBE status is classified correctly. She shared her request to be more involved in the design phase of County projects, to better identify their scope and pre-bid processes and ensure there are sufficient opportunities for MWBE participation.

Commissioner Cashion expressed her appreciation for the presentation and questioned how long it would take to review the County's data.

Barnes-Phipps stated she was currently reviewing Board reports and comparing those to reports submitted to the state.

Commissioner Cashion noted the market analysis conducted by the City of Greensboro should provide comparable data.

Commissioner Foster stated that the Board's interest appeared to lean towards conducting a market analysis. She spoke to the need for a disparity study that included a detailed review of the program.

Barnes-Phipps stated there was no written policy in place and shared her desire upon hire was to create a County MWBE policy. She confirmed the County is following state statutes, but expressed her concerns with proper tracking of data and the County's current processes only meeting the minimum standards created by the state.

Commissioner Foster expressed her appreciation for Barnes-Phipps and shared her support for developing MWBE program standards and policies.

Commissioner Alston expressed his support for Barnes-Phipps and the excellent work she was doing for the program. He reiterated the need for data on the availability of MWBE vendors in our community, and the need for a market study. He questioned if staff could collect existing data and negotiate with consultants on the costs of conducting a disparity study.

Chairman Branson questioned if the City of High Point had conducted a disparity study.

Commissioner Henning noted a study would only be beneficial if the findings were implemented. He stated developing policies should be a priority and expressed his interest in

learning more about best practices. He requested an update on areas for improvement and shared the need to address these issues in the beginning stages of the process, to ensure equitable opportunity for all vendors.

### **III. ADJOURN**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:29PM.

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Chairman J. Alan Branson

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Clerk to Board