

## Wilkes County Board of Health Meeting Minutes

April 12th , 2021

The Wilkes County Board of Health held a regular business meeting Monday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. at the Wilkes County Board of County Commissioners Room due to COVID-19. Board of Health members in attendance were:

Ms. Susan Bachmeier  
Ms. Deborah Britton  
Mr. Keith Elmore  
Dr. Fesperman  
Dr. Keaton Mash  
Dr. Gary Nash  
Mr. Carl Page  
Ms. Marcia Reynolds  
Ms. Adina Watkins  
Dr. Sarah Miller-Wyatt

Ms. Rachel Willard, Ms. April Edwards, Ms. Nancy Moretz, & Mr. Jared Belk, were also in attendance. Prior to the April meeting, packets containing the materials to be discussed were mailed to each Wilkes County Board of Health member for review and sent via email.

**Meeting Called to Order** : Ms. Susan Bachmeier, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**Adoption of A genda**: (Addendums Item 6, New Business FY 2020-2021 to FY 2021-2022 Budget & also, County Complex Resolution, presented by Mr. Keith Elmore). Dr. Joe Fesperman made the motion to adopt the amended **Agenda** for the Board of Health meeting for April 12th, 2021; the motion was seconded by Mr. Keith Elmore; unanimously approved

**Approval of Minutes for February 8th , 2020 Meeting** : Dr. Gary Nash made the motion to approve the **Minutes** from December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020; the motion was seconded by Ms. Deborah Britton and unanimously approved.

**Old Business**: None

**Administrative Reports**:

**State of the County Health Report : Mr. Jared Belk**

In North Carolina, the state requires each local health department to conduct a Community Health Assessment (CHA) every four years for accreditation and as part of its consolidated contract. During the years between community health assessments, health departments submit an abbreviated State of the County's Health (SOTCH) report. In Wilkes County, this report consists of an overview of demographics, health indicators, and leading causes of morbidity and mortality. This report also contains various updates on the community's top four health priorities, action plan projects, local initiatives and emerging trends. **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Progress**:

Change in Data: According to NC Region 3 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, in 2019, 80.6% of the residents reported having good, very good, or excellent health compared to 82.1 in 2018. Upgrades and improvements in Wake Forest Baptist Health Wilkes Medical Center's data platform, NC DETECT was able to capture more complete and accurate diagnosis codes. From the upgrades an increase was seen in unintentional overdoses from 2015 (20 cases) to 2017 (110 cases). 87 cases were reported in 2018, 51 cases in 2019, and 46 cases reported in 2020. **Obesity and Chronic Disease Action Plan Progress:** The health department has completed our 9th cohort of Brenner FIT. Seventy-eight families have completed the program, and can now make healthier decisions that impact their family's nutrition, physical activity and quality time. The health department completed its seventh season of providing Market Bucks to families in need. A distribution site was added at an elementary school in the north end of the county. This year the health department distributed sites at 9 sites, and were able to reach over 500 families and provided over \$2,000 worth of produce to them. DPP has completed 3 cohorts, despite being postponed to COVID-19. Each cohort maintained four active participants. Cohort 2 lost 40.6lbs and has a weekly exercise average of 260 minutes with 75% of the participants achieving the program goal of at least 150 minutes of exercise per week. Cohort 3 lost 7.8lbs, only 3 participants participated in the final weigh in, and 50% of the participants achieving the program goal of at least 150 minutes of exercise per week. To supplement the CDC-based curriculum, while maintaining fidelity to the program, the cohort is invited to participate in monthly exercise challenges, walks at the greenway, and workout nights at the YMCA. Wilkes Fresh, a mobile produce market increasing access to local fruits and vegetables. It traveled to 7 different sites weekly, adding an additional site in 2020, and operated from May through September. In addition to accepting cash and cards, Wilkes Fresh accepts Market Bucks and EBT/SNAP. Market Bucks is a very successful local program that gives 'Bucks' to lower income households to use at Farmer's Markets. Wilkes Fresh had a successful second year in 2020, with 996 total transactions equaling \$6,535.00. **Tobacco and Smoking Action Plan Progress:** Wake Forest Baptist Health's Comprehensive Cancer Center and Wake Forest Baptist Health Wilkes Medical Center's Care Connection Pharmacy partnered on a grant through Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center Foundation to provided tobacco cessation for Wilkes County residents. The cessation program is for 12 weeks and includes a combination of tobacco education with free nicotine replacement therapy (patches AND lozenges or gum). The Tobacco Cessation Group Program includes 6 weeks of themed sessions on subjects in relation to quitting. Following those initial 6 weeks, we have 4 brief bi-weekly check-in sessions as a group. The grant was renewed in June 2020 and will run through June 2021. Following the onset of COVID in February, 3 months were spent redesigning and converting the program to function virtually. Group programs resumed starting in June of 2020. In total, four tobacco cessation groups were held in 2020. All four cessation groups had 14 participants, with 4 participants quitting the use of tobacco. Unfortunately, we were not able to gauge CO (carbon monoxide) levels of the participants due to COVID risk. A total of 13 out of 14 participants decreased their daily tobacco usage and average of 58% less. 71% utilized the NC Quit Line at some point during the program and 100% would recommend this to a family or friend. Follow up with participants includes a brief evaluation asking about daily tobacco use and a follow up 30 days and 6 months after the program is completed. Upcoming programs are scheduled for April, July, and October. From January 2020-December 2020 122 Wilkes County residents have utilized the NC Quitline, with March having the heaviest call volume with 17 callers for that month. **New Initiative: Fight against COVID-19** Since January 2020, Wilkes County Health Department has been on the frontlines of COVID-19. We held our first Mass Testing Exercise in May 2020. Wilkes County Health Department tested more than 200 on site at the Tyson processing plant in Wilkesboro. Since testing for COVID-19 began, Wilkes County Health Department has tested more than 4,330 tests, and Wilkes County has more than 5,970

confirmed positive cases, and 103 deaths. Of these 5,970 cases, 51% have been women, and 58% of cases have been in people aged 25-64. Since vaccinations began Wilkes County Health Department has vaccinated over 9,737 individuals with 1st and 2nd doses.

#### **Health Foundation Challenge Grant : Ms. Rachel Willard**

We did get the \$10,000 grant and that will go towards our MESH services again this year, they have waived the “Letter Writing Campaign” so we will automatically get that grant. Last year, we did still do the letter campaign and we brought in more money than we had in the past. This grant will come to us in July, 2021.

#### **Office of Rural Health : Ms. Rachel Willard**

We are in year one, two, & three of the Office of Rural Health Grant, so Debbie Nicholson has submitted a grant to start over a new cycle for year one. We have not put the new year one grant in the budget for that \$150,000 due to uncertainty of obtaining the grant. However, we did write our continuation grant which is our MESH & our Case Management for \$150,000, so we will have a total of \$300,000 coming to the county to support those services and that will start in the upcoming budget year.

#### **Annual Child Fatality Report : Ms. Rachel Willard**

Any child which passes between the ages of 0 to 18, we have to review that death to see if there were any system gaps that might have been missed and we have to review that death to see if there were any system gaps that might have been missed. The group is made up of a team that includes EMS, Medical Examiners, Mental Health, School System, Health Care Professionals, the District Attorney’s Office, a Judge, BROCC, & several DSS representatives. During 2020, we met quarterly, and we had 4 deaths to review and we compared that to the 7 the year before; there were no findings in these deaths. There is one that is still a legal issue, so we can’t review that one until it is resolved.

#### **Medicaid Transformation : Ms. Rachel Willard**

A lot has happened on this front; we know we go live in the state with our transition which is July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. In 2019, it was brought before the board that we were signing up for the Community Care Network of NC to do all our contracts with the four prepaid health plans. In February of this year, we received an email stating that if you did not attest to be an advanced medical home, then you could not participate in that network. We chose to stay at a Tier 2 because our return on the rate increase was not enough to support the demands that we needed to have “in house” to move us to a Tier 3, so we were dropped two weeks before “open enrollment” from CCNC, so we have worked very diligently to sign contracts with United, WellCare, AmeriHealth, & Healthy Blue (BCBS) and those have been submitted and we are going to be an “enrolled” Provider with every single “prepaid” health plan. In our region, they have to sign, regardless, whether you were late for the game or not. We are moving in the right direction; we are getting staff trained, encourage our patients to sign up through DSS or thru the “online portal” and get people enrolled because the enrollment period ends in a few weeks.

#### **Departmental Updates : Ms. Rachel Willard**

Our providers are back to full capacity now with CureMD, which is great because we can now get more patients in; we have lost an Environmental Health Specialist and her last day is

Thursday, but we have already replaced her and he starts on Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, so we will not have a lapse in time except he is not yet authorized, so we will have to send him to Centralized Intern Training which will not be available until July, 2021. We have brought in \$30,000 in Revenue in Environmental Health just in March, 2021, we're out about 8 weeks on wells and septic right now, which is the highest and longest wait-period since 2008. In WIC, we just hired a new Breast Feeding Peer Counselor and are working towards getting her through the state process which usually takes about a month; we are still down a Nutritionist, but are getting ready to make an offer for that position. We are still dealing with COVID and what we are seeing is less testing, less vaccinations, but we are also starting to see things in Communicable Diseases (4 dog bites in one day). We had a norovirus outbreak at a restaurant, so we have had some additional Public Health things to deal with recently.

### **COVID-19 Update: Ms. Rachel Willard**

We currently have 6,401 cases since we have started, we have 107 deaths (4 of those in the past week), 165 cases within the last 14 days, 99 that are active (currently on isolation). We're seeing anywhere a range of 5-12 new cases per day, which is really low compared to where we were at, we have 7 people in hospitals that we are aware of, 2 clusters that are open and one outbreak. We're doing a lot of work around Spring and Summer events; we are working with the town, the Harley Davidson Store wants to have an event so we've been working closely with the town to look at all the guidance documents and what will have to happen. Looking forward, we will be getting into a lot of gray areas within the Executive Order and then street festivals, music venues and how the space is defined is very gray. We have been working with the town of Wilkesboro to start thinking through some of those things, as well as working with the school graduation and proms. In regards to vaccines, we have a total in Wilkes County of those partially vaccinated at 15,669 or 22.9% of our population and then those who are fully vaccinated, we have 12,089 or 17.6% of our population. The Wilkes County Health Department has given 21,951 vaccines with 13,000 being 1<sup>st</sup> doses and 8,951 being 2<sup>nd</sup> doses. Dr. Joe Fesperman stated to the members that the vaccination clinics are an incredible collaboration between the Health Department, EMS, and Sherriff's Department to make everything run smoothly; it makes you proud of how people have pulled together to try to make the clinics successful.

**Committee Reports:** None

**New Business:** Ms. Nancy Moretz

**FY 2021-2022** - Our proposed budget for 2022 is \$4,551,518 and this includes what was projected last year so you could do a comparison. Last year, FY 2021, we projected \$4,366,660 in Revenue. Our Total Expenses which is broken down by "General" & "Programs" Expenses; the total for "General Expenses" for FY 2022 is \$2,347,668 and our total "Program Expenses" 2022 is \$4,149,056, so Total Expenses for "General & Programs" is \$6,496,734; that means for our FY2022 Proposed Budget, our Total County Appropriations would be a requested amount of \$1,945,216 vs. last year which was \$1,883,653, so that is a slight increase from last year in the amount of \$61,563 in County Appropriations. Ms. Rachel Willard stated that we did ask for 2 positions, and we had \$57,000 in Capital for 2 county cars for Environmental Health which we desperately needed, \$7,000 to upgrade the security system so we could be on the same system as the other county locations and IT would be able to assist if necessary. The positions that are being requested are for another nurse, which we desperately need a Communicable Disease

nurse, outside of COVID, we still have rabies, norovirus, flu, lead, and all the other things that have to be dealt with which is almost impossible for one person. The other position being requested is a Processing Assistant whose time would be split between Environmental Health & the Health Department to assist with Medicaid Transformation, Accounts Receivable, and other daily requirements. Ms. Rachel Willard also requested, in addition to the presented “Proposed Budget”, a position for Environment Health due to the overwhelming demands of the department which would only add about \$40,000 more to the budget which would go into “General” and the county does support that, so that would take us to asking for \$100,000 in appropriations.

**FY 2021-2022 :** Mr. Keith Elmore made the motion to adopt the **FY 2021-2022 Budget** the motion was seconded by Ms. Marcia Reynolds; unanimously approved. (The motion is amended to approve the Environmental Health Position.)

**Complex: Mr. Keith Elmore**

Mr. Keith Elmore stated after visiting the Wilkes County Health Department for Board of Health Training, he noticed the need for more space and the possibility of relocation or a new building. Mr. Keith Elmore brought this to the attention of the Wilkes County Commissioners. A possible complex by Herring Hall which would include the Wilkes County Health Department, DSS, & the Wilkes County Office would be the ideal option. Also, there are options to retro fit other building(s). EMS currently has support to build a base above the jail and would be separate. There will be a “work session” to discuss options; however, there is the issue of the increase in building currently due to COVID. There are other projects that have were currently paid off or will be in approximately 4 years, so those are positives on the subject, but we will need a lot more input from all the entities.

**Public Concerns:** None

Next Meeting Date: June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Adjournment:** Dr. Joe Fesperman made the motion to **Adjourn** ; the motion was seconded by Mr. Keith Elmore; unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Minutes respectively submitted by,

April Edwards, Administrative Assistant  
Secretary to Board of Health

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Ms. Susan Bachmeier, Board Chair

