

**Chatham County Board of Health  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, October 23, 2023  
Board Room, Dunlap Building – 80 East Street, Pittsboro, NC 27312**

The Chatham County Board of Health held a regular meeting on Monday, October 23, 2023, in the Board Room of the Dunlap Building in Pittsboro.

**Attendees**

**Board Members:** Karen Barbee, EdD, Chair; Stephanie Freese, DVM, Vice Chair; Rya Williams; Ashley Pappas, PharmD, MHA; William Roscoe, OD; Zachary Brian, DMD, MHA; Tammy Lloyd, MD; Delfino Benitez; Alan Rimer, PE, PhD; Franklin Gomez Flores, Commissioner

**Staff:** Michael Zelek, Kevin Overcash, Bianca Sahota, Sara Green, Danielle White, Cheryl Garrett, Maia Fulton-Black, Zach Deaton, Dorothy Rawleigh, Jiona Mills, Nathan Way, Anne Lowry, Zachary Horner

**Guests:** Eric Wolak, Chatham Hospital

**Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions**

Dr. Barbee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

There were two introductions for new staff. Dorothy Rawleigh, Health Promotion & Policy Director, introduced Jiona Mills, new Community Engagement Specialist. Anne Lowry, Environmental Health Director, introduced Nathan Way, new On-Site Wastewater Specialist.

Dr. Barbee introduced Rya Williams, new board member.

**Conflict of Interest Disclosure**

None.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Ashley Pappas made a motion to approve the agenda, and Franklin Gomez Flores seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**Consent Agenda**

*Alan Rimer made a motion to approve the consent agenda, and Franklin Gomez Flores seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**Public Input Session**

None.

**New Business**

### *Electronic Health Records Transition*

Kevin Overcash, Administrative Services Manager with the Clinical & Community Health Services division, presented on the department's potential transition for the Electronic Health Records (EHR) system. Mr. Overcash began by speaking about the difficulties staff at the clinic have had with Patagonia, an EHR software the department currently uses. Clinic staff have been looking at other EHR options. He stated that Epic Systems seemed to be the platform that offers continuity of care that the department needs. He added that the department has reached out to Orange County, who uses Epic and mentioned that all systems will have some issues, particularly related to billing. He said the department will plan to bring a proposal to transition to Epic to the Board.

Mr. Overcash added that the start-up fee for Epic is \$20,243 per provider, which accounts for more than \$60,000 for the department up front. He said that the clinic would be connected to UNC Health and Chatham Hospital through Epic should this change be made, since they use the platform.

Michael Zelek, Public Health Director, said this EHR would help with synergy across the system and meet CCPHD's needs. He added that next month staff would likely bring a more formal proposal for the Board's consideration. Depending on the amount and duration of the contract, it may require approval from the Board of Commissioners.

Ashley Pappas asked how many patients the department sees every month. Mr. Overcash stated it was around 114 per month, and the number has decreased with the clinic discontinuing adult and child health services. Zachary Brian said that direct referrals are smooth through Epic from his experience, which Mr. Overcash said would be very helpful.

### **Reports**

#### *Bad Debt Write-Off Annual Report*

Cheryl Garrett, Accounting Technician with the Clinical & Community Health Services division, stated that the department writes off all patient debt after one year. She stated that bad debt write-off decreased by 47.9% from FY 2020-21 to FY 2021-22. Mr. Zelek said that this is done every year, and since it is a budget item, it has to go before the Board of Commissioners as well.

Dr. Pappas asked how much this item was budgeted for. Mr. Zelek said he did not have an exact amount, but the fact that the number decreased significantly means it will not be an issue. He confirmed the department had a budget for it.

*Stephanie Freese made a motion to approve the bad-debt write-off report, and Franklin Gomez Flores seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.*

#### *Community Assessment Update*

Maia Fulton-Black, Population Health Data Scientist, provided an update on the 2024 Chatham County Community Assessment process. She stated that another Community Assessment is due

soon based on the three-year cycle. She said this presentation would focus particularly on the Community Action Team component, which was used last time but has been revamped for this time.

As a review, Ms. Fulton-Black stated that the Community Assessment is a collaboration between CCPHD, the Chatham Health Alliance, and Chatham Hospital, with the goal of gathering data and information to improve health services and programs across the county. The primary data sources for the Assessment are the main survey, supplemental survey, Story Circles, and secondary data. The focus areas for 2021 were disaggregating survey data to identify and understand health inequities, done by expanding the survey cohort and revising survey methodology, and provide more opportunity for community engagement by creating the Community Action Team.

Ms. Fulton-Black stated that the goals for 2024 included:

- Ensuring timely and equitable population representation in the survey. Part of this is reviewing and updating survey approaches as needed, particularly in light of changes in population in Chatham.
- Building on community engagement and leadership foundations. This includes expanding work with the Community Action Team, continuing to utilize the Supplemental Survey (particularly for engagement with partners), and continuing to improve qualitative data collection.

Ms. Fulton-Black shared a timeline for the Assessment, ranging from Summer 2023 to Spring 2025. The timeline includes kicking off the Community Action Team, finalizing the survey, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. The final report is due in March 2025.

The Community Action Team is foundational to the Assessment, Ms. Fulton-Black stated. She said the team meets once a month and has had two meetings so far at the Wren Memorial Library in Siler City. The group is supported by the Chatham Health Alliance's Equity Subcommittee to ensure equity in decision-making and recruitment. For the first time, Community Action Team members are being paid for their time and participation through the Chatham Health Alliance. Ms. Fulton-Black said that was crucial to the sustainability of the Community Action Team to acknowledge the effort of people to show up and participate. Meetings have had interpretation, snacks, and activities for children. The team's first project is looking over the survey to ensure that questions are relatable and understandable and that there are no gaps in information.

Alan Rimer asked if the survey is benchmarked off other surveys. Ms. Fulton-Black said this survey began by using the 2021 survey, with an in-house review that included looking at other local, state, and national surveys. She added that some questions may be specific to the area, particularly related to access to health care.

Ms. Fulton-Black continued by sharing some other projects related to the Assessment that are being run by the Community Action Team, including upcoming door-to-door surveys in January 2024 and Story Circles in February 2024.

Stephanie Freese stated that she had been called by NC State about areas related to agriculture for funding and community engagement. The issues discussed include any food production done on local farms and how the meat and poultry is processed. She asked if there was space to bring agricultural and farming-related questions into the survey, like if individuals grow their own food at home and any kind of procedures they use. Ms. Fulton-Black said that one of the challenges of the survey is trying to encompass a whole county's health while also addressing specific issues. Potentially, she said, this could be an approach to qualitative data collection by utilizing topic-specific group meetings.

Tammy Lloyd asked what is being done on issues that are identified in each survey. Ms. Fulton-Black said the Chatham Health Alliance takes the data and identifies priorities to develop health improvement plans around. In 2021, she stated, the Alliance retained three priorities from the previous year (Access to Comprehensive Health Care, Healthy Eating/Active Living, and Economic Resilience), while adding three new areas (Employment/Income, Transportation, and Mental Health/Substance Use).

Dr. Rimer asked if we knew how many individuals in Chatham County utilized public health services by ethnicity. Ms. Fulton-Black stated that the CCPHD would look at internal data from sources like customer feedback forms and family planning. Dr. Rimer said that when he was on the Board of Health in Orange County, that department used the data to focus on Hispanic men, which was an underserved population. Ms. Fulton-Black said it can be difficult to see who is not utilizing services, but the survey can help understand the barriers to healthcare, possibly for particular populations. She said that identifying those issues can help those taking the next step so they can be more informed.

Commissioner Franklin Gomez Flores asked what equitable representation would look like in the survey. He explained that we should be careful that neither the Caucasian population in the northeast nor the Hispanic population in Siler City would be the "spokesperson" for Chatham County based on representation. Ms. Fulton-Black explained the process by which survey participants are selected, utilizing three tertiles separated by income. In 2021, she added, the cohort was oversampled, adding Census blocks that had a higher percentage of being chosen if they had a higher percentage of Black or Hispanic residents. Once all the results are weighted, she said, it represents the county population well.

Dr. Brian asked if there are questions about accessing healthcare outside of Chatham County. Ms. Fulton-Black said that has not specifically been asked about healthcare, but has been asked about employment. Dr. Brian said it would be interesting to know how many are traveling outside the county and why. Ms. Fulton-Black said there is a question about how far people travel for healthcare.

Commissioner Gomez Flores asked if there is a question about knowledge of services. Ms. Fulton-Black said that is a difficult question to ask. She said that once you ask if someone has heard of this service, they become aware of it and are likely to respond as such. She said in the past, the survey has asked what people would tell a friend or family member about where to go for mental health services. In the previous survey, it asked if someone sought a certain service, was it available or affordable or high quality. Ms. Fulton-Black said that, unfortunately, most people have not heard of whatever service may be needed. Rya Williams asked why it may be an issue to ask people about this. Ms. Fulton-Black said the answers may not always be reliable, and the responses may not always be accurate.

Dr. Freese asked if there was any harm in the Board of Health submitting questions for the survey, with staff making them functionally useful. Ms. Fulton-Black said she would love to hear from Board members regarding questions.

Dr. Rimer stated that the way a question is asked is interesting. He asked if the department has talked to individuals who look at survey questions to remove bias in the answer. Ms. Fulton-Black said that is her training and background. She added that the Community Action Team is also a part of that process.

### **Old Business**

None.

### **Health Director Report**

Mr. Zelek:

- He welcomed Rya Williams to the board.
- The clinic in Siler City now has both COVID and flu vaccines available.
- Department staff recently coordinated a presentation on Understanding Lead along with community members.
- Environmental Health staff inspected vendors at the tattoo convention in Pittsboro this past weekend and permitted all 32 artists.
- Staff have been leading lunch-and-learns in Siler City, with the most recent event focused on desk exercises and chair yoga. Staff Alicia Doran, Laura Hearn, and Ann Clark are leading these events.
- The next EMBRACe gathering is this Thursday at 5:30 p.m. at the Chatham County Agriculture & Conference Center in Pittsboro.
- The department has also attended several outreach events over the last couple months, including the Fall Festival at Chatham Hospital and a Chatham Resource Hub in Siler City. The latter event included many car seat inspections and installations, which is an important service the CCPHD provides.
- The clinic staff gave 60 flu shots to county employees at a recent county employee flu clinic.
- This past Saturday, CCPHD participated in a community event focused on vaccination at Corinth AME Zion Church in Siler City. Zach Deaton said the event was a partnership of five churches.

- He said there were more than 50 applicants for the Community Engagement Specialist position and it was a very competitive process, with Ms. Mills emerging and he is happy to have her on board.
- He added that there are still positions open for employment with CCPHD.

Finally, Dr. Barbee discussed the Board's holiday gathering. She said the Board needed to discuss whether to have a holiday gathering either in November or December. She added that the gathering could also coincide with the November Board meeting, and noted that there is no December Board meeting. The Board decided to have the holiday gathering in November right after the Board of Health meeting.

Mr. Zelek added one more note: A group of universities is conducting a PFAS survey involving individuals on the Town of Pittsboro water supply and has some slots available for a second round of surveying.

Dr. Rimer asked if the clinic asks if patients have already received the flu vaccine. Mr. Deaton said they do. Dr. Pappas asked if the CCPHD will have a table at the Pittsboro Street Fair. Mr. Deaton said there are not plans to, and Mr. Zelek said the department has been working to prioritize the many outreach events this fall.

**Adjournment**

*Stephanie Freese made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Franklin Gomez Flores seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.*

  
Karen Barbee, EdD, Chair

  
Secretary Ex Officio  
Michael Zelek, MPH, Public Health Director