

**Chatham County Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 26, 2024
Dunlap Building – 80 East Street, Pittsboro, NC 27312**

The Chatham County Board of Health held a regular meeting on Monday, February 26, 2024, in the Board Room of the Dunlap Building in Pittsboro.

Attendees

Board Members: Stephanie Freese, DVM, Vice Chair; Carol Reitz-Barlow, MSN, RN, CCRN; Rya Williams, Alan Rimer, PE, PhD; Ashley Pappas, PharmD, MHA; William Roscoe, OD; Zachary Brian; DMD, MHA, Franklin Gomez Flores, Tammy Lloyd, MD

Staff: Michael Zelek, Danielle White, Gary Thomas, Sara Green, Dorothy Rawleigh, Maia Fulton-Black, Zach Deaton, Kevin Overcash, Lisa Morgan, Barry Oldham

Guests: Julie Wilkerson, Chatham Health Alliance, Executive Director, Erik Wolak, Chatham Hospital

Welcome and Call to Order

Dr. Freese started the meeting at 6:01pm. Dr. Barbee, Board Chair, was unable to attend the meeting tonight.

Dorothy Rawleigh, Health Promotion and Policy (HPP) Director shared that Kyle Chambers, the new Communications Specialist, will start on April 8, 2024. He will be at the April Board meeting. Mike shared that the Chatham County Public Health Department (CCPHD) has no vacancies at this time.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

None.

Introductions

None.

Approval of Agenda

No additions or changes to the agenda were made.

Dr. Rimer made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, and Dr. Lloyd seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

No additions or changes were made to the consent agenda.

Dr. Pappas made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, and Dr. Brian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Input Session

None.

Reports

Journey Through the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Voluntary National Retail Program Standards

Lisa Morgan, Environmental Health Supervisor, provided an update on the FDA Voluntary National Retail Program standards.

Ms. Morgan shared that (FDA) program standards are standards of excellence. It is a national structured framework that was created for Food & Lodging Programs and designed to enhance services for the public. She noted that the program standards are a way to keep uniformity and confidence among the programs. Inspectors can share a QR code with establishments that connect them to food and safety protocols. Mr. Morgan shared that the health department enrolled in the program for the following reasons: Identify the greatest impact on food safety, promote risk factor interventions, identify program need areas, justify program budgets, lead to innovations, and uniformity and confidence.

Ms. Morgan said that there are nine standards for this framework:

1. Regulatory Foundation (laws)
2. Trained Regulatory Staff (staff to get standardized, and then re-standardized every 3 years)
3. Inspection Program Based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Principles
4. Uniform Inspections Program
5. FBI Response/Preparedness
6. Compliance and Enforcement (restaurant tour that has a lot of risk factors)
7. Industry and Community Relations (outreach)
8. Program Support and Resources (do we have staff, equipment, and budget we need)
9. Program Assessment

Ms. Morgan said that CCPHD enrolled in the program in 2011. The initial self-assessment was in July 2012 and the department met standards 1, 7, and 9. The second self-assessment was in July 2017 and they met standards 1, 7 and 9. On the third assessment in August 2023, the standards met were 1, 2, 3 and 7. Ms. Morgan shared that they are currently working on meeting standards 2 and 9 for fiscal year 24. Last year they re-standardized all staff and by next month all staff will meet. They plan to maintain FDA standardization credentials for all inspection staff and complete risk factor study by summer of 2024. The most common risk factors are cooling, not cooling food properly, and not proper handwashing. The plan is to apply for more grants from this program. Last year they purchased food safety stickers, vomit and diarrhea clean up kit with grant funds. Ms. Morgan said that her goal is to meet all nine standards within 6 months.

Dr. Roscoe asked if the assessment was a self-assessment. Ms. Morgan said yes, they self-assessed it and turned it into the FDA. Mr. Zelek noted that it was a voluntary program. Dr. Pappas asked if this is only related to restaurants. Ms. Morgan said it relates to any establishment that adheres to the food code.

New Business

State of the County Health (SOTCH) Report

Julie Wilkerson, Executive Director, Chatham Health Alliance, Maia Fulton-Black, Population Health Data Scientist and Sara Green, Strategic Planning and Development Officer, provided a brief presentation on the SOTCH (State of the County Health Report) and the Chatham Health Alliance.

Ms. Green shared that every year the Department must create SOTCH and get it approved by the Board before it is submitted to the State.

Ms. Green gave an overview of 2023 accomplishments. She shared that the CCPHD division updates include the following:

Environmental Health (EH)

- On-Site Wastewater Section (OSWW) provided the first Annual Septic Contractors, Inspectors, and Operator Workshop since the pandemic for fifty contractors. This year the workshop agenda included installing septic systems on a slope, new legislative updates, and an attendee favorite, State Trooper Skinner from NC Highway Patrol. ("Best class I have ever attended"!)
- EH participated in a year-long project with NC Office of Recovery and Resilience (NCORR) and Triangle J Council of Governments (COG) to evaluate the top concerns related to climate in the region and to develop the [Climate Resilience Project Portfolio for the Triangle J Region](#), which details projects that are ready to be implemented as funding becomes available. Chatham County was tasked with the development of a Heat Wave Response Toolkit. Ms. Green shared that projects are ready to be implemented as funding becomes available.
- The Food, Lodging, and Institution (FLI) Section hosted the Annual Chatham-Lee Food Safety Summit

Dr. Roscoe asked if there was a charge to attend the workshops. Ms. Morgan (Environmental Health Supervisor) said some workshops have a fee associated with it. He asked if it had good attendance and do people enjoyed it. Ms. Green shared that someone said it was the "best class I ever attended."

Clinical and Community Health Services

- In partnership with UNC Health Chatham's Maternity Care Center, Alicia Doran and Nicole Hanner began Childbirth Classes in the fall. These were the first childbirth classes in Chatham since the 1990s.
- Ann Clark and Laura Hearn, Public Health Nutritionists, offered individual and group-based clinical nutrition services, partnering with the Center for Active Living, Chatham Libraries, Chatham County Sheriff's Office, Emergency Communications, and local churches to bring services directly to community members.

Health Promotion and Policy

- Full-time Opioid Overdose Prevention Coordinator, Morgan Culver, joined the Health Promotion and Policy Division and re-convened the Sheriff's Prevention Partnership on Controlled Substances. This position is funded with Opioid Settlement funds received by the County. She has started doing a lot of naloxone training.
- In 2023, four CCPHD staff completed a Community Education Trainer program.
- CCPHD held its first Naloxone Administration training where staff across the department received information on the basics of harm reduction, including when and how to administer naloxone.

Emerging Issue

Ms. Green shared that extreme heat was decided on for the emerging issue due to summertime temperatures being much hotter than previously. During the 2023 season, there were 3,925 emergency department visits for heat-related illness in North Carolina, a 5% increase from 2022. In the future North Carolina is expected to experience warmer temperatures and more extreme heat events (Heat Action Plan, 2024). This will increase the risk for heat related illnesses, especially for the more vulnerable groups. Infants and Children, Older adults 65+, Pregnant people, athletes, and outdoor workers, those with chronic conditions, people taking certain medications, low-income individuals. The reason this can affect Chatham County is the northeast section of Chatham County has the highest proportion of residents aged 65 years or older, while the median incomes on the west side of Chatham County are lower than in other parts of the County. Both groups are more vulnerable to extreme heat. The Environmental Health division and partners developed a Heat Action Plan. The plan is for seasonal readiness and interventions for excessive heat watches and warnings, including identifying respite centers in the county.

Ms. Fulton-Black shared overall data showing the county population has increased to nearly 80,000 people. The leading causes of death in Chatham County are ranked in the following order:

- Cancer
- Disease of the heart
- Cerebrovascular Disease
- other Unintentional Injuries
- Alzheimer's Disease

Ms. Fulton-Black shared that the leading causes of death remained similar to the previous data. Ms. Fulton-Black also noted that COVID is in the top ten leading causes of death, even though part of the period counted was before COVID became an issue. She shared that infant mortality rates are higher among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino populations than White, non-Hispanic/Latino. Ms. Fulton-Black said that these rates could be more equitable, and efforts like EMBRACe and the maternity care center (MCC) are focused on addressing these disparities. She also shared that overdose deaths decreased last year.

Comments:

Erik Wolak, Chief Operating Officer of Chatham Hospital, noted that the MCC is only level 1, for lower risk births, meaning it may not have a significant impact on infant mortality.

Health Priority Areas:

- Economic Resilience in 2017-2022 state and country decreased. The average weekly wages in Chatham County and NC wages went up but Chatham is still below the state.
- Healthy Eating, Active Living food insecurity as part of this priority area. Access to food and stable access. Decrease in rate of food insecurity from 2017-2021.
- Access to Comprehensive Care: The percentage of residents without health insurance in 2023 decreased with MCD expansion. 1,265 Chatham County residents have enrolled in Medicaid under Medicaid expansion. These residents were not previously eligible.

Chatham Health Alliance Updates

Julie Wilkerson, Chatham Health Alliance Executive Director, gave updates on the Chatham Health Alliance.

Ms. Wilkerson shared that the Alliance is a member-led organization utilizing collective action to improve health and wellbeing in Chatham County. The Alliance is a program of a 501(c)3 fiscal sponsor. The vision is an active, thriving community for all- a Chatham where are residents of all races, religions, ethnicity, sexual orientations, and/or gender identities achieve optimal health. The idea is to bring organizations and residents together to work on issues affecting health in Chatham County, with a focus on the health priorities identified in the Community Assessment (CA). Ms. Wilkerson shared that the CA survey will be sent out to Chatham residents in March. The Community Assessment is a collaboration between the Chatham Health Alliance, CCPHD, Chatham Hospital, community members and organizations. The CA gathers data, analyzes the data, and prioritizes focus areas using that data. The results are used to identify areas for funding and resources to create community programs, projects, and policies.

Ms. Wilkerson shared that the Community Resource Hub initially started in 2020 due to COVID and has grown tremendously. The hub has given out free hot meals, testing for HIV and COVID vaccines. The hub goes to neighborhoods and parks wherever the community requests.

Ms. Wilkerson shared the following updates on Health Priority Areas:

Access to Comprehensive Health Services

- Initial contact made to providers in Chatham County about Social Determinant of Health Screenings
- HIV testing held at Community Resource Hub events throughout 2023 provided by Alliance of AIDS Services
- Monarch is a new agency in our community who is providing 24/7 365 Mobile Mental Health Crisis Services in Chatham County

Economic Stability and Resilience

- A Living Wage Program exploratory committee has been formed to look into feasibility of a Chatham County Living Wage Program
- A collaboration of agencies partnering with Chatham County Schools and Central Carolina Community College on the College and Career Promises Program and the Chatham Promise Program

Healthy Eating and Active Living

- Pittsboro became the first Chatham County Farmer's Market to accept SNAP/EBT
- Chatham MOVES physical activity trailer is getting outfitted and the launch date is anticipated for Spring 2024
- Collaboration of agencies partnering with schools and CCCC (Career Promises program and the Chatham Promise Program EBT at Farmers market.

Questions: Commissioner Gomez Flores asked where the location of the recreation trailer will be. Ms. Wilkerson shared that the trailer will be housed with Parks and Recreation and attend events they are sponsoring around the county. She also shared the Healthy Eating Active Living subcommittee will be looking for close access points to parks and for recurring events to set up the trailer. Ms. Wilkerson said if the community lets the committee know of an upcoming event, they will come. Dr. Freese asked if there is a plan to increase more sidewalks in town. Ms. Wilkerson said she recently talked with the Town of Pittsboro planning department, and they just released a plan for Moncure and have plans on how to developed an active transportation plan. Mr. Zelek also shared that he has been in conversation with the Town of Pittsboro to extend an existing greenway to the Plant with grant support from CCPHD.

Alliance Standing Subcommittees:

Equity

- Serving as the equity advisory board for the Community Assessment
- Supported the development of the Community Action Team, continues to support the CAT through capacity and planning.

Dr. Lloyd asked about substance abuse rates. Ms. Fulton-Black shared that they come into play when you break it down by age. Dr. Lloyd asked if overdose deaths went down due to naloxone.

Ms. Fulton-Black said she was unsure, but the significant efforts by CCPHD staff to make naloxone available may be making a difference. Ms. Williams asked if the decrease in poverty rate was due to increased wages or more people not living in poverty moving into the county. Ms. Fulton-Black said that was a good question and noted that some of the stimulus program funding for families living in poverty may have helped, though this funding is no longer available, which could affect rates moving forward.

Ms. Wilkerson said the CA survey is a collaboration between the Alliance, Chatham Hospital, and the CCPHD. The assessment is an accreditation requirement. She also shared that focus groups will take place in the spring. She said that the Alliance is revisiting its structure this year to ensure they are running efficiently, sustaining funding and focusing on programmatic sustainability. The year 2025 will be the Alliances 10-year anniversary.

Dr. Roscoe made a motion to approve the SOTCH report, and Commissioner Gomez Flores seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FY25 Proposed Budget Discussion Overview

Mr. Zelek and Gary Thomas, Finance Officer, presented the proposed fiscal year 2024-25 budget. Mr. Zelek mentioned that the budget contains a lot of information and, to make it easier on the Board to digest, they would focus on the big picture and significant changes. He added that the Board's Budget Committee recommended the budget for approval by the full Board. Mr. Zelek went over a budget process timeline, noting that the process takes over half of the year and is not completed until the final budget is approved by the Board of Commissioners in June.

Mr. Thomas shared the following key budget considerations:

- Some grants and state funds are not yet known and therefore not included in the budget.
- Some grant and state funds roll over into the next fiscal year but are not included because amounts are not yet known.
- Salary increases unknown and not included.
- 1.2 increase for retirement (unknown what the salaries will be)
- Four percent increase in Health Insurance costs for FY25.
- A new Meeting Expense line for meeting food purchases was added next year.
- Expected to be a tight budget year across the board.
- Two expansion requests (Smart Start position support and well water testing program)

Mr. Zelek went over each division's budget. For Administration, he noted that grant revenues are for the EMBRACe program and will be similar next year. He added that any staff raises will be added by the County later and are not included, and that there is a computer replacement increasing the operating line. Mr. Zelek highlighted the "Key Items" on each slide.

Under Clinical and Community Health Services, Mr. Zelek shared that while state funds appear to be decreasing significantly, this is misleading because some funds will carry over and others are expected but cannot be included yet because they are waiting on final numbers. He added that he expects the total amount for state and grant funds to be similar next year to the current year. He also mentioned that the decrease in clinic patient revenues is not as significant as it appears, and it is due to adjustments needing to be made related to Medicaid transformation. Mr. Zelek noted that FY25 is like FY23 in terms of billing revenues, the last year for which complete revenues are known. Under capital outlay, Mr. Zelek stated that the expense this year is to replace a generator using COVID state funds, and that will not be included in next year's budget.

Mr. Zelek then presented the Health Promotion & Policy Division budget. He noted that some COVID funds are ending this fiscal year, so the amount next year will be lower as those funds are spent down. The decrease in grant expenditure is due to carryover funds not being known and therefore not included. He then presented the first expansion request to support Smart Start-funded positions. Mr. Zelek shared those two positions, the Childcare Health Consultant and Focus on Fathers Program Coordinator, are supported with state funds distributed locally through the Chatham County Partnership for Children. Because there have not been increases in the state budget, Mr. Zelek said that this funding has not kept up with program costs, and that the budget will need to include a request that the County cover the gap with a total cost of \$26,452.

Last, Mr. Zelek presented the Environmental Health budget. He noted that the Department received some short-term state and grant funds this year and it is unknown if they will continue into the next fiscal year and are therefore not included in the budget. He added that Environmental Health fee revenues are down about 9% this year due to the continuing slowing of development, but this is expected to rebound in the future. Mr. Zelek said that there are two vehicle replacements in the budget under capital outlay. He also said the proposed budget includes \$10,000 to pilot a well water testing program to provide testing at reduced cost for lower-income residents on well water. He noted that Anne Lowry, Environmental Health Director, presented this last month, and that the Department is hoping to partner with a nonprofit organization that can support needed repairs or treatment identified through this testing.

Mr. Thomas then presented the full budget. He noted that decreases in state funds and grants are misleading given new and carryover funds are not all included. He also mentioned the decrease in revenues. Under salary and fringe benefits, Mr. Thomas shared that the budget includes a 4% increase in health insurance costs but does not include raises and a 1.2% increase

in retirement contributions. He added that there are two expansion requests totaling \$36,452 and that capital outlay includes the two new vehicles from Environmental Health but does not include the generator for clinic purchased this fiscal year.

Mr. Thomas then shared the net cost with the county as a 5% increase over last year, but again noted that this is misleading because of the funds that are not included in the budget.

Commissioner Gomez Flores asked when the Board of Commissioners decides on pay raises for the County, does that apply to public health. Mr. Zelek said yes, the raises are for all County employees and will be added to the budget at that time. Dr. Lloyd asked why grants that are allotted to come in but have not come in yet are not included in the budget. Mr. Zelek said they are not included in the budget until we have formal notice with an amount. Dr. Rimer asked why operating expense decreased by around \$1 million. Mr. Zelek said that is because state and grant funds that are not yet known are not included in operating.

Dr. Rimer asked if we had ever done benchmarking to see what other county charges for Environmental Health fees. Mr. Zelek said yes, Anne Lowry checks surrounding counties to see what their fees are and to see if we are in line with others. He also asked if cost to provide the service is considered, and Mr. Zelek responded that it is, though fees are typically lower than cost to provide. He noted that well water testing costs around \$150, which is how the fee was set.

Commissioner Gomez Flores asked if the health department was regulated the same way as the County building inspections such that any revenues over expenses must stay with the department. Mr. Zelek said that was a good question but that, given EH's fee structure and services, revenues do not exceed expenditures.

Dr. Freese asked if residents could collect their own well water samples and the health department could share a pamphlet with instructions on how to collect the sample. Ms. Morgan said Environmental Health had to collect the samples, and that they also check for other issues with the well during that time. Dr. Rimer noted the need to maintain chain of custody with samples, adding that if the bottle is not properly handled, contamination could take place.

Dr. Pappas asked what the average mileage on the County vehicles per year was. Ms. Morgan said it could be around 30,000 miles a year for EH. Mr. Zelek said vehicle replacement recommendations come from County fleet. Ms. Williams asked if the vehicles were bought new. Mr. Zelek said they are bought new but at state contract pricing. Mr. Zelek said that it is up to departments and divisions to call around and get pricing for vehicles.

The Budget Committee recommended the proposed budget for approval and no second was needed. The motion passed unanimously.

Clinic Fees

Kevin Overcash, Clinical and Community Health Services Administrative Services Manager, gave an update on clinic fees.

Mr. Overcash said that in 2019 the Board of Health approved the shift from a flat, set-fee approach to a formulary approach for clinic charges. This has given the department flexibility to adjust charges, based on the costs incurred (for example, the cost of vaccine, the cost of supplies, and staff time) rounded to the next dollar. Adopting this approach has allowed the department the option to add additional services and charges without returning to the BOH or BOC for approval.

He shared that the Clinic Fee Review Committee meets annually to review charges and met on February 22, 2024, to review charges for FY24. There were two charge changes since last reported to Board of Health in 2023: Prevnar 13 was phased out and Prevnar 20 was added at a charge of \$265.00 (\$242.00 acquisition cost + supplies -\$3.00+ staff time/administrative charge -\$20.00). The Rabies vaccine also increased to \$322.00 (previously \$315). Mr. Overcash also mentioned that there is a nationwide shortage of Bicillin for syphilis treatment. Given that Syphilis rates are increasing, the agency is purchasing an alternate treatment: Extencilline, which is FDA approved will be allocated to pregnant and HIV clients. Mr. Overcash mentioned that the approach has continued to benefit the department and thanked the Board for their support.

Old Business

None.

Health Director Report

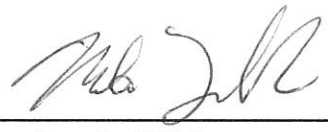
- The next newsletter is coming out later this week and will be sent out to the Board. It includes several updates, including that the CCPHD Polar Plunge Team had a great time on Saturday at Jordan Lake. Photos will be included.
- Childbirth classes are coming up in March. There will be virtual classes in English and for the first time Spanish classes, offered in person.
- Environmental Health is offering free water sampling this spring to pregnant people and households with children under 6 years old living in homes that use a private well as a water source. This program is supported by leftover state funds focused on lead and asbestos.
- Recruitment will begin this week for the Board positions coming open in a few months. Positions include Nurse, Optometrist and Physician.
- He is now serving on the Chatham Hospital Board of Trustees and his first meeting was last week. He thanked Commissioner Gomez Flores for the invitation.
- He is excited to welcome Kyle Chambers as the new Communications Specialist.

Adjournment

Ms. Reitz-Barlow made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Dr. Pappas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



Karen Barbee, EdD, Chair



Secretary Ex Officio
Michael Zelek, MPH, Public Health Director