



Meeting Minutes

Project: **Consolidated Human Services Board Meeting**

Subject: Minutes

Date: September 8, 2025

Location: 2330 Concord Ave Monroe, NC

Attendees: Amy Dickey, Gary Sides, Noyes Harrigan, Susan Marciniak, Craig Kolasch, Wendy Sellers, Matthew Childs, Earl Ford

Ashley Burts, Michelle Marciano, Theresa Torres, Janet Payne

Absent: Lisa Kerner, Brandi Smith, Eric Claflin, Heather Wyss

1. Welcome, Pledge and Invocation

Ms. Dickey called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM, leading the Pledge of Allegiance and the invocation.

2. Approve Minutes

Motion to approve August 2025 minutes by Dr. Kolasch seconded by Mr. Ford. All in favor.

3. Approve Agenda

The agenda was presented with one correction: the order of division reports was adjusted so the Community Support and Outreach presentation would be heard first. A motion to approve the revised agenda was made by Mr. Ford, seconded by Ms. Marciniak. All in favor.

4. Old Business

None

5. Executive Director Report

6. Division Reports

Community Support and Outreach (CSO) Department Update

Ms. Starr, provided an overview of the Community Support and Outreach (CSO) Department (See PowerPoint). This Department delivers services and education that promote self-sufficiency, healthy living, and chronic disease prevention.

1. Economic Stability Programs:

- o Energy Assistance Programs: Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Crisis Intervention Program (CIP), which provide utility support to income-eligible families.
- o Work First Program: Offers job training, placement assistance, counseling, and childcare and transportation referrals.

2. Nutrition Services for Vulnerable Populations:

- o WIC (Women, Infants, and Children): Provides food benefits and nutrition education to low-income women and young children.
- o Senior Nutrition Program: Offers congregate and home-delivered meals, partially funded by federal and state grants.

3. Community Outreach and Engagement:

- o Volunteer coordination programs, including the Christmas Bureau, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), and support for foster children and adult wards.
- o Health promotion and education programs and a 13-week evidence-based parenting program for families referred by DSS or Juvenile Justice.

CSO also leads the Community Health Assessment (CHA) every three years in collaboration with Atrium and Novant Health and participates in the Opioid Settlement Work Group.

The department is funded through a mix of county (approximately 60%) and federal/state (40%) sources. Staffing includes 35 full-time, 5 benefited part-time, 2 part-time, and 3 seasonal staff.

Ms. Starr summarized FY25 program achievements, including a 55% increase in parenting program participation, a 17% increase in WIC clients, and significant growth in energy assistance applications (54% more CIP and 44% more LIEAP applications).

She also discussed recent accomplishments, such as administering \$11.5 million in rental and utility assistance during the pandemic, expanding community coalitions, and forming the Substance Use Disorder Task Force and Mental Health Solutions Group.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Ms. Starr noted that Union County's population is projected to grow by 51% by 2042, with a 120% increase in residents aged 65 and older. Federal and state funding reductions, especially for energy assistance and senior programs, pose challenges as needs rise. She highlighted staffing constraints, limited mental health resources, and volunteer shortages in senior nutrition delivery.

Despite challenges, the department continues to innovate. WIC appointment wait times decreased from 46 days to 8 days through policy flexibility and improved communication. The Senior Nutrition Program also partnered with Food for Families NC to provide groceries to seniors awaiting permanent meal placements. Additional county and municipal funding have helped reduce the



senior meal waitlist from over 600 to 358 as of August 2025, with another 110 expected to be removed by the end of September.

Board members discussed ongoing volunteer needs, vetting of the senior nutrition waitlist, and staffing limitations affecting follow-up. Commissioner Sides expressed strong support for senior nutrition services, emphasizing their essential role in addressing food insecurity among older adults.

Public Health Department, Environmental Health Division, Well Program Update

Ms. Colley presented an update on the Private Drinking Water Well Program and overall water quality in Union County (See PowerPoint). She explained that the program is governed by state statutes and local ordinances, ensuring compliance with construction, inspection, and sampling standards for private wells, irrigation wells, and repairs.

Approximately 25% of county residents rely on private wells as their primary drinking water source. In FY25, Environmental Health issued 664 well permits, conducted 1,585 site visits, and completed 88 water quality samples.

Common contaminants identified in well samples included:

- Arsenic: Detected above safe limits in 23% of samples.
- Manganese: Elevated in approximately 15% of samples.
- Coliform Bacteria: Present in 27% of samples; E. coli in 1.6%.

Ms. Colley explained that arsenic and manganese occur naturally due to county geology and can have neurological health effects. She presented maps illustrating contamination clusters and described partnerships with UNC Chapel Hill, NC State, and other universities to study groundwater contamination and develop cost-effective treatment methods.

She also detailed a Private Well Rehabilitation and Repair Pilot Program, funded by \$200,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Eleven residents were approved, and eight wells were selected for repair or replacement, with project costs capped at \$30,000 per property. Early results show improved water safety and pressure for participants.

Board members asked about project costs, timelines, and future funding. Ms. Colley noted that final data will be compiled upon completion to evaluate program effectiveness and support future funding opportunities.

Additional discussion addressed:

- The need for potential local ordinances requiring water testing prior to issuing certificates of occupancy.
- Homeowner responsibilities for ongoing well maintenance and testing.
- Challenges of balancing regulatory authority, property rights, and public health protection.



Public Health Update on Actions Taken in response to the City of Monroe Boil Water Notice

Ms. Colley reported on the City of Monroe's systemwide boil water notice issued August 13, 2025, following confirmation of E. coli contamination. Environmental Health worked with the NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Public Health, and county communications to notify and guide 496 regulated establishments in the affected area.

The notice initially covered the entire city system but was later limited to the western zone. After confirmation of corrective measures, restrictions were lifted by August 15. Ms. Colley commended staff coordination and rapid public communication throughout the event.

Approval of Public Health Clinical Service Fees

At the start of the meeting, a quorum was established; however, following several presentations, two members departed, leaving the board without a quorum. Seven members are required to conduct official business, and six remained present.

Ms. Colley presented three proposed updates to the clinical fee schedule for FY26. These changes ensure fees remain consistent with Medicaid reimbursement rates and reflect the actual cost of supplies, staff time, and testing materials.

1. **Tuberculosis (TB) Risk Screening Questionnaire** – Proposed Fee: \$10
 - Currently, no fee is charged for TB risk assessments conducted for individuals who cannot receive the standard skin test due to prior positive results.
 - The screening involves reviewing symptoms, exposure history, and potential risk factors. It is frequently required for employment, school enrollment, and volunteer clearances.
 - The proposed \$10 fee aligns Union County with rates used in comparable counties statewide and helps offset administrative costs. This fee would generally be paid out of pocket, as insurance does not typically cover TB questionnaires.
2. **Biopsy of Tissue, Pathological Examination** – Proposed Fee: \$109.43
 - The current Medicaid reimbursement rate is \$84.18, and the average commercial insurance reimbursement rate is approximately \$107.83.
 - The Health Department proposes setting a uniform rate of \$109.43, reflecting both current market costs and state reimbursement guidance.
 - This fee applies to biopsy specimens requiring lab analysis to identify tissue abnormalities, infections, or malignancies, ensuring the cost of processing and pathology services is appropriately covered.
3. **Penicillin G Benzathine** – Proposed Fee: \$38.09



- The rate aligns with updated vaccine and medication cost data from the North Carolina Immunization Branch and CDC.
- Penicillin G Benzathine is used to treat several communicable diseases, including syphilis, and must be administered by a licensed nurse under medical supervision.
- The new fee reflects the rising cost of the medication and the required clinical resources for safe administration.

Ms. Colley noted that the proposed adjustments are consistent with surrounding counties and necessary to maintain financial sustainability of public health services. She clarified that patients with Medicaid or qualifying insurance will continue to be billed through standard third-party processes, while uninsured patients will pay based on established sliding fee scale guidelines.

The remaining six members reviewed and discussed the proposed fee adjustments in detail. While the board lacked quorum to take a formal vote, no members expressed opposition. The group reached consensus to move the recommendations forward to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration.

7. Announcements/Public Comments

Ms. Bowers, recently appointed Division Manager over Child Welfare and Adult Welfare Services, attended on behalf of Ms. Lantz, who was recovering from knee surgery. She provided updates on current staffing and division activity:

- Economic Services: Eight vacancies, all within the Medicaid department, primarily due to promotions and family leave. The division is currently undergoing a state audit, with no results yet reported. Both Medicaid and Food & Nutrition programs are meeting timeliness standards. September is Eligibility Worker Appreciation Month, and the team will hold a breakfast event with prizes and gift baskets to recognize staff.
- Child Welfare: Six total vacancies, including three supervisor positions. Recent changes were due to one supervisor's passing, one promotion, and one resignation. Caseworker openings are primarily in after-hours and foster care.
- Adult Services: One vacancy in a supervisory role. The division continues to meet timeliness standards for service delivery.

The Board welcomed Ms. Bowers and expressed appreciation for her leadership.

Ms. Payne provided a few updates. The Veterans Treatment Court Initiative led by a group including Veteran Services Director Michelle Marcano and Robert Turner is underway. The team completed the first round of required training.

The Veterans Court will focus on rehabilitation and support for veterans in the justice system through coordinated access to mental health treatment, substance use services, housing, employment, and peer mentorship.

Ms. Payne reported that an Opioid Settlement Update would be presented to



the Board of County Commissioners on September 15, 2025, followed by the kickoff of a strategic planning process on September 16. Five planning meetings will be held between September and December, finishing in proposed priorities for the Board of Commissioners' review. New contracts with funded partners will take effect by July 1, 2026.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Dickey; seconded by Mr. Ford all in favor.
Ms. Dickey thanked everyone, and the meeting ended at 7:45.

