

NC FAST Update

In September, the Board received information that staff with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Business Support Services Agency (BSSA) are working to implement locally a new State of North Carolina technology system called NC FAST (Families Accessing Services through Technology).

This project was launched by the State in May, 2012 in six pilot counties. Phase One of NC FAST was implemented in Mecklenburg County in October, 2012 for customers submitting applications for Food and Nutrition Services (Food Stamps). Other public assistance programs, such as Medicaid, will be launched in mid-2013 in phases two and six. This new program is intended to improve overall customer service, particularly to reduce the time people wait for services from DSS. One of the key changes from the NC FAST system is that DSS customers will have one worker regardless of program participation, to streamline the process. Initially, the change could increase customer wait times until the process is refined and staff becomes fully proficient with the system.

At its January 15 meeting, the Board will receive a presentation on the NC FAST system. Specifically, Board members will receive information on the plans for complete

implementation of NC FAST in all social service program areas, as well as plans to utilize overtime and temporary staff during this implementation. I have approved the use of lapsed salaries (unspent staffing costs due to vacancies) of approximately \$800,000 to cover potential overtime and temporary staffing costs.

Additionally, staff is developing a contingency plan to ensure that eligible customers are able to receive food if there is any delay in their benefits processing during the NC FAST implementation. Through conversations with other N.C. counties implementing NC FAST, we have learned such a contingency plan has been useful.

Board members with questions regarding NC Fast should contact General Manager Michelle Lancaster at 704-336-2621 or via email at Michelle.Lancaster@MecklenburgCountyNC.Gov.

HUD Continuum of Care Grant Renewal

At its January 15 meeting, the Board will be asked to approve applying for the 2012-2013 renewal of grant funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Every year, HUD awards grant funding to communities to assist homeless and disabled residents with housing. This competitive grant

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opportunity is available to local Continuum of Care communities.

In 1994, HUD initiated the Continuum of Care process to encourage a coordinated, strategic approach to plan for programs that assist individuals and families who are homeless. This mandate required that communities come together to submit a single comprehensive Continuum of Care (CoC) application rather than allowing individual providers to apply for funding.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg community has been receiving HUD funds through this process since the mid-1990s. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Continuum of Care comprises various services provided by Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte and other community providers that are part of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Homeless Services Network.

In 2011- 2012, HUD allocated \$3,791,055 for new and continuing projects and \$379,106 for Bonus projects for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC as a whole. Mecklenburg County receives five grants from HUD as part of the CoC grant: three Shelter Plus Care Grants and one Homeless Support Services Grant within the Community Support Services Department; and one grant for the ACCESS Program contracted through MeckLink Behavioral Healthcare.

For the 2012-2013 grant funding, HUD will consider both new and continuing projects,

including Bonus projects, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

Board members with questions about the HUD grant should contact Community Support Services Department Stacy Lowry at Stacy.Lowry@MecklenburgCountyNC.Gov or 704-336-3784.

Public Health Department Transition Update

As Board members know, beginning on July 1, 2013 the County will have full responsibility for providing public health services due to the termination of the County's contract with Carolinas HealthCare System (CHS). Currently, the majority of public health services are provided by approximately 500 CHS staff.

In August, the Board received information on how we have been communicating with CHS staff regarding the process for filling County Health Department positions that will be created as a result of this transition. As a reminder, the County plans to offer comparable employment (without competition) to all but six of the CHS employees performing public health services. Non-competitive positions will be offered to current CHS employees who meet minimum qualification requirements and pass a background check and drug screening. The positions that will be exempt from this non-

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competitive process are six director-level positions, which will be required to undergo a competitive application process. Additionally, approximately 14 CHS positions will not be funded in the County's FY2014 budget; including positions funded with grants that end before July 1, 2013, temporary positions, as well as CHS support positions. All employees, including the seven who do not receive a non-competitive offer will be able to apply for vacant positions in the Health Department. This approach to transitioning public health services from CHS to the County will promote a smooth process, while ensuring that resources are leveraged and services align with the County's mission.

This week, County Human Resources staff is sending the non-competitive offers to CHS employees. The letters they will receive include the contingent salary offer and other relevant information (e.g., information on drug screens and background checks). The employees are directed to respond in writing by January 20, 2013 by either accepting or declining the offer. It is important to note that this is the first step in the non-competitive offer process. If a Board member is contacted by CHS or County employees with concerns or questions, this information should be provided to General Manager Michelle Lancaster so staff can respond quickly with accurate information. We anticipate our final

offers will be made in the spring, with final salary numbers being provided to include any merit increases or job changes that have occurred in the interim.

To keep current CHS employees fully informed of the transition process, information/Q&A sessions were held earlier in the fall at each work location. Benefit-specific information sessions were held in September. Board members with questions regarding this process should contact General Manager Michelle at 704-336-2621 or via email at Michelle.Lancaster@MecklenburgCountyNC.Gov.

CALENDAR REMINDERS:

- Mecklenburg County government offices and agencies will be closed on Monday, Dec. 24 and Tuesday, Dec. 25, 2012 for the Christmas holiday and Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2013 for the New Year's holiday.
- Wednesday, January 2, 5:00 pm, BOCC Regular Meeting, Informal Session, CH-14
- Wednesday, January 2, 5:00 pm, BOCC Regular Meeting, Formal Session, Chamber

- Harry L. Jones, Sr., County Manager

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