MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Budget/Public Policy Session in Conference Center Room 267 on the 2nd floor of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center located at 600 East Fourth Street, Charlotte, North Carolina at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 26, 2023.

ATTENDANCE

- Present:Chair George Dunlap and Commissioners
Vice Chair Elaine Powell, Arthur Griffin,
Mark Jerrell, Vilma D. Leake, Laura J Meier,
and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell
Acting County Manager Anthony Trotman
County Attorney Tyrone C. Wade
Clerk to the Board Kristine M. Smith
Deputy Clerk to the Board Arlissa Eason
- Absent: Commissioner Patricia "Pat" Cotham Commissioner Leigh Altman County Manager Dena R. Diorio

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dunlap, followed by introductions and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

23-0603 DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES FY2024 HOMES PROGRAM UPDATE

The Board received an update on the FY2024 Helping Out Mecklenburg's Homeowners with Economic Support (HOMES) grant program.

Background: The Department of Community Resources (DCR) budget request for the HOMES Program was approved in the FY2024 Annual Budget Ordinance. The DCR HOMES Program includes a partnership with the City of Charlotte. This program aligns with the Board's Priority of Housing Insecurity.

Yulonda Griffin, Director of the Department of Community Resources, gave the presentation.





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Applic	ations submitted		bility based o		
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	FY24 calculation, increased f	rom \$340 in prior ye	ars		
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FY24	Eligibility Re	equirem	ents*		
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	FY21-F				
Metric		FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24 YTD*
County Gro	ants Approved	\$135,861	\$186,108	\$358,037	\$575,030
City Grants	Approved	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$256,444
Total Grant	s Approved	\$135,861	\$186,108	\$358,037	\$831,474
County Gro	ants Pending	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$145,653
City Grants	Pending	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$66,459
Total Grant	s Pending	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$212,112
*July 1 – Septembe			De	na Diaria	Anthony Trotman
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Current Outreach Initiatives



Helping Homeowners in Need MeckNC.gov/4HOMES

- Onboarding two program coordinators to increase community engagement efforts
- 12 outreach activities, including Festival in the Park
- 12 senior events at six Recreation Centers
- Onsite applications at seven congregate meal sites for seniors
- Direct mailing to reach 40,000 additional residents
- Mass email outreach to faith-based organizations
- Charlotte Post webinar
- HOMES staff resource assisting with onsite applications at Office of the Tax Collector

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6



Comments

Commissioner Griffin thanked her for the presentation. He said that, regarding the 140-day application window from beginning to end, less than 10% had been approved, including the pending applications for grant funding. He referenced Slide 12, asking for full-court press for the next 52 days left by this meeting to kick up advertising to a higher level to come close to utilizing the program. He asked what kind of feedback was received. He asked if residents were aware and, if so, why there were so few. *Ms. Griffin said she had been hearing that some residents didn't know if it was real and didn't trust what was being shared with the community. She said they were working with trusted organizations and partners to broaden their outreach. She said some residents may not understand that their homes didn't have to be paid for to qualify. She said they could still apply and qualify, and if approved, the funds would be applied to their tax bill.*

Commissioner Griffin asked that they raise the bar next year when they looked at the budget.

Commissioner Leake commended Ms. Griffin for her outreach to the community. She said zip codes in which seniors lived were part of the process. She asked if they were communicating with the City to get information out. *Ms. Griffin said they were working with the City, utilizing 311, sharing information on social media platforms, and sharing handouts and cards.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if the remaining amount would be held in contingency for future years. *Ms. Griffin said there was a process to ask to carry over funds to the following year.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if the Office of the Tax Collector could look at how many could/should be applying and send postcards to those. She asked who wasn't getting the message. *Ms. Griffin said they had been working with the Office of the Tax Collector and looking at those who had delinquent bills to see who to send postcards to. She said they were also working with a marketing firm to develop lists to see who to target as well. She said they had a couple of different ways to identify individuals who may have qualified and encouraged residents to apply even if they weren't sure they qualified.*

Commissioner Jerrell thanked her for the presentation and the staff for what they had been doing so far around the program. He said it was important to note that the program had only been around for a relatively short period of time. He said he hoped they were reaching out to community partners, such as realtor associations and builders, and others within that industry that had an extensive list of resources that could send things out to homeowners. He asked where the 25,000 came from, as he thought it was 72,000. He said that when looking at the populations taking advantage of the opportunity, there was a huge gap/divide with seniors. He asked if they

wanted to extend the deadline and increase the grant amount. He asked what else they were doing to see how they could further help. *Ms. Griffin said the 72,000 was the initial estimate, where they used census data, home ownership, and household size or income to determine who may have been eligible in the community. She said the 25,000 was the amount of who they could serve if grants were issued out the way they estimated they would. She said they were working with the Tax Collector and Financial Services regarding the timeframe for posting those payments to show that tax year.*

Vice Chair Powell thanked her for the presentation. She said that, in reference to slide 6, in 2018, they were surprised at how few tax relief programs there were. She asked if people had to apply for the homestead and disabled veterans' exclusion annually. *Ms. Griffin said yes, it was a separate application, but it was also not handled within the Department of Community Resources.*

Vice Chair Powell asked if they could only get one exclusion and how they determined which one would be the best and that would benefit them the most. *Ms. Griffin said yes, they could only get one. She said they were working closely with the Tax Collector and County Assessor so that those eligible were referred to those programs. She mentioned that they had denied very few because they were eligible for the other program. She said that the benefits of state programs are generally more significant.*

Commissioner Meier thanked her. She said they were doing a great job of getting the information out. She asked why there was a three-year rule. She highlighted the high percentage of women and asked if they had information on children and marital status. *Ms. Griffin said women may have been the ones applying, but that doesn't mean they aren't married or have families. She said additional information as to who was in the household was requested later during the application process.*

Commissioner Meier asked how they decide how much one receives. She asked if someone was delinquent, if there would be a possibility of applying for a grant, and if they could increase it even if they were delinquent. *Ms. Griffin said the three-year rule was part of the policy, as they wanted to ensure individuals had been in their homes primarily for a period of time (three years). The policy also stated they could have only one delinquent bill. She said that as far as how much was concerned, it was based on the property tax amount and income calculations.*

Chair Dunlap said there was a limit based on federal requirements. He said they didn't take into consideration how many may qualify for other programs before the Homestead program. He provided other things for the Board to keep in mind.

Commissioner Griffin asked if people who were paying mortgages and taxes together could be

given a rebate or cash. *Ms. Griffin said they couldn't, but they could still apply and receive a credit that could be applied next year.*

Commissioner Griffin asked who was communicating with the mortgage company to adjust someone's payments. *Neal Dixon, Tax Collector, said they communicated with them. He said if awarded, pre-payment was applied to the bill next year, and then the mortgage company would receive the bill with notice of pre-payment.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked how long it took from start to finish. *Ms. Griffin said it was not a long process, and if all the necessary information was provided, the application could be processed within a matter of days. She said if they had to request information, they give the recipient ten days and do follow-ups.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked where most people heard about the program. He asked how they were using the data collection. He also asked her to touch on the extension of the program. *Ms. Griffin said they ask applicants how they heard about applications, and the majority have been through mailings (52% of the respondents), the County website, and social media. Concerning the extension, she said they worked with the Tax Collector to determine how the program was going.*

Chair Dunlap said he was under the impression they had partnered with the city and that everyone who got a water bill got notice. A staff member stated it hadn't gone out since marketing had already occurred.

23-0611 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE AND RESPONSE EFFORTS UPDATE

The Board received an update on communicable disease and response efforts in the County.

Raynard Washington, PhD, MPH Director of Public Health, gave the presentation.



Environmental Health & Communicable Disease

EH is responsible for enforcing state statutes and local ordinances governing a number of different types of facilities:

- Restaurants and Drink Stands
- Food Stands
- Pushcarts and Mobile Food Units
- Private and Public School Lunchrooms
- Private and Public School Buildings
- Catered Elderly Nutrition Sites
- Limited Food Service Facilities
- Lodging Facilities (hotels, motels, and bed and breakfast)

- Public Swimming Pools
- · Rest Homes and Nursing Homes
- Hospitals
- Home Day Care Facilities
- Residential Care Facilities (group homes and family foster homes)
- · Local Confinement Facilities (jails)
- Adult Day Care Homes

Meat Markets

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Environmental Health & Communicable Disease

Foodborne Illness

- Commonly results from improper food handling and preparation:
 - Improper storing and cooking temperatures
 - Dirty and/or contaminated utensils and equipment
 - Poor employee health and hygiene
 - Food from unsafe sources
- Can occur wherever food is consumed
 - Outbreaks are a particular risk at potlucks and picnics where hygiene/sanitation and storage temperatures may be harder to maintain.

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3









COVID-19 Information	
COVID-19 Vaccine Update	
 FDA & CDC approved new COVID-19 vaccine (targeting Omicron XBB variant) 	
 Now distributing to pharmacies and other ordering vaccine providers 	
 COVID-19 vaccine = a one-dose, routine annual vaccine (like seasonal flu vaccine) 	
Recommended for everyone 6 months old and older	
MeckNC.gov	- 13
COVID-19 Information	
COVID-19 Information COVID-19 Vaccine Update	
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 COVID-19 Vaccine Update COVID-19 vaccination = commercialized (government is no longer the sole provider) CDC's Bridge Access program provides free COVID-19 vaccines to un- and under-insured people through 	
 COVID-19 Vaccine Update COVID-19 vaccination = commercialized (government is no longer the sole provider) CDC's Bridge Access program provides free COVID-19 vaccines to un- and under-insured people through December 2024. Available at CVS and Walgreens pharmacies 	

















Comments

Commissioner Meier asked if the COVID-19 vaccine was no longer free and cost \$100. Dr. Washington said the cost was around \$140, but a lot of insurance companies covered the cost. He provided further explanation.

Commissioner Meier asked, about rabies, if there was a portion of the County where rabies was concentrated. *Dr. Washington said there were zip codes with higher reporting, but there were investigations throughout the county.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if it was not just an urban or rural thing. Dr. Washington said it happened throughout and that wild animals migrate. He said it was best for residents to stay away from wild animals.

Commissioner Griffin thanked him for the presentation. He said about HIV/Syphilis – black males had been impacted, but what was new was it was starting to hinder black women. He asked if there had been any lessons learned from around the country, not only in reporting but also in reducing it. He said this was impactful on the African American community.

Dr. Washington said it had been happening for quite some time throughout the country. He said trying to contain viruses/diseases to a network of individuals so they didn't spread wasn't easy, but with HIV, they weren't able to do that. He said they had initiatives called Ending the Epidemic and Getting to Zero that drove their HIV prevention strategy in the community.

Commissioner Leake said at least ten years ago, many young people lost their lives due to the amount of medication they were taking. She said there was still a stigma of talking about AIDS in the black community. She thanked him again for his presentation and the late Commissioner Valerie C. Woodard for her impact.

Vice Chair Powell thanked him. She said that based on what they had seen, the response from the state was slow. She asked how they could help with that. *Dr. Washington said they were investigating closely and believed they still had a voice. He said he would be in communication with the Board to amplify the noise and explain why it was critical and needed to be addressed.*

Commissioner Jerrell thanked him for the presentation and for making the content digestible. He said he appreciated when they could take presentations and tie them back to their priorities. He asked, in reference to the mobile van, how many they thought they would serve with those units. He also asked what the profile of the individuals were. *Dr. Washington said there were many plans for the mobile units to be used for things such as vaccines and dropping the van at schools for immunizations. He said they would do the same for the dental unit. He said that was a way to*

service children at the school by making access easier.

Chair Dunlap said there needed to be some coordination to make sure they were serving the entire community. He asked about the flu shot and what the general advice was on when to obtain the shot. He asked if someone should report food poisoning to the health department. *Dr. Washington said the general recommendation was that people get the flu shot in September or October. He said if someone believed they may have gotten sick at a restaurant, they could make a report to Environmental Health. He said the best thing to do was to see their provider and could follow up if necessary.*

23-0023 Commissioner Reports

Commissioners shared information of their choosing within the guidelines established by the Board, including but not limited to past and/or upcoming events.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Board, Chair Dunlap declared the meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Arlissa Eason, Deputy Clerk to the Board

George Dunlap, Chair