

**Wake County Health and Human Services Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Board Members Present:**

Lily Chen  
Maty Ferrer Hoppmann  
Wanda Hunter  
Christine Kushner  
Tonya Minggia  
Ann Rollins  
Dr. Anita Sawhney  
Dr. Kelcy Walker Pope  
Birchie Warren  
Commissioner James West  
Dr. Mary Faye Whisler  
Tamara Wilson

**Guests Present:**

Joshua Boone  
Deidre McCullers

**Staff Members Present:**

Akanksha Acharya  
Commissioner Vickie Adamson  
Debra Baker  
Ben Canada  
Ann Godwin  
Caroline Harper  
Kevin Harrell  
Duane Holder  
Tony Johnston  
Katie LaWall  
Annemarie Maiorano  
Jenelle Mayer  
Yolanda McInnis  
Janny Mealor  
Commissioner Don Mial  
Ken Murphy  
Shanta Nowell  
Tina Payton  
Toni Pedroza  
Morgan Poole  
John Roberson  
Kathryn Thompson  
Dr. Joseph Threadcraft  
Diamond Wimbish

**Call to Order**

Chair Ms. Ann Rollins called the meeting to order at 7:32 A.M.

**Next Board Meeting** – October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Ann Rollins asked for a motion to approve both the July 27<sup>th</sup> and August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting minutes. There was a motion by Ms. Christine Kushner and Dr. Mary Faye Whisler seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Christine Kushner, Treasurer, provided the Treasurer's Report. In July, the fund was reported as \$8,080.92. Since then, there had been a \$250 deposit composed of stipends donated by Board members. Thus, the Board fund was now \$8,330.92. Ms. Kushner noted that a future agenda item for the Board would allow for discussion on how to spend the Board fund. Historically, it had been used to provide gifts to foster children graduating from high school and for a gift of condolences if a Board member had endured a hardship or lost a family member.

### **Health and Human Services Board Member Swearing In**

(Presented by Mr. Ken Murphy)

Mr. Ken Murphy (Senior Deputy County Attorney) swore in Mr. Birchie Warren as a Wake County Health and Human Services Board member.

### **Review of Procedures for Upcoming Health and Human Services Board Officer Elections**

(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins)

Ms. Ann Rollins (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Chair) informed the Board that nomination forms for Board Officers (i.e., Board Chair, Board Vice Chair, and Board Treasurer) would be sent out shortly for a vote to be held during the Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Board meeting. Ms. Brittany Hunt (Executive Assistant to the Wake County Health and Human Services Board) would be sending out the nomination form which would be due by Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>. Nominees could be self-nominated or another Board member. In the latter case, permission from that Board member was required prior to submitting the nomination form. If Board members wished to nominate someone after October 13<sup>th</sup>, there would also be an opportunity to do so verbally during the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. Terms for the 2023 to 2024 Board Officers would begin December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 during the Board's regularly scheduled meeting.

### **Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Tobacco Amendment (Returning)**

(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins and Mr. Ken Murphy)

Due to a lack of quorum at the August 2023 Wake County Health and Human Services Board meeting, the Board was unable to vote to recommend the proposed amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to increase the distance of tobacco and hemp retail shops from schools from 500 feet to 1,000 feet. While there were no current stores and only one known potential store on the horizon that this amendment would impact, the change would keep the County in line with its municipalities and continue to ensure the health of its youth.

This was, admittedly, a proactive approach. This was not a health rule and not under the Health and Human Services Board's jurisdiction. The Wake County Planning Board (whose jurisdiction the UDO falls under) had already received the proposed amendments. However, staff sought further support from the Health and Human Services Board given the Board's committed efforts to addressing tobacco and hemp use in the county. The final destination of these amendments would be before the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC) for approval.

Mr. Ken Murphy (Senior Deputy County Attorney) reminded Board members that they were still able to vote on recommending the amendment even if they were not in attendance at the August 2023 Board meeting as State law allowed for the minutes of that meeting to be used as a reference.

Commissioner James West noted that, with any changes in the tobacco or hemp realm, staff had historically made a conscious effort to communicate with tobacco farmers prior to presenting to the BOC. This had likely already occurred but would continue to be emphasized as to not adversely impact local farmers. Ms. Rollins stated that there would be follow-up with the presenters of the amendments (Ms. Terry Nolan – Planner III and Ms. Michelle Mulvihill – Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention - Public Health Educator) to ensure that these conversations were ongoing.

Commissioner Vickie Adamson shared that she had brought the tobacco amendment as an informational item to the last BOC meeting. No comments, e-mails, or phone calls were received in relation to this item. There was supposedly only one potential shop that would be impacted, but the store owner was still uncertain if they wanted to specialize in tobacco and hemp or provide a wider range of goods.

**Dr. Mary Faye Whisler made a motion to recommend the proposed tobacco amendments to the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) as presented during the August 2023 Board meeting to the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC). Ms. Wanda Hunter seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.**

**Public Health Report: 2023 Communicable Disease (Returning) (Accreditation Benchmark #2.4)**  
(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins and Ms. Morgan Poole)

Due to a lack of quorum at the August 2023 Wake County Health and Human Services Board meeting, the Board was unable to vote to approve the 2023 Communicable Disease Public Health Report. Ms. Morgan Poole (Epidemiology Program Manager) stated that staff needed approval prior to publishing public health reports online for the general public to review (<https://www.wake.gov/departments-government/health-human-services/data-and-reports>). Ms. Wanda Hunter (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Vice Chair) thanked Ms. Poole and her team for providing requested demographic information for a better understanding of those impacted by all communicable diseases.

**Dr. Kelcy Walker Pope made a motion to approve the Public Health Report: 2023 Communicable Disease. Ms. Christine Kushner seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.**

**Planning for the Next Generation of Waste Disposal**

(Presented by Mr. John Roberson)

Mr. John Roberson (Solid Waste Management Director) presented on the future of waste disposal in Wake County. The County owns two major methods of waste disposal – the East Wake Transfer Station (East Wake) and South Wake Landfill (South Wake or Landfill). East Wake is located near Corporation Parkway in Raleigh. Waste at East Wake comes from the north and east of the county and is largely composed of residential and commercial solid waste. County facilities do not process much industrial waste. For East Wake, waste from trash trucks is dumped onto the floor before being consolidated into transfer trailers to be transported to South Wake. The Landfill also accepts waste from southern and western Wake County. It must meet mandated regulations from both the State and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Landfill is lined at the bottom and will be lined at the top once the facility closes. Currently, the Landfill accepts over 500,000 tons of waste each year. Additional summary details for both locations are included below.

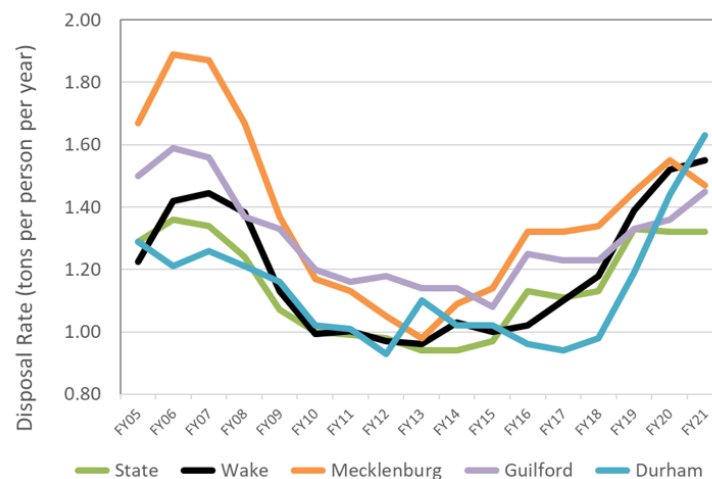
- East Wake Transfer Station
  - Located at 820 Corporation Parkway, Raleigh, NC 27610
  - Consolidates waste and reduces traffic to the landfill
  - Receives 900 to 1,500 tons per day
    - Tonnage varies due to commercial haulers
    - Facility regularly in need of repairs
- South Wake Landfill
  - Located at 6300 Old Smithfield Road, Apex, NC 27539
  - Municipal solid waste landfill opened in 2008
  - Receives 1,500 to 2,000 tons per day
  - Significant development around the landfill has made odor control a significant topic of concern

The need to look beyond South Wake stems from its anticipated life cycle lasting through 2045 with a conservative approach going to 2040 (i.e., changes occurring in increase in waste, reduction in density of waste, etc.). It is not anticipated that a new landfill will be permitted in Wake County. The land mass required and the availability of land in the county makes such a venture practically impossible. Instead,

the County has dedicated a great deal of research into identifying ways to most effectively utilize the space available. Two such reports are listed below. For a full list of studies and reports for Solid Waste, please see the following webpage: <https://www.wake.gov/departments-government/waste-recycling/wake-county-solid-waste-and-recycling-resources>

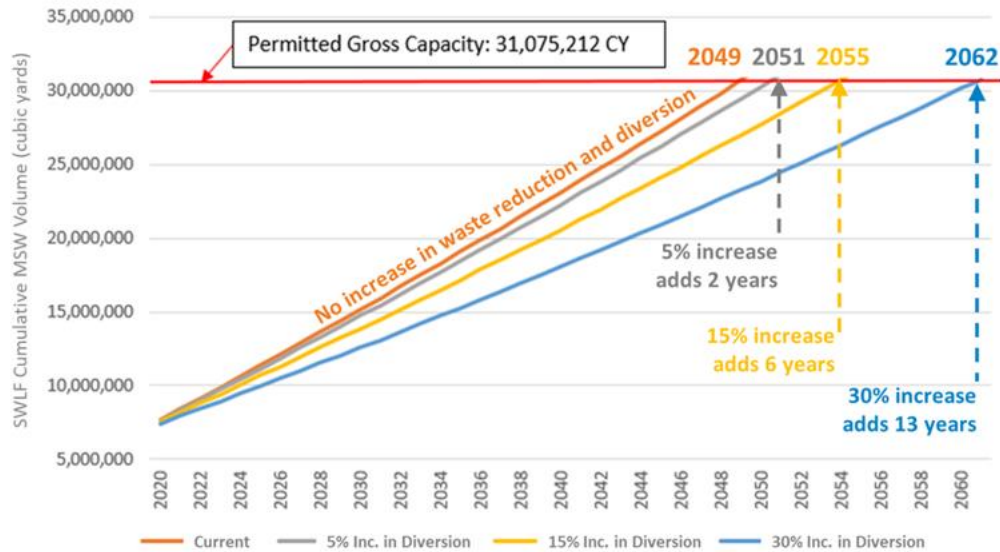
- Wake County 2020 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan: [https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/wakegov.com-if-us-west-1/s3fs-public/documents/2020-10/Wake%202020%20CSWMP\\_0.pdf](https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/wakegov.com-if-us-west-1/s3fs-public/documents/2020-10/Wake%202020%20CSWMP_0.pdf)
- Odor Management and Control Plan South Wake Landfill: [https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/wakegov.com-if-us-west-1/s3fs-public/documents/2021-04/SWLF%20OMCP\\_09-08-20\\_FINAL%20including%20Appendix%20I\\_0.pdf](https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/wakegov.com-if-us-west-1/s3fs-public/documents/2021-04/SWLF%20OMCP_09-08-20_FINAL%20including%20Appendix%20I_0.pdf)

The data provided below is contained in the Wake County 2020 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. The first chart shows a per capita disposal rate peer comparison. Wake County's increase is primarily linked to the construction market.



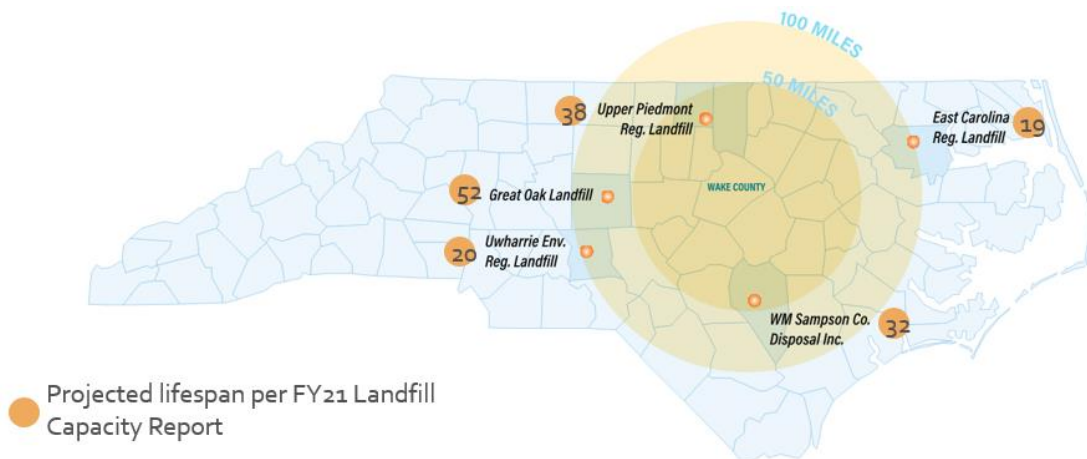
Notably, the chart shows similar curves for each county. Mr. Roberson explained that this was largely due to the impacts of the economy at any given time (see the severe dip that occurred in 2008 with the onset of the Great Recession).

What, then, are potential alternatives? The first would be to increase the side slopes of South Wake to gain better compaction. The projected percentages and their impact are included in the chart below.



Despite providing a few more years to the Landfill's lifespan, such a route would only be a temporary solution. The County is already monitoring different aspects of Solid Waste to better the resources and the life of the Landfill. Mr. Roberson shared that a mattress shredder was just acquired that, based on estimates, would add one or two years of life to the overall Landfill. Anywhere from 50 to 80 mattresses enter South Wake Landfill each day.

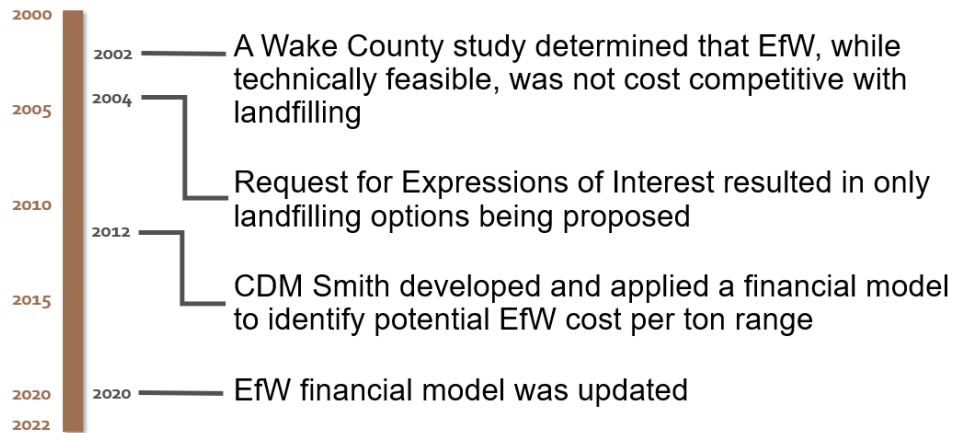
Another option is transporting the waste out of Wake County (see image below).



There are a number of regional landfills within reasonable driving distance of the county. Some, such as the relatively new Great Oak Landfill, have yet to expand to their full buildout and hold many years of life ahead. Note the years in the orange circles representing the projected lifespan. Downsides to this option include increased costs and price fluctuations.

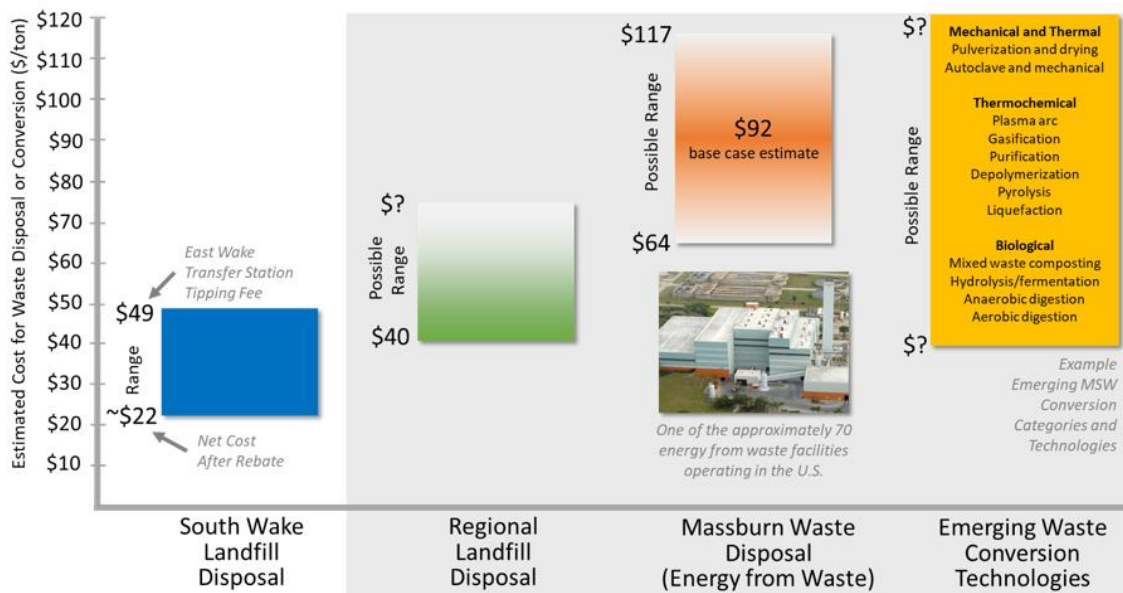
Staff could also evaluate Energy from Waste (EfW) alternatives. This would bring an increase return on investment through energy production as well as an increase in efficiency of pollutant removal from exhaust gases. EfW alternatives are proven methodologies in the European Union, Canada, and the United States. In layman's terms, this would mean that waste is buried and thereby turned into methane.

This methane is captured and turned into energy through Massburn facilities. A timeline of the County's investigation into EfW is provided below.



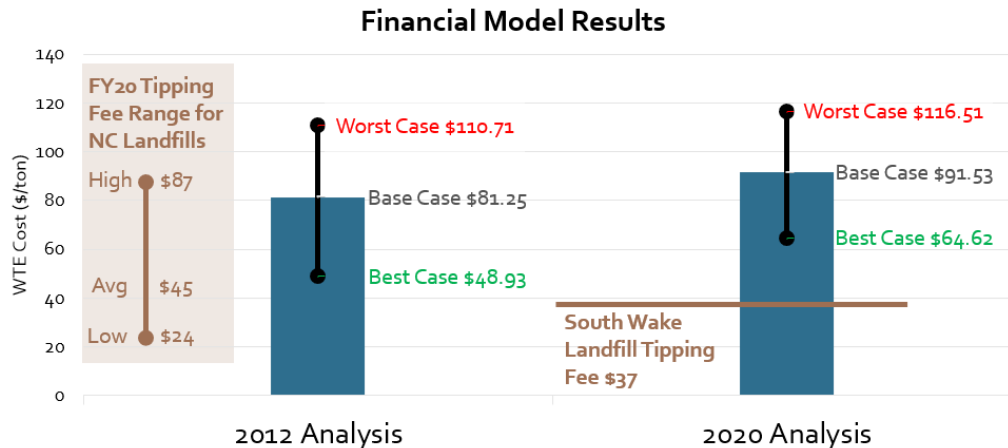
This process would be beneficial for electricity (carbon neutral) as well as for municipalities overall (high reliability). The increase in fuel prices will make hauling waste to out-of-county landfills less attractive. EfW emissions have decreased significantly over the last 30 years as technology and effective controls have been developed and installed.

The estimated costs for future waste management options outlined above are summarized in the image below.



The price range for “Regional Landfill Disposal” is not capped due to unknown fuel costs. Massburn facilities typically cost double if not triple what the Landfill costs today. Finally, there are several emerging waste conversion technologies to be considered. However, the latter is not seen as a viable solution as these technologies have not made substantial breakthroughs in recent years.

Below are details for the financial feasibility of EfW.



While the cost could be much higher initially, the creation of energy with this model could help offset the full amount. Energy pricing plays a big part of success for facilities.

Mr. Roberson then outlined other “emerging” technologies. He stressed that these technologies are generally unproven at full scale and/or do not apply to mixed waste.

- Waste to Bio-ethanol (INEOS)
  - Began construction in 2011 in River County, Florida with a total investment of almost \$128,000,000
    - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) loaned \$75,000,000
    - Department of Energy (DOE) grant amounting to \$50,000,000
    - State of Florida funded \$2,500,000
- Waste to Syngas (Tees Valley)
  - Sponsored by Air products (\$8.2 million company). It was supposed to be operational in 2014 but had to be shut down.
- Waste to Biofuels (Enerkem)

The frustrating reality is that the receipt of mixed waste requires a facility to sort the waste at the front end. Such a task is not useful when paired with these technologies.

Next steps were then outlined.

- Actively engage consultants in this initiative
  - Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) funding being planned for fiscal year (FY) 2025 and FY 2026 to initialize project feasibility and scoping
- Discuss and solidify methodology with the general public
- Discuss and solidify methodology with Triangle Area Governments
- Actively monitor and advocate for beneficial legislative actions as needed

Staff want to make sure, whatever the chosen solution is, to implement it with enough time for overlap with the current Landfill. This will ensure minimal delays when transitioning.

Finally, project development phases were shared (see below). Such a transition would, in total, take anywhere from seven to twelve years from start to finish. It is very possible, given the scope of this project, for it to exceed these estimates and take longer.



# Phases of Project Development

Phase 1 (Yrs 1-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project Feasibility and Scoping</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is EfW the best option for the County and region?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Preliminary Design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What technology and configuration makes the most sense?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is it financially feasible?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Permitting and Environmental Evaluation</b></li> </ul>
Phase 2 (Yrs 5-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Procurement</b></li> </ul>
Phase 3 (Yrs 7-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Design and Construction</b></li> </ul>

There was discussion around odor complaints. Thankfully, the East Wake Transfer Station is right next to the City of Raleigh Solid Waste Facility. Both facilities are not located in a residential neighborhood which greatly helps as dumping trash onto the floor causes a great deal of odor. Other transfer stations owned by private haulers may be located near neighborhoods.

Because the trash in these transfer stations is moved around by heavy equipment, things are often breaking. Due to this, the East Wake Transfer Station is in the middle of a reconstruction project that will keep the Station at half capacity for the next few months. As large as Wake County is, a transfer station is a necessity. If there was only the South Wake Landfill, trucks would have to spend the entire day travelling out to eastern parts of the county (such as Zebulon, Wendell, and Knightdale). Trash pickup, then, would be extremely late and inconvenient to the haulers and to the residents. The East Wake Transfer Station allows some relief given these travel considerations.

Commissioner James West inquired about the cost benefit ratio of looking at methane and how this would fit into the overall planning for the future of waste disposal in the county. Mr. Roberson stated that the current model of the landfill is exclusively using methane for energy. Methane is extracted for power or, in the case of a horizon project, landfill gas is purified to be 90% or more methane. When doing the latter, it can be injected back into the natural gas pipeline. This helps pay for the facilities being built in and around the landfill. With a waste energy facility, the entire methane process is skipped. Creating methane involves burying the garbage in a non-oxygenated environment where energy can be extracted after one to two years. At a waste energy facility, energy is taken from incinerating waste. The concern, of course, is with the pollution from the incineration process. This process has made notable advances within the past three decades.

There was mention of United States President Joe Biden looking into an infrastructure bill to address methane. Mr. Roberson stated that staff were currently working on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to use cutting edge equipment and technology from the EPA to test its effectiveness. Air quality measurement technology has changed a great deal in the last five years to the point that it is now – at times – being updated daily. This collaboration came about after EPA staff visited the South Wake Landfill and were impressed with the facility and its monitoring of several factors (such as odors). The infrastructure bill mentioned was addressing satellites with new technology measuring methane worldwide. Unfortunately, some landfills allow a great deal of methane to escape. With methane being anywhere from thirty to seventy times more



harmful as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, measuring that escaped methane and addressing it is a huge public health concern.

Ms. Lily Chen asked if staff had considered adding a collection option for biodegradables or organics and if such an option would be cost effective. She also asked what measurements – other than cost and odor – were being made. She also pointed out how Mecklenburg was the only county out of the cohort listed that had a decrease in trash rather than an increase. Solid Waste in the western and some parts of the northeastern United States have begun separating organics from other waste. When staff do waste studies at the landfill, trash trucks are out on concrete pads and people have to go through the waste which is an incredibly taxing, demanding, and oftentimes unpleasant task. All of the waste at that point of time is studied, which is how staff know that 25 to 35% of the landfill's waste is organic. Yard waste is not supposed to be collected, but some does make its way to the landfill. Otherwise, the majority of the organic waste is food.

Mr. Roberson explained that, generally, organics contained waters and liquids and biodegradables. Because of this, organic material converts to methane more quickly than other waste. It also promotes the waste around it into converting quicker. This creates a downside when trying to collect methane as the timeline could be thrown off and the chance to collect missed. Cost is another factor being considered. Mr. Roberson shared that a lot of yard waste was dependent on a resident's municipality. Up to three trucks – trash, recycle, and yard waste – may visit an area. Merging these into two or even one truck could bring huge cost savings but would mean that more separation would be required by staff (an unappealing option) and residents would be forced to merge their solid waste. The benefit of creating an organic collection would be in turning it into composting facility where it could be made into dirt or any number of other useful materials. The Town of Cary and City of Raleigh were both doing studies on organics, though the progress of both was not yet known. Staff are intent about maintaining discussions with municipality leaders as this issue is addressed.

Mecklenburg was unique among North Carolina counties in that they do not control their municipal solid waste. They do, however, control and deal with construction and demolition waste. Both Wake and Mecklenburg have a great deal of construction. Wake County Environmental Services does not accept construction and demolition waste, but there are four private construction and demolition landfills that do (listed below – please note that these are the construction and demolition (C&D) landfills. The linked webpage lists other drop-off locations, but these are transfer stations that will accept the waste and send to a landfill for disposal).

- Construction and Demolition (C&D) Landfills in Wake County
  - Webpage for additional details: <https://www.wake.gov/departments-government/waste-recycling/wake-county-solid-waste-and-recycling-resources> (click on “Construction and Demolition Debris”)
    - Greenway Waste Solutions of Apex – 5940 Old Smithfield Road, Apex, NC 27539
    - Material Recovery C&D Landfill – 2600 Brownfield Road, Raleigh, NC 27610
    - Red Rock Construction and Demolition Landfill – 7130 New Landfill Drive, Holly Springs, NC 27540
    - Shotwell Landfill – 4724 Smithfield Road, Wendell, NC 27591

Mr. Roberson recognized the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC) as two new C&D facilities had been approved to be built. One is currently under construction.

Ms. Christine Kushner (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Treasurer) commended staff on the implementation of the mattress shredder. She also asked how to incentivize scrap metal reclamation

(such as with big appliances) to keep them out of the landfill, reuse the materials, and capture all the costs including the impact cost on waste. Mr. Roberson stated that Wake County had made great strides with metal and appliances in the last fifteen to twenty years. There are three facilities across Wake County that accept appliances. Metal is collected in separate containers at landfills. Up to a million and a half dollars has been earned annually for reselling that metal as metal is the only recyclable material that is 100% recyclable. Other recyclables struggle to go above 20 to 30%. There are plans to build two more facilities for appliance drop-offs which would bring the location number to five. These will be completed in the next five to ten years. Composting is done in four different facilities in Wake County, but this is not enough to meet the volume received. The nearest composting facility is a 40-minute drive from the southern part of the county and doing more composting (outside of those done in a backyard) is riddled with obstacles. Compost facilities are even more malodorous than landfills. With South Wake, there were under 1,000 homes within a mile when it was first opened. There are now around 10,000 homes in that same distance. Understandably, odor complaints have gone up and are dealt with daily. This is in relation to open air composting. There is technology to compost inside of equipment, but the process is extremely slow and requires significant capital to build. Such an option will be brought to the ongoing discussions about waste disposal.

Ms. Wanda Hunter (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Vice Chair) asked for Mr. Roberson to share more details about the mattress shredder's proposed metal extractor and the monitoring system for odors. Mr. Roberson said that there was an option to add a magnet process to the mattress shredder already obtained to pull metal off as mattresses were being shredded. Staff hope to invest in this metal extractor within the next two years. It was not installed initially as some feedback indicated that it was a struggle to find someone willing to accept the material collected as it comes off dirty (i.e., combined with other non-metal parts of the mattress). Staff are working through how to ensure the material is clean enough to resell or recycle effectively so that it is not thrown away.

The odor monitoring system was one that the EPA was extremely impressed with. South Wake Landfill is the only landfill in North Carolina and possibly the southeastern United States that is producing power utilizing what amounts to automated solar panels on wells located in the landfill. There are one hundred wells in South Wake Landfill that are connected to the internet and collecting data every hour of every day. Every three hours there is a potential for the well to automatically adjust the valve so that staff do not have to go out and monitor each well individually. With high humidity and temperatures that can dip down and rise up to extremes, conditions are constantly changing and the wells need to be updated to be efficient. To have this done automatically is not only a huge time saver but also serves to retain the most accurate data possible. Staff also work with a system called EnviroSuite that allows the surrounding community to stay updated on the work toward odor control. Over the last two years, changes such as the implementation of EnviroSuite have cut odor complaints by 10%. Landfills will always have odors, but staff are working to dramatically cut what odors that they can.

Commissioner Vickie Adamson thanked Mr. Roberson for his presentation and noted that Wake County's trash disposal was rather cheap when compared to surrounding counties. She asked if Mr. Roberson could expand upon how such costs get passed along to the residents of Wake County. Essentially, tip fees (fees incurred by trash haulers to enter the waste facility) would increase. Three of the cities in Wake County (Raleigh, Cary, and Fuquay-Varina) do their own trash hauling service. All others pay a company to pick up waste. The tip fee the truck has to pay is expected to rise dramatically – up to double or triple its current amount – in several years. Part of the proposed project will allow for a thorough study and prediction of this increase. Staff are intent on giving trash haulers years of advance notice to help prepare them for this change.

Ms. Ann Rollins (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Chair) asked if a regional approach might be helpful. There was regional work and discussion being done. Mr. Roberson had went from the

recent Public Health Committee meeting to the Solid Waste Consortium (a group of Solid Waste professionals from the counties of Durham, Orange, and Wake as well as the City of Raleigh) where he had made a similar presentation to the one being made to the Board. The Consortium was established a year and a half ago and currently meets every other month. Discussions are coordinated through a consultant and have been very well received. One of the upcoming studies evaluates if regional waste disposal makes sense for Wake County. Wake County's solid waste volume is substantial enough to have its own facility. However, the question remains if it makes sense to make such a facility slight bigger to accommodate for the volume. A bigger facility means better ability to collect more trash which saves consumers on some of the aforementioned costs. There would also be the hope of additional jobs being kept to the area with such an option. Another study would be looking at diminishing return factors. There is a point where it would be expected to change the facility or go bigger than initially planned, but it was uncertain when this point would be for Wake County.

Finally, Mr. Roberson encouraged Board members to reach out if they were interested in a tour of the South Wake Landfill. Public tours are held once a month with a registration form available online (<https://www.wake.gov/departments-government/waste-recycling/outreach-and-education/landfill-tours> - scroll down and click on preferred date to sign up). Staff are also able to coordinate a private tour. The Public Health Committee (whose members had received this presentation the week before) had expressed interest in touring the landfill and a private tour with the Committee and the Board might be beneficial in continued advocacy efforts.

### **Environmental Services Director's Update**

(Presented by Dr. Joseph Threadcraft)

Dr. Joseph Threadcraft, Environmental Services Director, commended Mr. John Roberson (Solid Waste Management Director) and his team for their work in taking initiatives to address landfill odors and turning complaints into accolades.

Environmental Services is actively engaging with the Budget Office to construct a fiscal accountability business plan. Dr. Caroline Loop (Deputy Director of Environmental Services) manages Environmental Services' business plan which takes a three-year look at resource needs to accomplish key goals and initiatives. Staff make a concerted effort to link regulatory tasks with goals and initiatives when possible. Ms. Anarosa Jones (Department Business Manager) manages the budget for Environmental Services. The intent is to align the budget with goals and objectives. To this end, Ms. Jones has departmental authority and provides quality assurance and quality control (QAQC) for a decentralized budget process. Operations Analysis (led by Mr. Eric Green, Environmental Health Program Manager - Operations Analysis) oversees several studies including group staffing analysis, workforce analysis, and process improvements. They also manage performance measures regarding each resource that the County Manager's Office allocates to Environmental Services. This allows staff to report on the return in investment to the County Manager's Office and further provide a cost benefit analysis.

All of these resources enable Division Directors to focus on implementation to meet the goals that are ultimately set. It also helps to create projections that prepare staff to anticipate, avoid, or alleviate emergencies. Recently, Mr. Mark Forestieri (Director of Facilities, Design, and Construction) confirmed that a site for the new proposed Animal Services Center had been secured. Now knowing the site, Mr. Green's staff in Operations Analysis can use their staffing analysis to optimize the investment by evaluating the number of people required at a location to complete assigned work. A workforce analysis provides insight into the skillsets needed for those positions. Finally, a contract with a vendor allows staff to assess programmatic approaches to ensure a positive return on investment of resources.

Commissioner Vickie Adamson recognized Animal Services as they had recently helped to deescalate a misunderstanding in the community surrounding the safety of a pet.

### **Health and Human Services Director's Update**

(Presented by Ms. Toni Pedroza and Mr. Kevin Harrell)

- In the absence of Ms. Nannette Bowler, Wake County Health and Human Services Director, Ms. Toni Pedroza (Deputy Director of Social Services) presented on the following:
  - North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper has set December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 as the launch date for Medicaid Expansion. While the final policy is not yet available, a draft of it is and seems rather straight forward. The goal is to train current staff on new policies, hire expansion positions, and provide thorough Medicaid training to the new staff.
  - Ms. Christine Kushner (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Treasurer) asked how a potential government shutdown could impact the services offered to the community – especially those most vulnerable.
    - Ms. Pedroza said that the impact would depend on how long the shutdown was. The three programs most vulnerable immediately in the wake of a government shutdown are Meals on Wheels, Head Start, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
    - Social security would continue even during a government shutdown. While many programs would be impacted by a shutdown, some are considered essential.
    - Deputy County Manager Duane Holder added that there was a fund specifically used to ensure resources continue during a government shutdown. Once the shutdown has ended, reimbursements have historically been made which can offset the cost of these monies.
      - This is not a guarantee, however. In the event that a reimbursement is not given, the County's debt equity ratio will be impacted. However, the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC) move forward with this risk in order to provide services that residents depend on.
- In the absence of Ms. Rebecca Kaufman (Health Director), Mr. Kevin Harrell (Preventive Health Director) discussed the following:
  - Mr. Harrell introduced Ms. Tina Payton (Nursing Director). Ms. Payton comes from WakeMed Health and Hospitals and had a background in critical care with dual Master's degrees in Healthcare Administration and Nursing. She stated that she selected WakeMed to work at specifically because of their passion to serve the underinsured and uninsured in the community. She held a number of leadership roles and supported large projects such as strategic planning, expansion of service lines, and education and competency skills for staff. Ms. Payton will provide clinical leadership and support School Health and Clinics in her role.
  - The Wake County Clinic had not yet received its private purchase of COVID-19 vaccines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are now emphasizing the need to move away from the "booster" language and instead refer to the updated COVID-19 vaccine as the 2023 to 2024 formula. This is in an effort to better align COVID-19 vaccines with the language of other vaccines (such as influenza, otherwise known as the flu) which receive a new shot to address different strains dependent upon the year.
    - For the first time since its initial rollout in December 2020, the vaccine will not be free for everyone due to the end of the public health emergency (PHE).

- For residents with insurance, the vaccine will be billed to that insurance provider. Most providers will cover the full cost of the COVID-19 vaccine as they would the flu or other vaccines.
- For residents with Medicaid or Medicare, the COVID-19 vaccine would still be available for free.
- For residents without insurance, the COVID-19 vaccine could be free at local health departments (LHDs), federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), and pharmacies participating in the CDC's new Bridge Access Program. Bridge Access provides free COVID-19 vaccines to adults. Wake County Public Health has applied and been approved to serve as a Bridge Access Program provider. The Bridge Access Program is scheduled to end on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.
- Underinsured and uninsured children can also receive the COVID-19 vaccine for free through the CDC's Vaccine for Children (VFC) Program.
  - Wake County will be offering the Moderna vaccine when it is received. Other locations in the area would be offering the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine if residents wished to look for a specific brand.
- For influenza (flu), a walk-in flu shot clinic would be open at the Public Health Center at 10 Sunnybrook Road on the following Thursdays from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. No appointment is needed but residents can complete a registration form online to help streamline their visit (<https://www.wake.gov/departments-government/health-human-services/public-health-and-medical-services/communicable-diseases-and-pests/prevent-flu>).
  - October 5<sup>th</sup>
  - October 12<sup>th</sup>
  - October 19<sup>th</sup>
  - October 26<sup>th</sup>
  - November 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - November 9<sup>th</sup>
  - November 16<sup>th</sup>
- Staff were excited to make progress on one of their goals – opening Regional Center clinics five days a week. The clinic at Departure Drive would start its five-day offering on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. While the goal is to have every Regional Center clinic open for at least five days, there is already considerable movement to make this a reality. Both the Eastern Regional Center (ERC) and Northern Regional Center (NRC) clinics are on target to offer services five days a week by November 2023. The remaining two Regional Centers' (Southern Regional Center (SRC) and Western Health and Human Services Center (WHHSC)) clinics would be opening in early 2024.
- Preventive Health has been working closely with Wake County Child Welfare (CW) to provide services to children in the care of the County and foster care. This will be expanded but is being kickstarted with the HIV/STD Community Program and Maternal and Child Health. The latter is specifically focused on how to engage fathers in the community.
- Population Health had launched and now closed applications for the LitHealth4Wake grant. This grant was made available from the Office of Minority Health and was being managed by Ms. Lechelle Wardell (Population Health Director) and her team with a focus on health literacy. Organizations awarded provide resources and services to historically marginalized communities that have been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Awardees are expected to collaborate with Wake County to help reach community members that may still have

questions or concerns around the COVID-19 vaccine or other health-related issues. Twenty-one (21) applications were received with a total funding ask of \$805,572. Staff are reviewing the applications as only \$269,000 is available. Awards will be distributed shortly.

- There was a question posed on the ability of residents to receive services at the Public Health Center (also called Sunnybrook). No matter a customer's insurance status, they can receive vaccines at the Clinic.
- Ms. Maty Ferrer Hoppmann asked if a form was required to qualify for the free vaccine via the Bridge Access Program. No enrollment or registration was necessary – if staff were told that a customer was uninsured, that would be what was recorded.
- Staff were asked if a vaccine for the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) was available. This and COVID-19 were not yet at the Clinic. Staff had applied to receive RSV vaccines and were waiting for a shipment. There are limited number of flu shots available primarily for the young and the old (i.e., few flu shots that would be received by the general public). All of the vaccine providers in the area were experiencing the same delays with receiving vaccine shipments.
- Ms. Hoppmann asked if the Bridge Access Program was only for COVID-19 or if other vaccines were also included. Unfortunately, the Program was only for COVID-19 vaccines. Those with private insurance could be covered for free flu shots. Without insurance, the cost of a flu shot was \$30 unless the customer met certain criteria.

### **Discuss Advocacy Efforts**

(Presented by Mr. Ben Canada)

Mr. Ben Canada, Wake County Chief of Staff, led the Board in a discussion around advocacy efforts. Deputy County Manager Duane Holder clarified at the beginning of the presentation that Mr. Canada is the Chief of Staff in the Wake County Manager's Office. This means that he is responsible for legislative advocacy across the entire organization.

Mr. Canada began by providing an overview for the word "advocacy." Sometimes discussions of legislation can jump straight to lobbying. While this is an important part of advocacy, staff and lobbyists spend a great deal of time sharing information with legislators, legislators' staff, and other stakeholders. Advocacy is brought to life through leveraging existing partnerships and identifying new potential partners. Once these connections have been made, it is equally important to maintain and build those relationships. He then shared the following advocacy model that he used when working the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC).

- Staff Role
  - "Air traffic control" (i.e., information is received, synthesized, and shared with the appropriate contacts)
  - Identify priorities and legislation needing attention
  - Coordinate staff analysis
  - Share information with lobbyist and partners
  - Advise BOC on policy
  - Identify partners
- Lobbyist Role
  - Advocate to legislators and legislative staff on Wake County's behalf
  - Identify legislation needing attention
  - Advise Board on political and legislative matters

Mr. Canada also shared his proposed three-pronged approach to legislative priorities (see below). This was proposed at the BOC's January 2023 retreat and was not yet official. However, it was what the BOC was currently anticipating it would use for the fall. Deputy County Manager Holder cautioned once more that the presentation language and examples being provided were based on the BOC and intended for issues spanning all of the County's services – not just Health and Human Services.

- General Guidance
  - Policy guidance to staff and contracted lobbyists to:
    - Reflect ongoing Board interests, and
    - Allow discretion to react quickly to legislative actions
  - The BOC will pursue legislative advocacy that:
    - Preserves the Board's statutory authorities and discretion to set policy priorities for Wake County government
    - Preserves the County's financial resources and tax base
    - Maintains and enhances State funding for government services
    - Advances the Board's Strategic Plan initiatives
    - Facilities policy improvements that benefit Wake County government and residents
  - County staff have the Board's permission to advocate in support of this general guidance
  - Applies to State and federal advocacy
- Top Three Asks
  - To speak with a single, clear voice, Board needs to set up a short list of top priorities
  - Propose setting a "Top 3" list for State asks and a "Top 3" list for federal asks
  - There is one bucket of political "capital" for Wake County
  - Prioritizing the following:
    - Concentrates the Board's limited "capital" on highest needs
    - Gives lobbyists a clear message to deliver
    - Allows staff and lobbyist to reserve capacity for unforeseen needs
    - Easier for stakeholders and staff to explain
  - Need to specify outcome desired
  - Staff recommend focusing on County government needs
- Opportunity List
  - While the future cannot be predicted, the Board may approve a list of issues that, if an opportunity arises, staff has discretion to pursue
  - This provides some leeway to expand beyond the top three priorities mentioned above
  - Approve a list of policy issues that gives staff and lobbyists discretion to act quickly when opportunity knocks
  - This would be the list for policy items considered but not prioritized on either "Top 3" list (see above)
  - No advocacy is guaranteed – it depends on opportunities
  - Gives Board flexibility and gives staff permission to adjust as needed
    - There is no way to predict what issues will arise during a season
    - An opportunity list allows for nimbleness
  - Board doesn't need to specify the outcome desired

Generally, staff will refrain from advocacy on *political aspects* of political bills. Commissioners may continue to contact lobbyists with legislative or political questions. Staff provide routine updates every two weeks when legislatures are in session. Staff look to the BOC Chair for guidance as needed and the Chair may seek guidance from the full BOC.



Context for 2024 was then provided as it would be a short session. This means that it is anticipated that legislators will only briefly be in session and will not entertain new priorities. However, legislature has recently scrutinized local government roles and responsibilities in counties and municipalities alike and may remain in session longer than they historically have. At least twenty bills were introduced that would have an adverse impact on Wake County operations and policies. This included taking choices away from the BOC as well as bodies such as the Wake County Health and Human Services Board. Prioritizing is always important, but it is especially so in this setting. Staff are evaluating the situation now as the budget has been secured. Deputy County Manager Holder reminded Board members that as a local government in North Carolina, staff can only do what legislature explicitly gives them authority to do. If State law is silent on the ability to do something, it is implied that there is not authority to do it.

Commissioner Vickie Adamson and Commissioner James West confirmed the work that the BOC does with legislatures is complex and oftentimes frustrating. This includes limitations on the BOC to draw maps of the county's districts. Conflict in this area ends up costing taxpayers as both the County and legislators have to then secure costly legal counsel and pursue court proceedings that can span several years. The BOC sometimes has to weigh the cost of addressing community needs against the cost of attempting to ward off policies and procedures that would limit services and cause long-term damage to the health of Wake County.

Mr. Canada asked the Wake County Health and Human Services (HHS) Board to consider the following questions as they delved into advocacy efforts.

- Issues to keep an eye on in 2024?
- Who are the key partners for the Board's advocacy?
- Long-term (multi-year) policy changes desired?

Some potential partners may be State associations, local directors, or groups that the HHS Board works with. Mr. Canada closed with stating that ongoing communication was critical in determining the HHS Board's advocacy moving forward. He was happy to continue to be part of the conversation and could return to a future Board meeting as needed.

Commissioner James West spoke to the multiple stakeholders that the BOC has as well as its focus of systemic racism and how to best address issues with a lens on racism in Wake County. Three main areas for the BOC included criminal justice, education, and workforce development.

Ms. Ann Rollins (Wake County HHS Board Chair) said that the HHS Board would be planning an advocacy event to be held in the coming months with invitees including local delegations and stakeholders. The primary mission of the HHS Board was advocacy. Unfortunately, the HHS Board had not been able to hold its annual advocacy event in recent years due to COVID-19. With the pandemic now settling in to a new reality, the Board would need to restart this annual tradition. Wake County staff were the subject matter experts (SMEs). Board members were needed to truly bring advocacy to life. In response to this charge, Board members would continue to work on advocacy with an update anticipated in the next thirty to sixty days. Priority work would follow. While there were numerous issues severely impacting Wake County residents, a list of issues without prioritization would not be manageable or achievable. The Board would have a chance at a future meeting to discuss further with the goal of selecting one or two items from the State level to bring before the BOC.

Ms. Wanda Hunter (Wake County HHS Board Vice Chair) asked if staff ever coordinated with partners for lobbying efforts. The North Carolina Counts Coalition was currently partnering with all one hundred counties in North Carolina and having meetings about redistricting. Some feedback is coming from citizens directly sharing how redistricting has impacted their lives. Mr. Canada confirmed that the County

partners wherever possible as it helps to emphasize the discussions at hand. The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners has its own lobbying team that is often consulted. Mr. Canada and Deputy County Manager Holder oftentimes met to perform much of the organizing and collaboration that occurs prior to the actual lobbying. Ms. Hunter said that collective impact could be lost and was needed to display that the issues being addressed impacted more than just one concentrated area. Mr. Canada said that he often asks if a small rural county might share interests with Wake County that could be lobbied for together rather than separately.

Because the HHS Board had jurisdiction over Health and Human Services in Wake County, this would be where feedback was requested from rather than for all issues impacting the county. Other Wake County commissions, boards, and committees could be partners in elevating certain aspects of issues, but the issues themselves should be restricted to Health and Human Services. There were two entities that the HHS Board could and should consider as key stakeholders – the North Carolina Public Health Association (NCPHA) and the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS). Nationally, there was the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH) that could be strong partners. Board members would continue to brainstorm and report back at a future meeting with a more comprehensive list of both current and potential partners.

### **Committee Chairs Update**

(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins, Dr. Mary Faye Whisler, and Ms. Wanda Hunter)

Ms. Ann Rollins (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Chair) reminded the Board that there was a Regional Networks report sent out with the minutes for the meeting. The ribbon cutting for the clinic at Departure Drive opening five days a week would be held on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. More information about this event would be forwarded so that members could attend.

Dr. Mary Faye Whisler (Chair of the Public Health Committee) stated that the Committee met on September 15<sup>th</sup> and received the same presentation the Board had just heard from Mr. John Roberson (Solid Waste Management Director). There was another presentation on youth traffic safety initiatives with Safe Routes to School (SRTS). Dr. Whisler commended Mr. Roberson and his staff and how helpful the advance planning is with providing solutions both small and large. Ms. Wanda Hunter (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Vice Chair) brought up the possibility of SRTS being impacted due to the new school assignments moving children to schools nearest to their home address. There were traffic back-ups and difficulty in dropping students off that could prevent students from walking, biking, or using alternative methods of transportation to school.

Ms. Hunter stated that the Social Services Committee met on September 1<sup>st</sup>. The initiative to provide transitional housing to youth aging out of foster care had finally come to fruition with the first client moving in to Falkcrest Building at St. Augustine's University. This project was proposed by the Aged-out Foster Care Workgroup (led by Mr. Derrick Byrd, Executive Director of the Family Resource Center at South Atlantic). The transitional housing was composed of four private rooms connected by one shared space. Because the first client to be eligible for the room was male, the rooms are designated for men only. A celebration of this accomplishment is being planned and details will be forwarded when available. The Committee also heard about the struggles and delays for recertification for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). Staff were finding themselves running into obstacles with residents not only knowing that they needed to recertify but how to complete that process accurately. Ms. Hunter cautioned that some of these barriers could be due to the ongoing housing crisis. A person's contact information may be verified, but if they are facing the stressors of homelessness including their family's safety and/or food security, filling out an application may be far down on the list of priorities.

There was also a discussion on father engagement. Wake County primarily collaborates with three outside partners (Mr. Derrick Byrd's Family Resource Center at South Atlantic; Mr. Glen Warren's Fathers Forever; and Mr. Melvin Williams' Proud Fathers) to help fathers be active and engaged with their child(ren). In other news, Child Welfare was still excitedly anticipating its new case management system. This was currently scheduled to launch late December 2023 to early January 2024. The concept of equipping Wake County employees out on the field with a remote crisis panic button was also brought up. This would allow these staff to notify the County if there was a crisis situation or if they were in danger without notifying a potential assailant.

Finally, the Social Services Committee would be scheduling a meeting to discuss priorities and potential advocacy for the Committee moving forward.

- **Public Comments**

- Ms. Deidre McCullers reiterated the need to have introductions during the meeting so that the public could be aware of the attendees and their roles. She asked if the elections process mentioned was open to all Wake County residents and, if so, how one would apply. She requested the locations of appliance drop-offs (listed below) and asked if pregnant women needed proof of pregnancy to receive the flu vaccine for free. Ms. Tina Payton (Nursing Director) stated that proof of pregnancy was not needed to receive a free flu shot – staff would accept verbal confirmation of pregnancy.
  - Ms. Ann Rollins (Wake County Health and Human Services Board Chair) stated that she would speak to Ms. McCullers directly after the meeting to discuss the first two inquiries.
  - Appliance Drop-off Locations:
    1. North Wake Multi-material Recycling Facility – 9029 Deponie Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614
    2. South Wake Multi-material Recycling Facility – 6130 Old Smithfield Road, Apex, NC 27539
    3. East Wake Multi-material Recycling Facility – 5051 Wendell Boulevard, Wendell, NC 27591
  - North Wake and South Wake facilities are open Monday through Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The East Wake Multi-material Recycling Facility is only open on Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please visit the following webpage for additional information on these drop-off locations:  
<https://www.wake.gov/departments-government/waste-recycling/facilities/multi-material-recycling-facilities>.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 A.M.

**Board Chair's Signature:**



**Date:** 10/26/2023

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Brittany Hunt