

DURHAM RECOVERY AND RENEWAL TASK FORCE

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Friday, September 25, 2020

8:00 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.

MINUTES

Task Force Members

Steve Schewel, Mayor City of Durham
Wendy Jacobs, Chair, Durham County Board of Commissioners
Katie Galbraith, Task Force Co-Chair, President, Duke Regional Hospital
Maticia Sims, Task Force Co-Chair, Vice President and Corporate Controller, Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC
Ibukun Akinboyo, M.D., Assistant Professor, Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Duke Health
Susan Amey, CEO, Discover Durham
Ed Boyd, Chief Strategy Office, iNvictus
Dr. Herbert Reynolds Davis, Senior Pastor, Nehemiah Church
Lois DeLoatch, Executive Vice President, Self-Help
Geoff Durham, Durham Chamber of Commerce
George Habel, Vice President, Capitol Broadcasting Company
Philip Harewood, CEO, Lincoln Community Health Center
Rodney Jenkins, Health Director, Durham County Department of Public Health
Jodi Miller, Deputy County Manager, Durham County Government, representing the Emergency Operations Center
Pilar Rocha-Goldberg, President and CEO, El Centro Hispano
Anthony Nelson, Dean, North Carolina Central University School of Business
Nicole Thompson, CEO, Downtown Durham, Inc.

Call to Order

Co-Chair Maticia Sims called the meeting to order. She encouraged everyone to get their flu vaccine and turned it over to Mayor Steve Schewel and Chair Wendy Jacobs for the priority updates.

Priority Updates

Mayor Schewel announced he had received his flu shot and would publish this on social media.

With respect to the Halloween guidelines, Mayor Schewel shared that the Mayors of the six largest cities in the state were meeting with Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, to hear what statewide guidance she had to offer. In

addition, Mayor Schewel stated he was meeting with neighborhood association presidents from neighborhoods with the highest numbers of trick-or-treaters to discuss options.

Mayor Schewel discussed the issues surrounding water cutoffs and people's inability to pay their water bills. He noted that while the Utilities Commission extended the moratorium on utility cut-offs, people needed assistance to pay their water bills. The City Council was considering allocating more funds from the COVID Relief funds to support people who were not able to pay their water bill. By law the City was unable to build this relief into the water rate base; thus, it had to be provided out of the General Fund.

Mayor Schewel spoke on the recent property damage inflicted on the downtown area and how it was harmful to local businesses and residents. Nicole Thompson noted that the property damage from the night of Wednesday, September 23rd was not a result of protests, but of opportunistic individuals taking advantage of current events to destroy property. She discussed the reasons behind the decision to pause all Downtown Durham Streetery activities.

Chair Jacobs spoke on how property damage was harmful to the Durham community and organizations and how this harm was magnified in some ways due to the pandemic. She discussed the necessity of safe and secure housing as well as how the pandemic was impacting mental health.

Chair Jacobs shared that the State would be issuing Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT)—i.e. additional food resources—for Durham Public School families who received free or reduced lunch and other types of food assistance. She also shared that the Department of Social Services was awarded participation in the HOPE program and would receive \$2.4 million dollars for rental assistance.

Chair Jacobs spoke on the SlowCOVIDNC Exposure Notification App, Durham Public Schools' decision to remain virtual for the remainder of the current semester, low participation in the Durham HOPE Centers, and the DPS and Eat NC partnership reaching an enrollment of 200 families.

Chair Jacobs discussed the Board of Elections and the opportunity for people to “cure their ballot.” Around 50,000 absentee ballots were distributed and roughly 12,000 had been returned, but around 376 of the returned ballots were not filled out properly. She encouraged people to get the word out about this and noted that in-person early-voting was also a great and safe option.

Co-Chair Sims provided the RRTF with an update regarding the budget proposal process. The four (4) proposals previously brought forth were Continued Language Access Services for RRTF, Rental Assistance, Pulse Oximetry, and PPE Warehouse. The subcommittee evaluated the proposals and identified the one they would be pushing forward: Continued Language Access Services for RRTF. This proposal extended an existing contract to allow interpretation and translation services for the RRTF efforts. She stated the other three (3) were determined to require further work before moving forward.

Update from and conversation with Sheriff Birkhead

Sheriff Birkhead announced that today was day 200 of North Carolina's State of Emergency declaration for COVID-19. He shared that the Detention Center had its first positive case of COVID in August; since then there had been 21 inmates and nine (9) staff members who tested positive for COVID. There were currently zero positive cases.

Sheriff Birkhead provided an overview of the mitigation strategies and protocols in place at the Detention Center and courthouse to prevent COVID transmission. The strategies for the Detention Center included temperature checks, screening questions, 14-day quarantine period in a designated area while being monitored before going into general population, social distancing, and single cell housing for detainees. The strategies for the Courthouse included face coverings, hand sanitizer and signage throughout the facility, temperature checks, screening questions, and a deep cleaning in August with chemicals that kept the virus off hard surfaces for up to 90 days.

Sheriff Birkhead spoke on the plan he and his team would be presenting to the Board of County Commissioners regarding the funding of mass testing in the Detention Center.

Member Davis inquired as to the number of total tests administered in the Detention Center. Sheriff Birkhead stated that a total of 294 tests had been conducted in the Detention Center, but the majority of employees were tested through outside entities (e.g. primary care physicians and drive-thru clinics) because the County did not have the means to administer mass testing at the time—he did not have the total number for these instances. Member Jenkins confirmed this number was accurate.

Member Davis asked how much Sheriff Birkhead would be seeking in funds for the mass testing plan. Sheriff Birkhead stated that staff was still working on the plan and calculations, but it would cost between \$30,000 and \$100,000 to mass test detainees and employees. Member Jenkins added that the County was looking into potentially funding beyond 2021 due to the uncertainty of COVID-19.

Co-Chair Sims inquired as to whether there was anything the RRTF could do to help in terms of ensuring the Courthouse and Detention Center had appropriate supplies. Sheriff Birkhead described his staff's efforts to stockpile personal protective equipment (PPE) in anticipation of the increase in activity levels in the Courthouse. He stated that any assistance with obtaining PPE as well as getting the word out would be appreciated.

Member Croxton asked whether there was a mandate for the frequency of testing for employees. Sheriff Birkhead stated that everyone (detainees and employees) would be tested in early October and then a random sample of individuals would be tested every two weeks.

Member Nelson asked Sheriff Birkhead to shed some light on any possible causes to the increasing crime rate. Sheriff Birkhead spoke about the different catalysts that contributed to the uptick. These included civil unrest due to the national climate and pandemic related situations such as domestic violence and economic troubles as a result of the shutdown.

Update on Evictions

Peter Gilbert, Project Director of Durham's Eviction Diversion Program Legal Aid NC, presented an update on evictions. The presentation included information regarding the lack of effective legal protections for tenants facing eviction. He described how the CDC "moratorium" was not effectively stopping the filing or carrying out of evictions; tenants were only able to use this as a defense in court via a signed declaration.

Member Croxton inquired as to whether all the conditions in the declaration had to be true for a tenant to be able to file the declaration. Mr. Gilbert clarified that, for the most part, all the conditions had to be true in order for a tenant to use it in court as a defense.

Ben Rose, Department of Social Services Director, discussed DSS's addition of housing to its spectrum of services. He and Janeen Gordon, DSS Assistant Director Aging & Adult Services, detailed how DSS partnered in the funding to provide assistance in the housing sector. While DSS did not typically focus on housing, safe and secure housing was a social determinant of health. This coupled with the financial difficulties faced by residents due to the pandemic helped cement housing into DSS's range of services.

Mr. Gilbert discussed how the number of evictions his office was seeing in small claims court involved more people than could be safely contained in the smallest courtroom of the courthouse or the hallway leading up to the courtroom—the docket schedule set over 20 cases for one half hour court appearance. This was unnecessary considering that other counties, such as Mecklenburg, were continuing evictions indefinitely and not scheduling large dockets.

In terms of emergency rental assistance, Mr. Gilbert offered the following for a scaled perspective: it was estimated that, nationally, between 10 percent and a third of households were not able to pay their rent due to the pandemic. There were around 60,000 tenant households in Durham County and a majority of them were already cost burdened before the pandemic. Using the national estimate, between 6,000 and 20,000 households in Durham could not pay rent due to the pandemic. The average rent in Durham was \$1,000. This produced between \$6-20 million in unpaid rent each month. The City and County contribution of \$1 million would help around 300-400 households and the additional \$2.4 million (via the HOPE program) would help another 600-800 households. Around 1,200 households would be helped, but a minimum of 6,000 households in Durham could not pay rent due to the pandemic.

Co-Chair Galbraith asked whether rental assistance was available to undocumented individuals. Ms. Gordon stated citizenship status was not verified for those seeking financial rental assistance. Mr. Gilbert stated that Legal Aid of NC was federally prohibited from representing undocumented immigrants, but their partnership with the Duke Civil Justice Clinic—which was able to represent undocumented immigrants—ensured no one was turned away.

Chair Jacobs recognized Mr. Gilbert's and the DSS staff's great commitment and work for the benefit of the community. She requested Mr. Gilbert provide suggestions as to how to address the issues seen in the courthouse for evictions. Mr. Gilbert informed the Task Force that the discretion for the safe operation of the courthouse rested with the local Chief Justice judges. He detailed other

problematic situations such as the lack of court staff ensuring social distancing in certain areas (such as in and outside of the small claims court). Another was the lack of system to notify staff of a person's inability to enter the courthouse—e.g. if a person showed up for their court date, was not allowed entrance due to having a high temperature, and was not in the courtroom they would lose their case because there was not a system in place to address this situation.

Member DeLoatch asked how people were made aware of the resources available to them. Mr. Rose and Ms. Gordon described how clients' eligibility and data were checked against multiple DSS programs as well as staff's practice of sharing other community resources with those who did not qualify for DSS programs.

Sheriff Birkhead responded to Mr. Gilbert's concerns. He confirmed that the docket schedule was administered by the Clerk of Court and stated his intentions on meeting with the Clerk to find solutions to the issues brought forward.

Update from Public Health

Co-Chair Galbraith shared the following updates on hospitalization numbers:

- 30 cases across all three hospitals during the previous week
- 35 cases across Duke Regional Hospital and Duke University Hospital as of today
- Capacity between Duke Regional Hospital and Duke University Hospital continued to be over 90 percent
- Nine COVID-19 patients in the ICU between Duke Regional Hospital and Duke University Hospital

Member Jenkins shared the following County updates:

- 290 active COVID-19 cases
- 7,263 inactive or discharged cases
- 94 deaths (long term care facilities)
- Total cases over time was now 7,651
- 14,320 total contacts were made thru Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC) and the Department of Public Health
- Seven day moving average was 30
- No real changes in race, ethnicity, or work percentages
- Rate for individuals under the age of 18 remains at 15.7 percent (it used to be closer to 20 percent)

Member Jenkins discussed the new SlowCovidNC App and encouraged the use of it as its effectiveness would grow with more participation.

Member Akinboyo shared that there was not a significant jump in the number of COVID-19 cases after the Labor Day holiday. She encouraged everyone to get their flu shot.

Discussion of KPIs for Economic Recovery

Discussion was held regarding the limited time left for the presentation and questions of this item. Co-Chair Galbraith inquired as to whether it was possible to defer this item to October 9th meeting agenda.

Co-Chair Sims suggested scheduling a 45-minute meeting outside of the set schedule to allow for the presentation and discussion of this item. Ryan Smith, Strategic Initiatives Manager, suggested meeting at 9 a.m. on Friday, October 2nd. After some members voiced schedule conflicts, a change to 8-9 a.m. was suggested by Chair Jacobs which was met with agreement.

Member Durham expressed his appreciation for the team's prioritizing of the item and for their flexibility. Member Thompson thanked guest speakers Latasha Best Gaddy and LaShon A. Harley for their flexibility in meeting with the Task Force again on Friday, October 2nd.

Updates from Roundtables

Members Thompson and Amey provided updates on outdoor dining and Durham Delivers.

Member Durham, who was also a member of the Durham Workforce Development Board, shared information on the Virtual Job Fair on October 8th for employers and job seekers. He asked members to share this within their networks to cast as wide a net as possible.

Member Harewood announced there had been more than 3,000 flu shots issued in only two (2) weeks. He shared information from the Vulnerable Populations Roundtable meeting in which Dr. Tiffany Covas, LGBTQ+ Patient-Centered Medical Home, presented. The challenges faced by this population included access to information, transportation, as well as cultural competence.

Drew Cummings, Durham County Chief of Staff, discussed the additional rooms the County was contracting at the Carolina Duke Inn (an increase from 40 to 64) as well as the continued use of four duplex units for COVID-19 positive individuals. Service provision for those individuals was done on an ad hoc basis. He also stated that the RFP for the COVID positive hotel was put on hold.

Member DeLoatch inquired as to the Lincoln Community Health Center's supply of the high-dose flu shot. She recalled conversations between individuals who were unable to receive it due to a shortage. Member Harewood clarified that there was no shortage, they just did not carry them.

Member Amey provided a communications update and shared that they recently entered Phase 2. Businesses were encouraged to complete the checklist and residents were encouraged to get out and do so safely.

Member Rocha-Goldberg announced that Hispanic Heritage Month was from September 15th to October 15th.

Member Amey proposed the RRTF meet in-person following safety protocols. She stated the Convention Center offered to sponsor this and their production company offered to support it. She stated this would be an opportunity for the Task Force to model the behavior they were encouraging. Member Amey agreed to add this to the October 9th meeting agenda to allow for more information and questions.

Adjournment

The next meeting was scheduled for October 9, 2020 at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tania De Los Santos
Durham County Senior Administrative Assistant

DRAFT