



CHEROKEE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
4800 West U.S. Highway 64, Murphy, NC 28906
828-837-7455

Cherokee County N.C. Department of Social Services

Board of Directors Regular Meeting

July 21, 2026

5:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

I. Call to Order

Chair Phillips called the meeting to order at 4:59 P.M.

Members Present:

Bo Phillips – Chair

Dr. Catherine Yost - Member

Jaems Jallah – Member

II. Approval of the Agenda

At the request of the director, the Board amended the agenda to delete Item V-A DSS Strategic Planning to be addressed at a later meeting. Dr. Yost made the motion to amend, seconded by Mr. Jallah and approved unanimously.

III. Adoption of Minutes

Dr. Yost motioned that the minutes be adopted as presented, seconded by Mr. Jallah and approved unanimously.

IV. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

V. Old Business

a. Community Awareness Event

Dr. Yost advised that the planning for the adoption and foster care event scheduled for October 17th at the Hackney Warehouse is going well. She is working with DSS staff members Clesia Wells and Cathrine Thorley. Clesia created a flyer for the event, which was shown by Dr. Yost. The title of the

event is “Be the Village.” Dr. Yost reported that Parkers restaurant is going to cater for the event and that there are approximately 100 invitations going out. Dr. Yost explained that they would utilize adoption funds to sponsor the event which will serve to recognize our long-standing foster care parents as well as promote adoption and recruit foster care homes.

b. Proposed DSS Regular Board Meeting Date Change

Chair Phillips requested this agenda item be revisited following discussion of the new business regarding the County Commission’s request for outcome measures and goals from the department. It was agreed that a trial period could be undertaken to ascertain whether the commissioners attended the meetings and if it was beneficial to the board and the department.

Mr. Jallah moved that the meetings be temporarily changed to the 4th Tuesday of every month through December of 2026 at which time the board could revisit the schedule. Dr. Yost seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Mr. Jallah requested that an email be sent reminding everyone of the new dates, 8/25/26, 9/22/26, 10/27/26, 11/24/26, and 12/22/26.

VI. New Business

a. County Commissioner Request for Outcome Measures and Goals

Director McGee reviewed the email and notes sent by the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners to all county departments requesting they submit KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to the county manager by August 10th for quarterly and annual reporting with quarterly review by the county. Director McGee advised that the agency’s benchmarks are overseen at the state and federal level and shared with the board the website where legislatively required data is available as well as the information (MOU Data and Board Report) that the agency shares with the DSS Board Monthly. The director’s recommendation is to provide this as well to the commissioners as it is more than sufficient to meet their criteria and she will be more than willing to answer any questions the commissioners might have.

Board discussion was extensive culminating in agreement that the agency is under the direct supervision of the DSS Board as well as NC DHHS and the federal government, more than meeting the oversight the commissioners are requesting. Mr. Jallah made a motion in support of Director McGee’s

recommendation, seconded by Dr. Yost and passed unanimously by the Board. Director McGee will provide the information to the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners.

b. Back to School Bash

Director McGee shared the flyer for the upcoming Back to School Bash coordinated by the department in conjunction with Vaya and REACH as well as many other community partners. The event will be held at Konahetta Park on August 15th with school supplies, food, a bounce house, other fun activities and a DJ.

c. Chatuge Dam Exercise

Director McGee shared with the board that she and the agency's Administrator Officer attended a training presented by TVA revolving around a scenario of the Chatuge Dam breaking and flooding Cherokee as well as surrounding counties. Director McGee provided a summary of the training for the board and advised that the agency would be working on the emergency plan in the event of this type of disaster occurring and the agency having to provide shelters, transportation and/or other services during a crisis.

d. CFPT Update and Report

Director McGee shared that this meeting was well attended and thanked Dr. Yost for agreeing to chair the team. Dr. Yost provided a summary of the previous meetings recommendations, discussed the changing format for this group and advised that it was a very good meeting during which four fatalities were reviewed and prevention recommendations developed.

VII. Management Reports

a. Supervisor Reports

Mendy Lance and Michelle Chastain advised that the 10-month Medicaid audit is ongoing and so far there have only been 2 errors with only 1 possibly resulting in a small payback. The IMC Supervisors advised that the audit occurs on a random basis with 200 cases being reviewed. There was discussion that the county will only be losing 2 beneficiaries due to the HR 1 changes effective in September. It is anticipated that the benefit qualifications effective January 2027 will most likely have a relatively small

effect on Cherokee County residents as well as since there are multiple exceptions allowing many recipients to remain eligible.

APS Supervisor, Daunita Maennle advised that Adult Services has been busy and Director McGee confirmed that APS is showing an increase in reports overall, with a marked increase in reports screened in for evaluation, and advising that staffing may have to be looked at as the numbers continue to increase. Mr. Jallah asked why and SWS Maennle discussed the aging population and it was mentioned that older adults retiring to the area as well as substance use and mental health issues leading to an increase in disabled adults in our area with limited resources. SWS Maennle advised the unit would be having its quarterly CQI review from the state on Thursday, July 23rd.

New Adoptions Supervisor, Cathrine Thorley advised that board that due to achieving nine adoptions last year, the agency was awarded \$86,798 in Adoption Promotion funds to be used for adoption efforts, such as the community awareness event Dr. Yost is coordinating for October. SWS Thorley provided the board with adoptions, CFT, and 18-21/Links updates.

CQI team reported their upcoming case plan training and PATH roll out for permanency planning.

b. DHHS MOU Data – April

Board reviewed during new business discussion.

c. DSS Service Report

No report.

d. Staff/Unit Accomplishments

No report.

VIII. Adjourn

Chair Phillips moved the meeting to be adjourned at 6:27 PM. So moved, seconded by Mr. Jallah and passed unanimously.