

The Fayette County Board of Health met on Tuesday, March 11, 2003 in the Public Meeting Room in the Fayette County Administrative Complex, 140 Stonewall Avenue, Fayetteville, Georgia.

**Board of Health Members Present:**

Dr. John DeCotis  
Lynette Peterson  
Lyn Redwood  
Dr. Michael Strain  
A.G. VanLandingham

**Staff Members Present:**

Michael Brackett, MD  
Laurie Cook  
Merle Crowe  
Cynthia Grant  
Jeff Kilgore  
Carl Knapp  
Wanda Scarborough  
Shantay Thomas  
Dennis Davenport, Attorney

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

Dr. Strain called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM January 14, 2003:**

Motion was made by Ms. Peterson to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Redwood. The minutes were approved with Dr. Strain abstaining due to his absence.

**OLD / UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Office Space Recommendation:** Ms. Grant updated the board, reminding them that physical space limitation prohibited the hiring of much-needed new staff. She informed the board that as had been requested, meetings had been held to find recommendations for alleviating this problem. She mentioned that McIntosh Trail Mental Health services representatives had met with Health Department directors regarding their respective space problems, saying that other counties housed the health department and mental health in the same structure. She mentioned that a temporary solution would be to move Environmental Health into the old Library building, thus freeing their space for Physical Health. She said she thought that building was scheduled for destruction, with a berm to be put in its place, but felt that there was ample room for a berm between the building and the fence surrounding the new jail, thus hiding the jail from view. She said there was about 150 or 200 feet between the building and the fence. She said the building would be large enough to house environmental health with a laboratory which would not be a fire hazard, as was its current laboratory.

She said a long-term solution would be a new building, modeled on the one in Henry County. She said Henry County Health Department was housed in the same building with Mental Health, which required a much larger building; but that it would be less expensive to house the Health Department and Mental Health together than in separate structures. She mentioned that Mental Health was in need of more room, and that representatives were present today to speak.

Ms. Grant listed justifications for asking for more space: she said nursing positions had remained at 5.5 since 1996, as compared with Coweta County Health Department which had a clinical staff of 14. She said Coweta County's population was 89,401 vs. Fayette's at 92,542 (per the 2000 Census). She said Fayette County Health Department had a nutritionist who came twice a week and a dietician twice a week, bringing clinical staff up to 6.5. She mentioned that in FY 2002 Coweta County Health Department reported 12,507 initial patient contacts; Henry County Health Department reported 11,798 with a clinical staff of 12; whereas Fayette County Health Department had 12,872 with a nursing staff of 5.5. She said total patient contacts had increased from 10,344 in 1996 to 20,122 in 2002 (from Mitchell & McCormick MHAR Report). She said the WIC caseload had gone from 227 to 768 in the same time period; an increase of 250%. She said Fayette County's total population had increased to an estimated 95,542 in 2001. She reminded the board that space had to be taken from the conference room to house the nutritionist, thus rendering it unusable at least 2 days a week, since there was no more clinic rooms to serve that purpose. She told the board that more patients were now being seen, due partly to increased population numbers, but also that visits were now more complicated and required more clinic time. She said patients were requiring multiple services and had more complicated needs; for example, language barriers and loss of insurance increased demand for services and length of time necessary to communicate. She mentioned that patients would inform clinic staff of family members in need of services, leading to follow up which added to clinic time. She said nursing staff was currently at full capacity, which would lead to an eventual scheduling problem—longer waits for appointments—for example, 2 week waits for family planning appointments might become a month or more.

Jeff Kilgore: Mr. Kilgore informed the board that when the Health Department moved into its current facility Environmental Health actually moved from a larger to a smaller space, since none had been allocated for them in the new facility; they had to occupy space that had been set aside for a conference room. He said that Physical Health gave up a clinic room to be used as a water laboratory. He said that additional space had been requested even before the move into this location. He said over time the growth of staff had led to an even greater need for space. He said the current 6 Environmentalists, along with 1 full time and 1 part time secretary, share office space and that file storage is occupying waiting area and offices. He said when full staff was on board 3 people had to share an office, which makes client privacy difficult if not impossible. He said any assistance from the board would be of great help.

He informed the board that the current budget included a request to fill an open Environmentalist position. He said the position had been budgeted in 1999, and current staff was at 6 staff members. He said 2 new programs had recently been added: the Swimming Pool and the West Nile Virus Programs. He said these had strained an already

stressed staff, particularly during the late spring and summer months. He said processing of individual sewage disposal system permits was currently 3—4 weeks behind. He said priority was given to failing systems, currently numbering an average of 3—4 per day. He said this tied up staff, along with ongoing programs. He offered to answer any questions.

Dr. DeCotis asked about a Vehicle Handout that Mr. Kilgore had provided.

Mr. Kilgore replied that Mr. Fehr had provided those handouts for informational purposes. He stressed that EH was very thankful that the county provided them with vehicles, thus preventing the need for staff to use their personal cars to conduct business. He mentioned that due to the process followed by the county in allocation of the vehicles, and their age when given to EH, breakdowns occur on average of every 2—3 weeks. He said this creates another time consideration for staff.

Dr. DeCotis asked if the proposed budget had vehicle maintenance built in.

Ms. Crowe replied that those expenses were billed through the county budget.

Dr. Strain remarked that the board of health's role was one of support on the office space issue, and that they would be willing to support staff when a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners was made.

Mr. VanLandingham said Mr. Fehr had approached Chris Cofty about space about 2 months ago. He said Mr. Fehr had been instructed to establish the need for space; to justify those needs; then finally to notify the Board of Commissioners (BOC) of what was needed and why. He said that had not yet been done, and that asking for support from the Board of Health (BOH) was a first step. He suggested that this process be followed, and the plan be presented to the Board of Health for its endorsement if it agrees. He said the Library building belonged to the county and the BOH can only convey endorsement to the BOC. He mentioned that if the Library building was left standing, there was a list of departments wishing to utilize it; allocation of that space would be on an as-needed basis. He said until official notification is given to the BOC, no consideration would be given to needs of the HD, because the BOC would not know what was needed, or why. He assured staff that no new positions would be added to county staff this year, due to budget constraints.

Ms. Peterson recommended leaving in the request for an EH position, even if not approved this fiscal year; so doing would make the need known when funding becomes available.

Ms. Grant replied that making needs known was the purpose of the presentation of this information today: to seek the endorsement and suggestions of the BOH prior to any presentation to the BOC.

Dr. Strain commented that the need was definite and needed to be pursued, and that the board would be glad to lend its support in any way it could.

Dr. DeCotis concurred; he felt that it was important to have this information so the board could endorse it to the BOC.

Ms. Grant felt it was important that the BOH be informed prior to any questions the BOC might have. She said that McIntosh Trail staff members were present and would like to add information to the presentation.

Ms. Cathy Johnson: Ms. Cathy Johnson introduced herself to the board as the Executive Director of McIntosh Trail Community Service Board (MT). She informed the board that they were a multi-county public organization headquartered in Griffin. She said they served 7 counties and had done so since the early 1970s. She said she had begun her career in 1980 here in Fayette County. She said she wanted to leave a brochure with the BOH about MT, so they could have a better understanding of what MT did and why they would like to partner with the HD in this initiative.

She said MT was a public organization designated by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to provide services to public consumers. She said the services consisted of mental health services, services for adults with mental retardation or mental disabilities, and substance abuse / addictive disease treatment, for both adults and children. She said current facilities were in 2 locations in Fayetteville. She said all directors of services were present this morning and introduced them. She said Jane Fanslow directed Fayette Counseling Center, located in Braxton Court, which provided Mental Health and Addictive Disease services for adults and children. She said the Developmental Disabilities Service Center was directed by Dean Roach, and was located just off Hwy 85 north across from the Pavilion. She said this facility provided day services and employment support services for adults with mental retardation. She said he also directed the DHR Unified Transportation System, which transports citizens from different organizations—such as Department of Family & Children Services (DFCS)—to where they need to go for services. She said they provided very limited child & adolescent services out of the Fayette Counseling Center, such as patient assessment and counseling services, and some community support for children and families. She said they would like to provide more services, and mentioned that the director for that program was Randy Freeman, whose office was in Griffin.

She said they hoped to accomplish a couple of things in partnering with the HD: to expand Child/Adolescent Services to include a day program, probably to run for about 3 hours a day after school hours, since MT does not provide education. She said that kind of program is currently provided in 3 other counties: Spalding, Henry, and Upson. She said neither resources nor space had been available to expand that service into Fayette County, although there was a need here. She said the Juvenile Court System, as well as DFCS and the school system had made the need known. She said they would like to provide a day program for adults with mental illness as well, but currently there was no space to do that, even though there were adults who had been assessed to be in need of such a service. She said they or their families must transport them to Spalding County, where there is a full range of day services. She felt that this could be accomplished in a cost-effective manner by running concurrent programs for children and adults in the same space, since these programs ran at different times of the day. She said a more serious issue was the inability of MT to meet the special needs of children currently in the school system; that there were about 400 children currently enrolled with some kind of mental retardation or other developmental disability—autism, for example. She stressed that there was no way that the current facility will be able to meet the needs of these children as they transition out of high

school and into adulthood. She the MT board did a Needs Assessment last year in Fayette County. She said they held the Board Meeting there, and that more than 50 people attended. She said many were from an advocacy group in Fayette County called Special People of Fayette County, and that they gave input to their perceived needs. She said these people were very critical of current facilities here in Fayette: to location, age, layout and size of the building. She said it was clear that lack of a better location would result in families with needs not having those needs met or them going elsewhere. She felt that the main focus of special needs families was that their child have the opportunity to be in a work program, which was not available now and would not be there to meet the needs of those children soon to come out of high school. She said such a work program would give special people the skills to move toward independence in their adult lives, which was the mission of MT. She concluded that MT was in need of a larger space, and was willing and anxious to work with the HD in seeking a way to do that; she asked for the BOH's support in this effort. She offered to answer any questions.

Ms. Redwood commented on a letter that appeared in the local paper a couple of years ago, which was very critical of Fayette County's mental health services. She said she had compiled the numbers for autistic children of school age, and that there was an epidemic of these children in school—current estimates are 1 in every 132 children under the age of 10. She said that soon these children would be out of school and in the community; she thought this was a crucial need. She asked if the board would be willing to forward a letter to the BOC, letting them know that mental health issues had been brought before the BOH.

The board was in agreement with Ms. Redwood, and Ms. Peterson asked if Ms. Redwood would write such a letter.

Ms. Redwood commented that she was hearing that Fayette County was growing, and that there were needs, but no money to address those needs. She felt that this was an issue that needed to be looked at more closely.

Motion was made by Ms. Redwood to draft and send a letter to the BOC to share some of the concerns discussed regarding mental health services in Fayette County, and that she would write such a letter.

Ms. Peterson seconded the motion. Dr. Strain called for further discussion, there was none. The motion passed unanimously.

There was no other old business.

**NEW BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**National Pharmaceutical Stockpile:** Ms. Grant commended the Fayette Fire Department on their support of the Health Department. She said Allan McCullough and Pete Nelms had both been wonderful in helping with her efforts in dealing with the Bioterrorism Planning, due to their knowledge of the county and willingness to help. She said the board had before them the county's *Bioterrorism Response Plan*, put together by Mr. McCullough and Mr. Nelms. She said it was the general plan for the county. She said the other thing the board had was a *National Pharmaceutical Stockpile Disaster Response Plan* (NPS). She said she

wanted the board to have these documents and to know that the NPS Plan was a document in the works. She said it was basically how the county would respond if there were a need to call down the pharmaceutical stockpile. She said one of the things done to elicit staff volunteers was to send out a blast fax to local physicians' offices about a week ago, asking if staff members would be willing to be on a call list in the event of need. She mentioned that there were 200 offices on the list, and she felt that at least 175 offices received clear faxes. She said to date, other than requests to re-fax the information from a few offices, no response had been received. She asked if the BOH had any ideas to get a better response to this request. She said staffing needs to man a mass clinic would be great.

Ms. Redwood suggested an ad in the paper, asking for volunteers; she said there might be medical people living in the county but working outside it that might be willing to volunteer.

Dr. Strain mentioned a meeting scheduled at Fayette Community Hospital for medical staff, suggesting that Ms. Grant might be able to make a brief announcement there. He said there would be approximately 70—100 physicians in attendance.

Ms. Grant thanked the board for suggestions given. She said there was a task force that was meeting on this issue, and that the hospital was on that task force, as well as the school system. She said Dr. DeCotis had been wonderful in allowing the task force to utilize three buildings for mass clinics at need. She said the nursing coordinator was checking to see if school nurses would be willing to volunteer as well. She said there had been a lot of support from a lot of areas.

Dr. Strain thanked Ms. Grant for her efforts on behalf of the board.

Allen McCullough: Mr. McCullough informed the board that the smallpox initiative was 1 of 15 that Emergency Services had undertaken with the homeland security function. He said they had begun addressing Homeland Security issues about a year ago, and that a document was in preparation and would be presented to the board within the next 30 days. He said pre-and post-exposure plans for small pox was a big part of it. He commended Ms. Grant on her job coordinating the plan. He mentioned a couple of other components of the plan: protection of first responders with Mark I kits in a chemical situation, and how to do risk reduction in a biological event. He said 4—5 of the 15 initiatives had health care/medical related implications. He said when the document was complete he would like to present it to the board for review. He said assessment of Fayette County critical infrastructure, intelligence, information sharing, how to better secure and protect critical infrastructure were all part of the comprehensive plan. He said the Smallpox Component was probably most far along, thanks to Ms. Grant's department and its efforts.

**BUDGET PRESENTATION:**

Wanda Scarborough: Ms. Scarborough said the board had before them the proposed Fiscal Year 2004 Budget. She reviewed the budget with the board, mentioning that the right side of the summary sheet covered expenses that were expected, and the left side covered the revenue sources to cover them. She said the total budget amount was \$1,316,701. She said the second page covered personnel expenses, with no planned merit increases for the upcoming year. She said 7 public health nurses, 6 environmental health specialists, and 9 ½

administrative staff was funded. She said also included was a request for a part-time public health nurse and a full time environmentalist. She mentioned that staff costs included the largest increase for the year. She said the next page included requests for 2 copiers for Physical Health, which was a dire need. She said the next page was titled Repairs & Maintenance, which covered Biomedical Waste Removal cost and a maintenance agreement for IKON business machines and Pitney Bowes postage machine. She said the next page was Per Diem, which paid for BOH meetings. She said the next page was Contracts, which consisted of only one to cover Mitchell & McCormick for computer hardware and software maintenance. She said this covered the patient information system as well as the accounting system. She said the next page covered services provided by the district office, of which all counties share in the cost by agreement: centralized Personnel and Pharmacy services. She said pharmacy services costs pay for a Pharmacy and pharmacist at the district office. She said the last sheet gives the Other Operating Expenses, which covered supplies, pharmaceuticals, printing, other operating, travel, telecommunications, and postage. She said the last sheets show a comparison of FY 2004 and 2003, and they reflected the increase in Personnel and Equipment. She said the bottom of the sheet showed Revenue Sources, and that Grant-In-Aid (GIA) showed a decrease. She said the decrease was expected to be 2% FY 2003, and another 3% FY 2004. She mentioned an increase was expected in WIC funds, and that Prior Year Income Fees was less than the year before, because of a required software upgrade cost to become Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant. She said some current year fees from Environmental Health would be placed in the budget to help offset expenses. She said requested County Participating Funds were increased by 8% over the prior year. She offered to answer questions on the proposed budget.

Ms. Peterson questioned the Environmental Health Current Year Fees item.

Ms. Scarborough explained that use of Current Year Fees had been placed in the budget before but had not been needed, as was hoped would be the case this year.

Dr. DeCotis asked if the copy machines would be leased or purchased.

Ms. Scarborough said the machines would be purchased as it had been found that purchasing was more cost effective in the long run.

Dr. DeCotis asked if there was a Cost of Living Increase for staff in the budget.

Ms. Scarborough replied that there was not.

Ms. Redwood asked how much the county population had grown in the last year.

Mr. VanLandingham replied about 3000-4000, at a guess.

Ms. Redwood wondered if population increases affected services offered and that she understood that required services had become more complicated.

Ms. Grant replied that more people were moving into the county; that the Hispanic population had grown tremendously. She also mentioned that people who had not needed health department services before were now coming in, due to job layoffs and loss of insurance.

Mr. VanLandingham said he knew that financial crunches were not limited to Fayette County; such limitations existed in many other places. He felt that mental health issues were important and should be addressed. He said that he did not doubt that the state had a shortfall but that money could be found for those things that were really desired. He said there was always a senator or representative that would like to have their name associated with a grant. He said Fayette County had a hard time getting grants, because it was well known that it had the highest per-capita income in the state; as a consequence it did not get the attention that other counties get. He said that there was money out there, and if a package was put together and presented that money could probably be found to fund mental health services. He felt that the letter from the BOH would be the first step. He said Fayette County's resources were limited; that the higher you go in government the more resources expand, and a way needed to be found to tap into those resources. He volunteered to approach ACCG to introduce this issue to create a bill for grants for this issue. He said they were the people to talk to in Community Affairs and Community Development. He said this would be a better way to find funding, instead of looking to the county, which had limited resources.

Ms. Redwood mentioned funding from United Way; that much of monies collected in Fayette County there does not return to Fayette County. She wondered if they could be approached for funding.

Dr. DeCotis mentioned that traditional funding for the school system was 60%-40% State and local, which was heading toward 50%-50% and he felt that was a scary trend. He thought this was across-the-board effort by the state to cut their expenses.

Dr. DeCotis asked if insurance costs would go up during the year.

Ms. Scarborough said she had not heard.

Dr. DeCotis asked to be kept informed on that issue. He said if that were the case, employees would actually get a pay cut.

Ms. Scarborough said health insurance costs would be known by May, when early enrollment starts.

Motion was made to approve the budget as written by Ms. Redwood, seconded by Dr. DeCotis.

Dr. Strain asked for discussion.

Mr. VanLandingham remarked that he felt that Dr. DeCotis' concern was valid, but that the insurance increase would be factored into the budget review. There was no further discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

**STAFF REPORTS:**

**MS.GRANT:** Ms. Grant gave the board a handout on HIPPA. She said compliance was due by April 15, and that intake processes had been put in place to get in compliance. She said the district office was compiling necessary documentation to be printed and used for compliance.

**Dr. Michael Brackett:** Dr. Brackett introduced Carl Knapp as the new Program Director, who took Gus Morgan's place when he retired; he also introduced Shantay Thomas as the new Epidemiologist, replacing Larissia Dawkins. He said District IV was lucky to have them both.

**Carl Knapp:** Mr. Knapp said he had 25 years health care experience: 5 years as a Paramedic and 20 years in health care administration. He said he had experience in direct patient care, with facilities, outpatient clinics, as a director or CEO. He mentioned that his last job was at a health care support office for a regional command, which provided consultative assistance for 12 hospitals, numerous outpatient clinics and dental centers. He said his career had been military, in the Navy, and he had also been trained in Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations to do mock surveys in preparation for Joint Commission surveys. He said he hoped that his experience would be of help to the district and BOH.

Dr. Strain thanked Mr. Knapp and welcomed him aboard.

Mr. VanLandingham took that opportunity to thank Chris Venice and Rick Fehr, as well as any others who worked on the Septic System brochure. He said it would go out with the water bills, and new construction owners would be given a copy at final inspection. He said the old brochure would be added in as well. He said a lot of work went into the packet and it was very needed.

**SMOKING RESOLUTION:** Ms. Redwood mentioned an article she had run across on the Internet regarding smoking. She said she knew that a few years ago this had been an issue with the BOH and that every day news of new ordinances being passed were in the newspaper. She felt that these ordinances appear to be very well received: for example, about 71% of the population in Florida voted in favor of such an ordinance. She wanted to know if anyone had read the article and if the BOH would like to re-address this issue in the future.

Ms. Peterson said she read the article and thought it was a good one, with new information.

Ms. Redwood said the research was becoming more and more clear that this was a public health issue.

Dr. Strain felt that the board should support this issue, but that it fell to government to enforce such regulations. He said the board's role was to be an advocate for health and pass its support along to entities that have enforcement power. He said he felt that the BOC would probably need to look at and address this issue.

Mr. VanLandingham felt that it would be beneficial for the BOH to endorse this action, that it had become more evident that smoking was damaging to the public's health. He said the county attorney could assist in the effort.

Ms. Redwood suggested information be put together and forwarded on to the BOC.

Mr. Davenport said he had an extensive file on smoking ordinances and he would review his existing file, which had been put together about 5 years ago when this issue was first raised. He said he would review that file so the BOH could decide which action to take. He said he would send it out within the next 30 days for the board's review.

Mr. VanLandingham said he had a resolution already prepared, and that he would send it to Mr. Davenport to include in his review.

The board felt that drafting a resolution would be a step in the right direction, and that enforcement would fall to the county's jurisdictions.

Attorney Davenport requested a short Executive Session to deal with a legal matter.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Motion was made to adjourn to Executive Session by Ms. Peterson, seconded by Dr. DeCotis. The motion passed unanimously.

**RECONVENE:** The board reconvened after Executive Session.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 am.