October 7, 2026

BURKE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

The Burke County Public Health Advisory Committee met in its regular session on Wednesday, October 6, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was held in the Board Room located at 700 East Parker Road, Morganton, North Carolina. The Members present were:

PRESENT:	Commissioner Phil Smith Dr. Nicholas Thomas Dr. Kenneth Bonfield Dr. Laura Gratton Dr. Joel Welch Jessi Stout Joset Taylor Gwen Stephens Cristy Gupton
ABSENT:	Dr. Anthony Frank
ALSO PRESENT:	Ashley Jarrett, Interim Health Director Bobby Smith, Director of Nursing Miranda Smith, Health Educator/PIO Amy Burnette, Senior Administrative Support
CALL TO ORDER:	Dr. Welch called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

MISSION, VISION, VALUES:

Burke County Public Health's Mission, Vision, and Values declaration was read aloud by Dr. Welch.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

Dr. Welch called for a motion to approve the Minutes from the June 3, 2026 Advisory Committee meeting. Gwen Stephens made the motion, and it stands approved.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

Dr. Welch called for a motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting. Joset Taylor made the motion, and it stands approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Jarrett announced that the Health Director's job posting has closed. Human Resources and County Administration are currently combing through the applications/resumes and will begin contacting the qualified applicants soon. Ms. Taylor asked who would be conducting the interviews. Dr. Jarrett responded that as far as she knew, they would have a short introductory interview via Teams/Zoom. From there, HR will contact candidates to complete the interview process that will include assessments, "homework", etc. Dr. Jarrett will notify the Advisory Committee once a decision has been made.

DEPARTMENT UPDATE:

- Our WIC Department received the WIC Breastfeeding Award of Excellence Premiere Level by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Administration. This award recognizes local WIC agencies that have provided exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities.
- Preparedness Coordinator, Todd Staton, Health Educator, Samantha Simmons, and Interim Health Direct, Ashley Jarrett attended this year's NC Public Health Association's annual conference in Concord last month. While there, they networked and presented to public health professionals across disciplines including epidemiology, environmental health, maternal & child health, nursing, and social work.
- Accreditation: We are currently working on gathering the required documentation for NC Accreditation and entering it into the dashboard. We started with 147 measures and are now down to 47 measures.
- Building Update: Currently, we have a tentative start date of somewhere around April/May to begin moving the clinic to the "Board of Education" central office.
- HMA/HMA SWOT: Health Management Associates has contracted with the county and is looking into our practices, billing, etc. They are doing a thorough analysis about the wellness of our department-especially since we do not have a billing/coding person in-house. We should have results in approximately two months.
- Rabies Investigation: The rabies investigation went really well from the petting zoo outbreak. All attendees were evaluated/vaccinated. Boddy Smith commented on how proud he was of how smooth that investigation went.
- Grants: We have a couple of grant opportunities in the works. These include a Family Planning Support Grant, Maternal Health Expansion Grant, and a Maternal Health Infant Mortality Grant.
- CMARC/CMHRP: This program will close on December 31, 2026.
- Child Health: Child Health is being assured. We do not have a provider that is comfortable/qualified to do child health exams anymore. They are being assured with an FQHC at High Country Community Health.
- Collabs: Students from the North Carolina School of Science and Math are here working on a dental hygiene needs project. Dr. Jarrett will share those results with the committee once completed. The Mental Health project with UNC Gillings is complete. Once those results are finalized, we will share them as well.
- Clinic: We are having a huge health/career fair on Saturday, October 24th at the old courthouse square. We have approximately 24 vendors participating. We held a Back-to-School Immunization Clinic last month. We were able to vaccinate 130 seventh and twelfth grade students. Our Communicable Disease Nurse, Bevely Ward took and passed the test to become a Certified Disease Interventionalist. In July we saw 348 patients, 359 in August, and 425 in September.

- Vacancies: We have filled the part-time interpreter position and also the Environmental Health Specialist position that was opened. Both candidates are set to start next month.
- Environmental Health: Food and Lodging programs are currently at 100% completion on all required inspections. OSWW are currently 4-6 weeks out from application to permit.
- Finances: Currently, Maternal Health funds have been depleted partly due to lab demands. Dr. Jarrett commented that we will have to budget differently next FY.
- Our Director of Nursing, Bobby Smith, announced his retirement. His last day will be December 31, 2026.

ADVISORY COMMITTTE:

Dr. Jarrett explained that we can change our meeting cadence according to the general statute. The Advisory Committee meets 6 times a year and we meet with the Board of Health twice a year. She proposed that the Advisory Committee meet every four months. Dr. Bonfield made the motion and Dr. Thomas seconded the motion. It stands approved. Also, Amy will send monthly operational updates to the committee.

ADJOURMENT:

With no further business to discuss, Dr. Welch made the motion to adjourn the Burke County Public Health Advisory Committee Meeting at 6:07 p.m.

Next meeting will be held February 3, 2026 at 5:00p