

Harnett County Board of Health  
Minutes of Regular Meeting  
January 15, 2026

The Harnett County Board of Health met in regular session on Thursday, January 15, 2026 in the Health Department Board Room, Harnett County Governmental Complex, 307 W. Cornelius Harnett Blvd., Lillington, North Carolina.

**Members present:** Dr. Laura Smith, OD, Chairwoman, Dr. Lori Langdon, M.D., Vice Chairwoman, Dr. Brandon Washington, DDS, Dr. Catherine Evans, DDS, Ms. Stacie Hogan, RPH, Dr. Kim Fowler, PhD, Dr. Amanda Langdon, DVM, Commissioner Barbara McKoy Ms. Amy Brown, Ms. Betty Goodwin, Ms. Michelle Pleasant and Ainsley Johnson, Health Director.

**Others present:** Oliver Tolksdorf, Natasha Johnson, Gail Hobbs, Melissa McLamb, Belinda Rayner and guest David Tillman, PhD.

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**Chairwoman Smith** called meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Announcements** – Ms. Johnson introduced David Tillman, PhD, who is attending tonight’s meeting. Dr. Tillman is the Chair of the Department of Public Health at Campbell’s College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Dr. Tillman and his Public Health graduate students have been working with our Community Health Assessment Advisory Committee to complete our 2025 Community Health Assessment. Dr. Tillman has been a committed and valued partner of the Health Department for over 10 years and has completed our Community Health Assessments since 2013.

Ms. Johnson announced Ms. Betty Goodwin and Ms. Michelle Pleasant have been appointed by the Board of Commissioners to serve on the Board of Health. Ms. Goodwin was appointed on December 1, 2025 and serves as the public member position, she completed her Board of Health Orientation on December 9, 2025. Ms. Pleasant was appointed on December 9, 2025 and serves as the registered nurse position, she completed her Board of Health Orientation on January 13, 2026.

Ms. Johnson announced tonight is Dr. Laura Smith’s last meeting and she would like to take a moment to recognize her dedication and service to Harnett County. Dr. Smith has served three 3- year consecutive terms. This is the second time Dr. Smith has served nine consecutive years. She has served our board, employees, and residents in total of 18 years. Words cannot express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Dr. Smith for your commitment and contributions to our county. Dr. Smith was presented with a plaque of recognition and gavel for her time served as Chair.

**Consent Agenda – Minutes - Motion made by Dr. Brandon Washington, DDS., for the November 20, 2025 agenda and minutes to be approved and seconded by Commissioner Barbara McKoy, Motion Carried.**

**Consider additions and deletions to the published agenda – None made.**

**Public Comment – Period of up to 30 minutes for informal comments allowing 3 minutes for each presentation – Chairwoman Smith** opened the floor for informal comments by the public, allowing 3 minutes for each presentation up to 30 minutes. Seeing no one, Chairwoman Smith closed the informal comments.

**Community Health Assessment** – David Tillman, PhD presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Harnett County Community Health Assessment (CHA). The CHA is conducted every 3 to 4 years to collect information to identify the strengths, resources and needs of Harnett County residents. The Harnett County Health Department, in collaboration with Campbell University, is currently completing the 2025 Harnett County CHA. Based on survey responses from 407 Harnett County residents, the emerging priority areas identified were Access to Food & Nutrition, Access to Care, Behavioral Health, Economic Challenges, Growth Management, Recreation & Community Connection and Transportation. The Community Health Assessment Advisory Committee selected the top three priority areas based on community impact, achievability, and positioning. The three priority areas the committee will focus on over the next three years are Access to Food and Nutrition, Access to Care, and Behavioral Health. All Board of Health members supported the three priority areas.

**Consumer/Patient Satisfaction & Community Survey Report** – Belinda Rayner presented the 2025 Consumer/Patient Satisfaction & Community Survey Results. Harnett County Health Department administered the Patient Satisfaction and Community Survey from December 1, 2025 through January 2, 2026. A total of 398 Patient Satisfaction Surveys, and 74 Community surveys were completed. Overall, patient satisfaction remains very high across all service areas. Most patients (95.6%) reported clinic hours meet their needs, with limited demand for evening, early morning, or weekend hours. Patients reported high satisfaction with quality of care, cleanliness, privacy, and staff professionalism. Convenience and quality of care were the top reasons patients chose the Health Department, followed by cost, referrals from friends, convenient hours, and confidentiality. Nearly all respondents (373 of 380) stated they would recommend the Health Department to family and friends. A key opportunity for improvement identified was low patient portal usage, with approximately 71% of respondents reporting they have not accessed the portal. Community survey results indicated general awareness of Health Department services and satisfaction with current hours of operation. These surveys are used to gather feedback on patient experiences in order to evaluate services, identify areas for improvement and enhance the quality of care provided.

**Child Fatality Prevention/Infant Mortality Report** – Belinda Rayner presented the 2025 Child Fatality Prevention Report. The Child Fatality Prevention (CFPT) is a multidisciplinary group that reviews child fatalities in Harnett County occurring in children ages of birth through seventeen. The purpose of the CFPT is to review causes of child deaths and to make recommendations based on the team's findings to reduce future child fatalities. Approximately twenty child death reports were received for

review in 2025. Males contributed to the majority of the fatalities at 60%. Cases reviewed by ethnicity: 35% were identified as White, 40% were identified as Black, and 25% were identified as Hispanic. Approximately 11 of the 20 deaths (55%) were Infants, two deaths (10%) were ages 1-4 years, two deaths (10%) were ages 5-9 years, two deaths (10%) were and three deaths (15%) were ages 15-17 years. The following system-level issues were identified through the 2025 child fatality review: delayed or inadequate access to prenatal care, unsafe firearm access in the home, unsafe sleep practices for infants, inadequate supervision practices around water, and improved access to youth mental health services. The Child Fatality Prevention Report also included the latest Infant Mortality Data. Infant mortality is the death of an infant before his or her first birthday. Infant mortality rates are the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births within a given time frame, usually a year. In 2023, the infant mortality rate in NC was 6.9 per 1,000 live births. Harnett County's Infant mortality rate was 6.3 per 1,000 live births. The number of infant deaths reported was twelve. The total live births reported was 1,913.

#### **Health Director's Report and Program Reports – Ainsley Johnson**

- **Accreditation** – Ms. Johnson announced Dr. Laura Smith, OD, Chairwoman signed a letter regarding Adjudication as part of the Health Department's Accreditation process. The Board has not had any Adjudications for 2024-2025, no new or amended rules or ordinances were needed. The Board will continue to monitor.
- **Legal Counsel** – Ms. Johnson informed the Board that the county has attorneys, and the Board of Health has access to legal counsel. Harnett County Staff Attorneys, Christopher Appel and Thomas Royer are accessible to the Board and Health Department for any legal issues and are readily available to our department on an as needed basis.
- **Medicaid Rate Reversal** – Ms. Johnson reported effective December 10, 2025, the state announced the reversal of Medicaid reimbursement rate reductions that took effect on October 1, 2025. The reductions discussed at our last meeting were from 3-10%. The state is now taking immediate action to update fee schedules to align with rates prior to this date. All claims impacted will be reprocessed and we should start to see those changes this month.
- **Rural Health Transformation Program** - Ms. Johnson reported on the Rural Health Transformation Program to the board. On December 29, 2025, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved North Carolina's application for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP). Through this

approval, NC will receive over 213 million for the first year of the program to improve health and care delivery across 85 rural counties. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) is hosting a virtual town hall on Friday, January 16, 2026 to highlight program goals, next steps, and statewide impact. The plan for NC will focus on six interconnected strategies:

- Community Rooted Care networks
- Prevention and Chronic Disease Management
- Behavioral Health expansion
- Workforce Development
- Financial sustainability
- Technology and Innovation

Funds will be allocated by NCDHHS, and they will be working to submit a budget by the end of the month. I will keep the board updated on how this program will impact Harnett County.

**Opioid Task Force** – Ms. Johnson provided an update on the Harnett County Opioid Task Force to the board. The Harnett County Opioid Task Force is a collaborative team that works together to reduce opioid use disorder and provide help and hope for individuals impacted from it. Over the last several months, Ms. Johnson has been working very closely with Coley Price and Christopher Appel, Co-Chairs of the task force. With the board's support, Ms. Johnson has been asked to serve as a third Co-Chair of the task force to assist in leading efforts of the task force. Board Members voiced support. Currently we have Health Department team members on each of the subcommittees to ensure that the Health Department supports all efforts of the group. The subcommittees of the task force include Education and Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, and Harm Reduction. The executive team of the task force is currently reassessing and updating the strategic plan for the team. The Health Department is responsible for all county Naloxone distribution and allocated funds to purchase Naloxone as needed. At this time, we have not purchased because we are utilizing state allocated doses. We began distribution in September 2023, and since initiation, we have distributed 2,281 kits. That equals 4,562 doses given to community organizations, businesses, schools and individuals. We receive state provided doses and opioid settlement funds to continue this important work at the Health Department. The task force's executive committee requested information on the board's views regarding a syringe exchange program and how such a program might be implemented in Harnett County. NC Harm Reduction is conducting harm reduction work in our county and that is a service that could be offered in the future

if approved through the task force and Board of Commissioners. No official recommendation is needed at this time. Board members stated they would like to learn information regarding the syringe exchange services and how this will affect the county.

- **Financial Report** – Ms. Johnson provided a handout of the second quarter's finance report for July 2025 through December 2025. Federal revenues for Health are as expected for the past six months at 54% and Aging is at 35%, which Aging federal funding typically runs two months behind. The overall summary for the year-to-date revenues received for Health is 56% and we have only used 30% of county funds. Our expenditures are on track with 41% spent for Health and Aging. Ms. Johnson reported the Employee Clinic saved the county \$58,703 in the second quarter, with a total of \$115,314 for this FY 25-26.

#### **Clinical Report- Melissa McLamb**

- Melissa McLamb reviewed the clinical activities summary with clinical numbers remaining steady. The Health Department's primary care clinic continues to see an increased number of viral illnesses. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) updated the vaccine schedule. No vaccines were removed but several vaccines are available through "shared clinical decision-making" between parents and clinicians or routinely recommended only for high-risk groups. NCDHHS presented a response to media outlets, which stated that they "reaffirm that vaccinations play a vital role in protecting children, their families and entire communities from the spread of infectious diseases. At this time, NC does not anticipate changes to our clinical guidance regarding childhood immunizations and the US DHHS has stated that previously recommended vaccines will continue to be covered by insurance and through the Vaccines for Children Program." In following our Immunization Agreement Addendum, the Harnett County Health Department follows Advisory Committee of Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations, and they have made no changes at this time. Melissa reviewed the NCDHHS Measles Metrics website, the NC Measles Vaccination Data Dashboard, the CDC Measles Cases and Outbreaks website and the NCDHHS website that allows you to check your immunity to

measles and is updated regularly. The Health Department is prepared with testing kits, and we have communicated with the local hospital system to ensure availability of treatment if needed. The NC Respiratory Virus Summary Dashboard was also reviewed. This site shows information on wastewater monitoring, virus surveillance and vaccination rates for these viruses. The health department continues to offer COVID, flu, RSV vaccine daily by appointment or on a walk-in basis. The Health Department post information on our social media feeds and website. We also provide education on measles and respiratory viruses as well as information on the importance of vaccination and how to get them.

- **Environmental Health** – Oliver Tolksdorf presented a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the different Environmental Health authorizations performed by Environmental Health Specialists. Oliver reviewed each section of Child Care/School Sanitation, Childhood Lead Prevention, Food Lodging & Institutions, Public Swimming Pools, Tattoos, Private Wells and Onsite Wastewater.
- **Aging & Case Management** – Belinda Rayner reviewed Medicare Open Enrollment ended December 7, 2025. The Harnett County Division on Aging/Medicare Program provided counseling and plan comparisons to assist beneficiaries and families with reducing prescription drug costs. Significant Medicare changes in 2026 include higher deductibles, increased co-pays and medication tier changes. Additionally, individuals losing Medicaid Expansion coverage are increasingly seeking assistance after learning they no longer qualify through Department of Social Services; we anticipate continued growth in demand for Medicare counseling services. The Division on Aging will be applying for Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) funding for \$5,600. This funding will support additional contract personnel during open enrollment and assist with sponsoring a Med-Assist event in the spring. The board supported and raised no objections regarding the grant funding. Volunteers from the Harnett County Senior Volunteer Program serving with the Central NC Tax Assistance Program (VITA) are IRS-certified and trained to prepare simple tax returns. The Division on Aging is currently scheduling appointments for tax assistance at the Erwin Public Library on Wednesdays and Thursdays beginning February 4, 2026.

The Family Caregiver Support Program continues to host monthly Family Caregiver and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren support groups at the Resource Center and Library (RCL). This month's topic is winter health, presented by the Harnett County Public Health Education Program. Holiday activities included sponsorships from Boon Edam and Liberty Baptist Church, providing gifts and celebrations for caregivers, grandparents, and grandchildren. The annual Holiday Craft Fair hosted 30 vendors, with proceeds supporting caregiver needs such as adult incontinence supplies, and nutritional supplements.

- **Health Education/WIC/Community Events** – Belinda Rayner reported the Health Education Division is preparing for American Heart Month initiatives in February.
  - Go Red Lunch and Learn on Tuesday, February 10, 2026 from 11:30am-1:00pm will be held in the Commons Area. This program is conducted in partnership with Cape Fear Valley Healthcare
  - Go Red Sunday- Go Red Sunday raises awareness that heart disease is the #1 health threat of women. One Sunday in February churches are invited to participate in Go Red Sunday by encouraging members to wear red to increase awareness of heart disease in women. The participating churches are provided with heart health information packets to distribute to members of their congregation.

The next PreventT2 (Diabetes Prevention Program) cohort will begin on Monday, March 2, 2026 from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Health Department.

Health Education Division has started planning for the 35th Annual Girls Are Great & Teen Girls Conference, scheduled to take place in April 2026. Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program DUMA satellite clinic is going well. The satellite site opened on September 12, 2025. From opening until December 31, 2025 there have been approximately 225 WIC appointments at this site. The satellite clinic is open every Friday from 8am-4pm.

**Closed Session** – There was no need for closed session.

**New Business** –**Chairwoman Smith** opened the floor for New Business. Being none, Chairwoman Smith closed New Business.

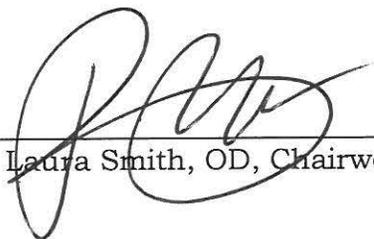
Page 8  
Board of Health  
January 15, 2026  
Harnett County Health Department Board Room

**Vice Chairwoman Smith adjourned the meeting.**

Respectfully submitted,



Ainsley Johnson  
Health Director



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Dr. Laura Smith, OD, Chairwoman