



## **CUMBERLAND COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FORT BRAGG & CUMBERLAND COUNTY FOOD POLICY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

April 7th, 2025, 6:00-7:30 pm

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

*Dr. Clifton Johnson, Cumberland County Co-Chair  
Shannon Gettings, Healthcare Representative  
Beth Maynard, Cumberland County Schools  
Melissa Pennington, Food Insecurity Representative  
Robert Elliott, Farming/Agriculture Representative  
Roni Winston, Food Insecurity Representative  
Joyce Adams, Higher Education  
Shella Korch, Public Health Representative*

### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

*Alexis McClain, Farming/Agriculture Representative  
Kenny Bailey, Local Government Representative*

### **STAFF PRESENT:**

*Dr. Jennifer Green, Public Health Director  
Tamra Morris, Deputy Health Director  
Martina Sconiers-Talbert, AO III  
LaToya Bell, WIC Outreach Coordinator  
Meredith Thompson, FPC/UNC Intern*

### **VISITORS:**

*Kyara Crocker*

### **Item 1. Call to Order:**

*Dr. Clifton Johnson* welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

### **Action Items:**

Approval of April Agenda.

MOTION: *Joyce Adams* motioned to approve the March Agenda.

SECOND: *Melissa Pennington* seconded the motion.

VOTE: Unanimous Approval

Approval of March Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: *Melissa Pennington* motioned to approve the February Regular Meeting Minutes.

SECOND: *Joyce Adams* seconded the motion.

VOTE: Unanimous Approval



### **Action Item 2c. Vote to Approve Bylaws**

VOTE: Unanimous Approval

***Dr. Clifton Johnson, Cumberland County  
Co-Chair***

### **Discussion Item 3a. Legislative/Federal Funding Updates**

***Dr. Jennifer Green, Public Health  
Director***

- a. *Dr. Jennifer Green* provided updates on federal administrative changes to the council and asked the council to think of concerns or advocacy opportunities to bring to the Mayors Coalition on May 2<sup>nd</sup> in Spring Lake, NC. *Dr. Jennifer Green* shared that *USDA's Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement* had their funding terminated that helped schools and food banks purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers. Additionally, the *Local Food Purchase Assistance Program* had their funding terminated that serves food banks. *Dr. Jennifer Green* said that local organizations were in transition as they navigate budget losses and determine the impact of funding changes for food access in their communities. The regional food banks *Second Harvest* and *Feeding America* have not given notice of any funding losses.
- b. *Dr. Jennifer Green* provided additional updates regarding the termination of *USDA's Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement* and the *Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA)*, both of which supported schools and food banks in purchasing fresh local produce. It was noted that while *WIC* and *SNAP* funding remain secure under the Farm Bill, proposed changes to *SNAP* benefits—such as restrictions on purchasing soda—are under discussion. Programs outside of the Farm Bill, such as *LFPA* and *LFPP*, have faced significant funding cuts, causing local organizations to hesitate on spending due to reimbursement uncertainties.
- c. *Robert Elliot* suggested that the Food Policy Council could strengthen advocacy efforts by drafting a support letter for these programs, in addition to signing ongoing petitions led by organizations like *Carolina Farm Stewardship Association* and *Farm Aid*. The council agreed to review available advocacy templates and personalize a letter with local data for distribution to elected officials.
- d. *Beth Maynard* reported the cancellation of the second phase of the *Local Foods to Schools* grant, which had previously allowed Cumberland County Schools to enhance their student menus with local produce. Although no immediate budget impacts occurred due to cautious planning, there is significant disappointment regarding the loss of future enhancements. *Beth Maynard* also shared concerns about the possible impact of funding changes on partnerships with *Second Harvest Food Bank*, including *Backpack Buddies* programs at summer meal sites. The Council agreed to follow up with *Second Harvest* to determine if additional advocacy is needed to support their programs and ensure continued food access for students and families during the summer months. *Robert Elliott* shared a link to a draft advocacy letter for council members to review and edit as needed.

### **Discussion Item 3b/3c. Chicken/Livestock Ordinances, Restrictions for Home Gardens**

***Meredith Thompson, FPC/UNC Intern***

- a. *Meredith Thompson* provided an overview of local ordinances related to backyard chickens and home gardens. Chickens are permitted in certain residential zones and with limitations on lot size and the number of hens. *Meredith Thompson* emphasized that while HOA rules may be stricter, opportunities still exist for establishing shared community gardens. She offered to post further details to Basecamp and to research deeper if the Council wishes to pursue this idea.
- b. *Robert Elliott* and *Roni Winston* voiced strong support for exploring community garden initiatives, particularly to empower residents in food desert areas to grow their own food.

Discussion included potentially supporting "Everybody Eats," a local organization aiming to foster gardens where produce is shared rather than sold. The Council agreed to invite the organization's founder to a future meeting to discuss partnership opportunities. Ideas were also shared around building "starter kits" for raised garden beds, seeking funding for materials, and posting clear guidelines online about garden ordinances to help residents navigate local restrictions.

**Discussion Item 3d. Transportation and Summer Feeding Programs**

**Beth Maynard, Cumberland County Schools**

- a. *Beth Maynard* provided an update on Cumberland County Schools' summer meal program plans. Due to USDA regulations, non-congregate meal service is permitted only in areas designated as rural. The plan includes distributing five-day frozen meal bundles to eligible households during the summer. Families will apply through an online link distributed by the schools after spring break. Meals will be delivered directly to households once per week for nine weeks. Final approval from the state agency is pending, and preparations are in progress to launch the program successfully. *Beth Maynard* shared additional details on The summer feeding program operating from June 2 to August 1, 2025, with potential for additional food distribution in August through Second Harvest partnerships. Last summer, about 95,000 meals were served at 86–90 locations, and this year's goal is to exceed those numbers.

**Discussion Item 3e. Service Station Resolution**

***Dr. Clifton Johnson, Cumberland County Co-Chair***

- a. *Dr. Clifton Johnson* revisited the idea of creating a service station resolution to address the disproportionate growth of gas stations versus food retailers in Cumberland County, particularly in areas identified as food deserts. The proposal would aim to encourage local leadership to pause or limit new service station developments in favor of attracting grocery stores or other healthy food retailers. Discussion highlighted the need for data collection to support this initiative. Members suggested gathering statistics on the number of permits issued for gas stations compared to food retailers (such as Dollar General and grocery stores) to substantiate the argument with concrete evidence rather than perception.

**Discussion Item 3f. Food Desert Map & Zip Codes**

***Dr. Clifton Johnson, Cumberland County Co-Chair***

- b. *Dr. Clifton Johnson* discussed preliminary research indicated that a successful resolution or ordinance might require proving a public health or environmental impact (e.g., air pollution, water runoff, underground storage risks) or leveraging existing land use or zoning policies. It was suggested that future action may involve working with city or county zoning and planning boards to request a temporary pause on new service station permits while conducting further analysis. The Council agreed that the next step would be to begin gathering relevant data and developing an analysis to potentially move toward drafting a formal resolution or ordinance request.

**Item 4: Conclusion**

- a. Introduction of Visitors – *Kyara Crocker*



b. Public Comment

c. Announcements –

**Mayor's Coalition Meeting:** The Mayor's Coalition meeting is open to public attendance. While structured with an agenda, the atmosphere is more casual (like community watch meetings) and does not require formal registration.

**Spanish-Language Food Safety Classes:**

New Spanish-language food safety classes have been scheduled by the Environmental Health team. The first class will be offered on June 3rd, with registration and payment handled through Environmental Health. Flyers have been finalized and will be distributed to promote the classes.

**"Vet Yourself, Pet Yourself" Event:**

The Health Department will host its annual vaccination clinic event, on Saturday, April 26, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**ADJOURN**

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

**Monday, May 5th, 2025, 6-7:30 pm**

@ Cumberland County Public Health Department  
(1235 Ramsey St, 3rd Floor Conference Room)