

A look at: the Board of Health

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The results of a study on the possibility of consolidating the local departments of health and social services, which may involve combining or eliminating their citizen boards, is expected soon.

The results on the study of consolidation options are currently scheduled to be presented to commissioners on Dec. 7.

The Department of Public Health has the bigger of the boards with a dozen members that oversee a department with a roughly \$26 million budget and 250 full time employees. The Health Board has a variety of responsibilities including hiring the health director, voting on the department's operational matters and providing oversight for health services.

The large size of the board and the expertise of those on it are mandated by state law with a variety of skill sets to help with the diverse issues a health department deals with.

"They wanted to, in my mind, put together a multi-disciplinary team that could come together with the department to get a handle on the many health-related issues that exist in the community," said Health Department Director Marlon Hunter, who is the board's staff member.

Other members that meet required positions are John Davenport (engineer), Dr. B. Keith Cash (optometrist), Amanda Kistler (registered nurse), Charles Massler Jr. (dentist), Dr. Peter Robie (physician), Dr. Scott Schroeder (veterinarian), J. Phil Seats (pharmacist) and County Commissioner Gloria Whisenhunt. There're also three members that represent the gen-



Photo by Todd Luck

The Forsyth County Board of Health conducts its meeting as nursing students from Winston-Salem State University look on.

eral public: Heather Parker, a business manager at Vienna Village Assisted Living; Veterinarian Calvert Jeffers Jr., and Chiropractor Ricky Sides.

"We all bring to the table professional perspectives and that allows them to represent their areas of expertise and then we come together to do what's best for the citizens of the county," said Parker.

The health board's Nov. 1 meeting showed just how diverse its agenda can be. They voted for staff to find a collections agency to collect overdue payments owed by some family planning patients. They heard updates on changes in state lodging laws that health staff enforce through inspections and on changes in rabies regulations, another issue the

department deals with since it's after an illness humans can catch. There was an update on tracking cases of Hepatitis B in the county and testing for a possible case of mumps. Hunter also informed them of plans to hire a nurse to monitor inmate healthcare in the Forsyth County Detention Center and new funding for the Nurse-Family Partnership, which

helps improve pregnancy outcomes for first-time mothers.

Board members said the work on the board is challenging but rewarding and praised Hunter and his staff for the job they do for public health.

"They're heroes every day to a lot of people in Forsyth County," said Seats, who is chair of the board. "They make lives

better every day and that's why I'm happy to be associated with the board."

Dr. Robie said he was also glad to be able to give residents a voice in the health department's activities.

"Speaking as a physician, I work for the patient," he said. "I think the Board of Health should reflect the same idea, we work for the citizens."

If county commissioners did decide to consolidate the departments of health and social services, the commissioners could eliminate the governing boards and take direct control of the departments but an advisory board with the same required positions as the Board of Health would have to be appointed. There's also the possibility of a combined board, which would have 20-25 members featuring some of the current required positions on the health board plus new ones, including those who are Social Services clients.

Consolidation mainly involves the governing structure of the departments, not their services.



Photo by Todd Luck

Mayor Allen Joines, right, presents a proclamation to Bethesda Center board member Eric Proctor during Monday's City Council meeting.

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week starts Monday

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

During Monday's City Council meeting on Nov. 6, a proclamation recognizing next week's National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week was presented to the Bethesda Center for the Homeless, which has the only day shelter and emergency night shelter for men and women in the city.

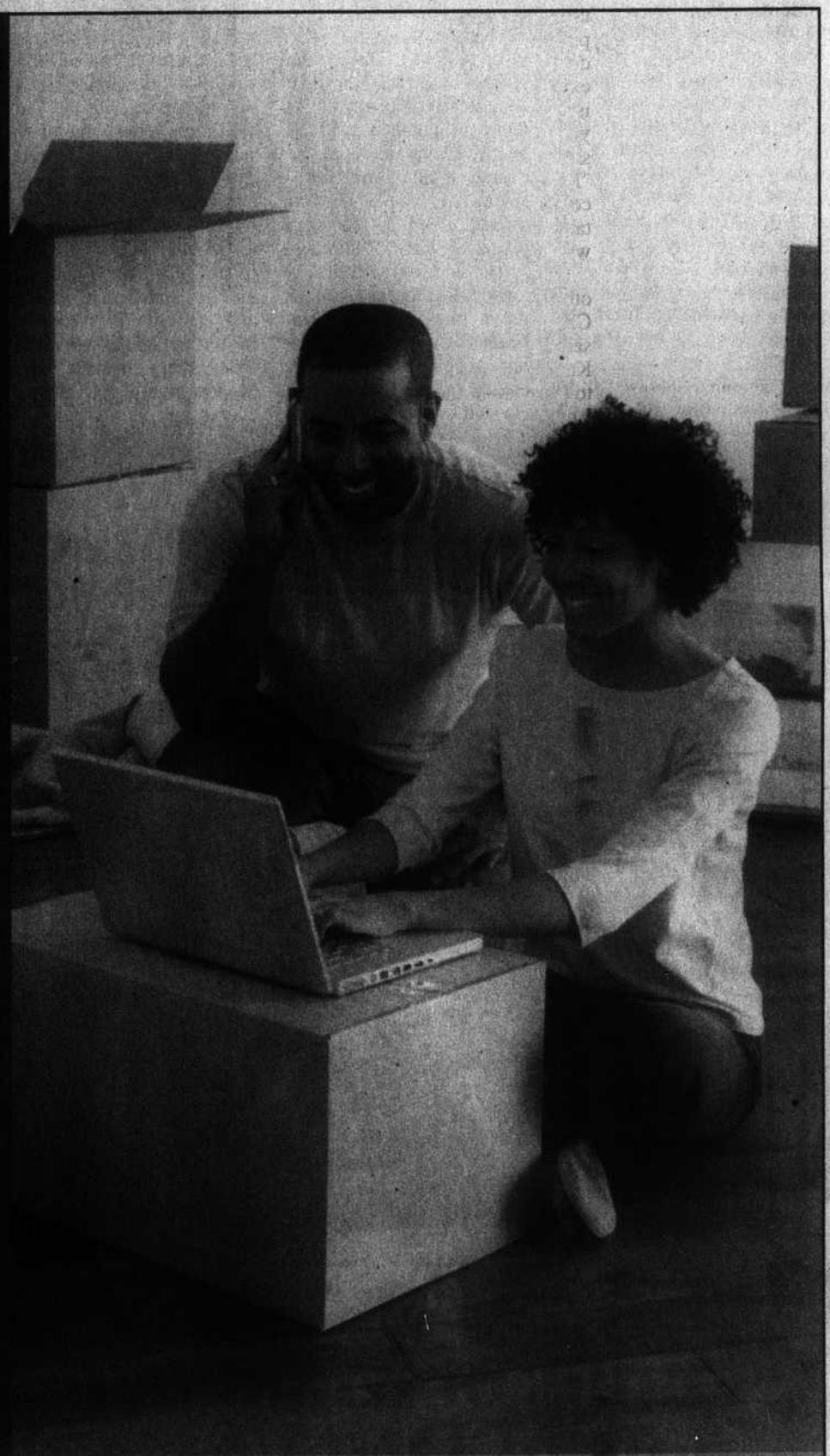
Bethesda's events for the week include a community kickoff on Monday, Nov. 13 at 8 a.m. that will be held at Bethesda, 930 N. Patterson Ave., where a new initiative will be announced.

On Wednesday, Nov. 15, the Heroes for the Homeless breakfast fundraiser will be held at 7:30 a.m. at the Bridger Field House at BB&T Field, 499 Deacon Blvd., with Trulliant President Marcus Schaefer as the speaker.

There will be a Sleep Out Winston-Salem fundraiser at Bailey Park, 445 Patterson Ave., on the evening of Friday, Nov. 17.

Reservations for the fundraisers can be made at www.bethesdacenter.org/about-us/fundraising-events/.

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