

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2020  
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Rob Sassi, Chairman  
Michael Amo, Mike Anagnostakis, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel, Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader  
Michael D. Paduch, Minority Leader  
Kevindaryán Luján, Legislator  
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel  
Harold J. Porr, III, Deputy County Executive  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services  
Irina Gelman M.D., Commissioner of Health  
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health  
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center  
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center  
Donna McCarey, Deputy Commissioner, Human Resources  
Alison Tyack, Director of Personnel Management, Human Resources  
Danielle Diana-Smith, Assistant Director, Office for the Aging  
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Mr. Sassi opened the committee meeting at 3:33 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator O'Donnell who joined in via-telephone, although not permitted to vote.

Ms. Tautel moved request to create one (1) Aging Services Specialist (Spanish/English Speaking) position, Grade 9, in support of the New York Connects Expansion and Enhancement Program. This position is contingent on grant funding and shall automatically be abolished upon cancellation of such funding, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Ms. Diana-Smith explained that with the increase in the aging Spanish and limited English-speaking population there was a need for this position.

Motion carried. All in favor with the exception of Legislator O'Donnell who joined in via-telephone.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate donation from the estate of John Joseph Fantasia on behalf of the Orange County Office for the Aging.

The funds will be used to support the Home Delivered Meal Program, \$20,000.00, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Ms. Diana-Smith explained that Mr. Fantasia was from the Greenwood Lake area and a recipient of their home delivered meal service. Mr. Fantasia wrote numerous letters and made numerous phone calls telling them how much the Home Delivered Meal Program meant to him and after his death in 2018, they were informed that he bequeathed \$20,000.00 to be used specifically for their Home Delivered Meal Program.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if there was an income criterion for the program. Ms. Diana-Smith replied no, it is a need-based program.

Motion carried. All in favor with the exception of Legislator O'Donnell who joined in via-telephone.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept the New York State Age-Friendly Planning Grant from the New York State Office for the Aging on behalf of the Orange County Office for the Aging in the amount of \$20,000.00 to create a replicable version of the Governor's Executive Order No. 190 on Incorporating Health Across all Policies into procurement and planning activities at the County level. Requesting \$10,000.00 to be appropriated to the 2020 budget for use in the current fiscal year. The remaining \$10,000.00 will be incorporated into the 2021 Budget, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Ms. Diana-Smith explained that they are in discussions with the County Executive's office, municipalities and county departments on how they could look at their community and make it more age-friendly. It will look at the walkability throughout a community, where senior housing is being built and if they are near banks and supermarkets allowing the ability to walk and maneuver around their communities. Out of the five states nationwide New York State received the first age-friendly designation with Orange County being the eighth county to receive the age-friendly designation. During a recent conference call, they learned that there are a million more older adults (age 60 and older) than school aged children. After this has moved forward and the language, policies and procedures are in place they will pick a town, city and village for the pilot program.

Mr. Tuohy asked how the town, city and village would be selected and would the \$10,000.00 be used for materials. Ms. Diana-Smith replied that both issues were still being discussed.

Chairman Brescia commented on the recent positive newspaper article on the Office for the Aging.

Mr. Sassi stated that he has visited the Office for the Aging and encouraged his fellow legislators to visit the Office for the Aging to observe the work they accomplish on a daily basis.

Motion carried. All in favor with the exception of Legislator O'Donnell who joined in via-telephone.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate funds from the NYS Office of Victim Services.

The funds are being made available by the Federal Victim of Crime Act and the Victim and Witness Assistance Grant Program and will be used to create two (2) positions (see Agenda Item II.b.), \$188,980.00

Orange County has been selected to receive funds over a three-year period or through September 30, 2022.

There are local funds involved in the amount of \$47,245.00 available from the current 2020 Department of Social Services Budget, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Ms. Miller explained that they were awarded the funds last year and this request was to accept the funds going forward. They were encouraged by the Office of Children and Family Services to have a Child Advocacy Center in addition to what they currently do with the multidisciplinary team. The difference between what they currently do and what they will be doing with the Child Advocacy Center is that they will have a family friendly environment that will be specific to children that have been victimized by sexual and/or physical abuse. In addition to hotline calls all law enforcement departments throughout the county will be able to bring victims and their families to the location with a forensic evaluator assisting law enforcement with non-familial crimes. They currently do not have forensic evaluator like they do in their child welfare division; however, in the Child Advocacy Center the coordinator would be a forensic evaluator and would assist law enforcement across the county.

Ms. Tautel commended Ms. Miller and her staff for the work they are doing and that they were able to secure this grant in order to assist these victims.

Ms. Miller credited Department of Social Services Deputy Commissioner Irene Kurlander and Fiscal Director Todd Craner who helped to successfully secure the funds.

Mr. Paduch asked if the \$47,245.00 would be supplemented by the county for the next three years. Ms. Miller replied yes, and it was included in their 2020 budget.

Mr. Paduch asked if the grant was discontinued would the positions be abolished. Ms. Miller replied yes, but the New York State Office of Victim Services funding is often continued, and they would be required to complete a competitive application every three years. In addition, she will be coming before the committee in either February or March with additional funds from the Office of Children and Family Services to help support this initiative.

Mr. Sassi asked for the location of the center. Ms. Miller replied that they have looked at a few locations but are undecided.

Motion carried. All in favor with the exception of Legislator O'Donnell who joined in via-telephone.

Ms. Tautel moved request to create a Sr. Social Caseworker, Grade 14 and Casework Assistant, Grade 7 position, seconded by Mr. Amo.

Motion carried. All in favor with the exception of Legislator O'Donnell who joined in via-telephone.

On the agenda were the highlighted important issues from the Department of Social Services monthly report.

Ms. Miller reported that Temporary Assistance and Family Assistance numbers continue to decline; however, SNAP numbers saw less of a decline in 2019 as compared to previous years. The HEAP season is in full swing with HEAP staff extremely busy. Emergency Housing placements remain consistent and they are watching the numbers for hotel/motels to ensure they are maximizing their temporary housing.

Mr. Sassi asked about the federal reimbursement for hotel/motel. Ms. Miller replied that it was 100% unless they are over 60 months on benefits then they would pay 71%.

Ms. Miller added that while they have had a cap on medicaid the cost of medicaid has increased dramatically under the Affordable Care Act due to the increase in people on medicaid. Governor Cuomo has reported an approximate deficit of \$4 billion in expenses related to medicaid and some of the cost that the state currently bares will be on the backs of the county and they will be watching it closely as they are concerned with what that could mean to Orange County.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they anticipate the governor moving the cap up. Mr. Craner replied that the governor has stated that he can bear a 3% increase but anything over a 3% increase will be on the county. However, there are federal funds associated with that so they will have to see.

Ms. Miller continued stating that she and Mr. Craner will be attending the New York Public Welfare Associations bi-annual meeting where they will be briefed on the budget and meet with the Director of Medicaid. The Public Welfare Association is strongly advocating for them knowing that the governor has stated it would be on the backs of the counties and as soon as they learn anything they will be informed as it has the potential to have a great impact on counties. During her five years with the Department of Social Services the balance between the 2% tax cap and medicaid costs has gone from \$700 million to potentially \$1 billion by next year.

Mr. Amo asked about the increase in emergency housing shelter for families and singles. Ms. Miller replied that it was due to the cold weather and that there were many individuals living in tents and on the streets and when the months get colder, they finally come in resulting in the increase.

Mr. Amo noted that with the Affordable Care Act the limit for medicaid was increased allowing more people to get medicaid with the federal government offering to pay that cost for the first few years which recently ended.

Ms. Miller agreed with that cost now on the county. Orange County currently manages 30,000 residents who are medicaid eligible as compared to 104,000 Orange County residents on medicaid.

Mr. Craner clarified that the entire 104,000 medicaid recipients are contributing to the cost but Orange County only manages 30,000 locally with the remainder managed through the exchange on the state level.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked for clarification that the total for Orange County is 104,000 individuals. Ms. Miller replied yes.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if there were 70,000 five years ago. Mr. Craner replied that in 2015 they had 69,000.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if that was when the figure was \$700 million. Ms. Miller replied yes.

Mr. Craner added that the additional cost for the aging population must be considered.

Mr. Sassi asked if the bulk of the cost for medicaid was in New York City. Mr. Craner replied that it was 50% of the total cost.

Mr. Amo commented that New York State offers twenty-seven plus programs under medicaid yet the federal government only requires seven. Ms. Miller replied that in New York State they allow coverage beyond what is federally required. The medicaid redesign team was designed to manage the potential increase in costs for medicaid and it has some successful; however, not enough to match what the federal government was providing to New York State prior to the loss of the benefit.

Ms. Miller added that Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) legislation went into effect on January 1, 2020. They are on the cusp of opening a youth center that will bring probation, mental health and DSS together as a single point of access for families and youth to come through. They anticipate that through that collaboration they will better evaluate, serve and provide support to families of youths to keep them in their communities, homes and school districts while reducing high-end costs. New York State will no longer cover the cost of PINS out of home placement, and it will be borne by the counties. Knowing that legislation was coming forward they had seven PINS youth that were in out of home placement, but they were fortunate that their teams were able to safely bring the seven youth back to Orange County and therefor not bear the cost of their placement.

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.