

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2023
4:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Peter V. Tuohy, Chairperson
Michael Amo, Glenn R. Ehlers, Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel

ALSO

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Chairwoman
Thomas J. Faggione, Majority Leader
Betsy N. Abraham, Esq., Legislative Counsel
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health

Dr. Alicia Pointer, Commissioner of Health
Lisa K. Lahiff, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Jennifer L. Roman, D.O., Orange County Medical Examiner
Jacki De Chiara, Director of Operations, Medical Examiner's Office
Erik Denega, Commissioner, Dept. of Public Works
Brian Titsworth, Deputy Commissioner of Infrastructure Services
(Buildings and Grounds), Dept. of Public Works
Kerry Gallagher, Commissioner of Finance
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Erin Sztendor, Budget Analyst
Alison Tyack, Director of Personnel Management, Human Resources

Mr. Tuohy opened the committee meeting at 4:00 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Anagnostakis, who was absent.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health.

Ms. Miller addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to legislators. The New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports, has informed counties that their New York State Opioid Settlement funds will be distributed directly to Departments of Mental Health for "abatement" **services**. **Their funds are regionally** designated, and the county share was determined based on a formula considering three factors: opioid related fatalities, suicide rate and percentage of other than white population and the total allocation for Orange County is \$2.756 million. The Orange Steering Committee has identified and have prioritized spending to meet three goals: expanded Harm Reduction, expanded Medication Assisted treatment, and expanded Safe Prescribing with the grant having \$685,000 to spend on community services. They anticipate having the RFP's out within the next four to six weeks. The Monroe Woodbury School District licensed satellite clinic has been fully approved. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been agreed upon with the Goshen Central School District with the next step to establish a satellite clinic location. Planning is underway for school district satellites in the Washingtonville Central School District and Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District. All mental

hygiene services continue to actively provide services both in person and virtual. Services can be accessed by calling the Orange County Crisis Call Center 24/7 at 311 or 1-800-832-1200. They continue to struggle with workforce recruitment. The Departments of Mental Health and Health recently sent staff to Washington, DC to participate in training and planning for Fatality Review surrounding opioid and suicide. They will be working closely with the Medical Examiner's office to create their own Fatality Review Team.

Mr. Tuohy asked about the formula. Ms. Miller replied that research has shown that minority communities and/or communities of color have had less access to care and an increase in fatalities.

Mr. Luján asked if housing would be including in the RFP. Ms. Miller replied yes, peer support housing.

The committee and Ms. Miller had a brief discussion on the current mental health crisis, gaps in need and availability, shortage of psychiatrists and beds, struggles with addiction and mental health, creating better access, difficulties in finding a psychiatrist for managed medicine, concerns for the residents of Orange County, NARCAN training, hybrid models for care, school satellite clinics, need for face-to-face sessions for children, lack of psychiatric beds for children and recent legislation requiring the 1,000 psychiatric beds at hospitals that were offline during COVID be reopened or face financial penalties.

On the agenda was the monthly financial report on Valley View.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View.

Ms. Strecker presented the committee with the updated December 2022 financials. IGT funding remains at \$2.128 million. Other revenues were at \$34.9 million, and emergency disaster assistance at \$3.2 million. On the personal services side, personal services were at \$20 million, equipment at \$115,597.00, contractual was at \$11.3 million, indirect costs at \$1.625 million, employee benefits at \$15.3 million and serial bond interest at \$96,000.00.

Ms. Strecker explained that for January 2023, IGT funding is at zero and other revenues were at \$3.1 million. On the personal services side, personal services were at \$1.964 million, contractual was at \$540,007.00, employee benefits at \$1.2 million and serial bond interest at \$3,619.00. Their census for January was 65.19%. Their medicaid utilization was at 79.90%, medicaid (HMO) at 2.56%, medicare at 9.69% and private pay at 6.38%.

Mr. Amo asked if they were seeing an increase in the Medicare rate because of the CHHA. Ms. Strecker replied no, short-term rehabilitation.

Ms. Strecker addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to legislators. Valley View's census on February 10, 2023, was 65.83%. They have three units closed. They are taking short-term admissions and the CHHA census is thirteen. Eagle Scout Brain Small, from Washingtonville, donated six wheelchair accessible planters for their residents to use in the spring. They have a large number of capital projects they are preparing to go out to bid

and are as follows: Sewer plant and complete facility evaluation, rooftop HVAC unit replacement for Glenmere and Simon buildings, Couser HVAC Project Phases two and three, Glenmere resident bathrooms refurbishment, kitchen floor repair, anti-elopelement system replacement, refurbishment of Glenmere elevators and replacement of Couser generator. Hiring new staff continues to be a struggle and they will be unable to open another unit, until they hire additional staff. They will be meeting with New York State Assemblymembers and Senators next week to advocate for better Medicaid reimbursement for nursing homes. Governor Hochul proposed a 5% medicaid increase in her budget address; however, they are advocating for a 20% increase as they have not received a cost of living increase in fifteen years. Hiring continues to be a challenge with no new applications being submitted since January 17th.

Mr. Tuohy asked if the meetings were set with their state legislators. Ms. Strecker replied yes.

Mr. Tuohy requested that the meeting schedules be forwarded to the committee.

Ms. Tautel moved request to reclassify Secretary (#26963) Grade 6, in the Department of Health, to Secretary & Administrative Assistant I, Grade 8, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to create one (1) CYSHCN Coordinator (Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs), Grade 14 position, and create one (1) Child Find Coordinator, Grade 14 position, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to accept and appropriate funds into the operating budget for the period of 1/1/2023 – 3/31/2023 from the National Foundation for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Inc. for the Reducing Disparities in MPox Vaccination grant, \$22,871.85, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Dr. Alicia Pointer, Commissioner of Health.

Dr. Pointer addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to legislators. Infectious Disease data as of Tuesday, February 14, 2023, are as follows: Flu: Orange County currently has 185 reported cases. They are also seeing an uptick in gastrointestinal viruses. COVID: Orange County's community level is Medium. There are 15.4 positive tests per 100,000 people. This is a decrease over the last two weeks. Total deaths are

1,278 since March 2020. Polio: wastewater has been negative since December 15, 2022 and they are looking to expand testing in municipalities. Mobile Unit: The Department of Health is in the process of purchasing a mobile unit (schematics were emailed to legislators). They are excited to have a way to reach more of our residents. Senior Fairs: They have been working with interested municipalities and other County Departments to hold senior fairs to offer health education, blood pressure screening, COVID vaccines and other resources. In February, they held a senior fair in the Town of New Windsor and have one upcoming in the city of Port Jervis on February 22, 2023. Environmental Health: Sanitary Control presented at the SUNY Orange Foodtec's Restaurant Services Day. Lastly, engineering will be sending their annual letter to municipalities regarding when and how to contact the Department of Health for plan reviews or other supports. Lastly, the Medical Reserve Corps is looking to assist in the community, and they will be meeting on Thursday with Commissioner Darcie Miller and her team to help address some of the issues in our community.

Mr. Amo asked about staffing for the Mobile Unit. Dr. Pointer replied they are looking to hire a few nursing positions. They are applying for a CDC grant that looks at reaching minority and underserved communities and if they are awarded that grant, they would hire a community health worker to assist with education and outreach. In addition, they have started to change their provider contracts to include the mobile unit as that is where the cost would increase.

Mr. Amo asked about smoking cessation programs and emphysema. Dr. Pointer replied that Healthy Orange does some work regarding smoking cessation programs and there are many local resources and programs available.

Mr. Tuohy asked if behavior modification cessation programs would be something that the Health Department would be interested in. Dr. Pointer replied, possibly as it could fall under the Orange Health Program and could be covered under the CDC grant, as she previously mentioned.

Mr. Luján asked about edibles in schools and would that be covered under the CDC grant. Dr. Pointer replied that they have been hearing a great deal about edibles and vaping in schools and they have been in contact with the schools on how they can help them educate students. They also conduct inspections and enforcement of flavor vapes and they are trying to address it from different angles.

Mr. Luján asked if there was a push to ban flavor vapes. Dr. Pointer replied that flavor vapes are illegal in New York State and banned; however, many people still sell them. This pertains to any flavor vape that contains nicotine and/or is intended to be used with something that contains nicotine. The Health Department is tasked with inspecting stores and issuing violations against stores that sell flavored vapes with fines of \$100.00 per vape package.

Mr. Luján moved resolution appointing members to the Board of Health of Orange County Health District (P. Tuohy, M. Bigg, Jr., A. Hulse, M. Leahy, J. Mittleman, D. Miller), seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Chairwoman Bonelli explained that the board has been inactive for several years and presented a brief overview on the structure of the board and current appointments and reappointments.

Mr. Amo addressed the reappointment of Mr. Mittleman who is the Executive Director of the Ezra Choilim Health Center and an asset to the board.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was an update on the Medical Examiners Building.

Mr. Denega reported that the full design has been completed and a bid was put out in mid-December for a 18,175 square foot one story building and came in on January 24, 2023. The bids came in with four contracts: general construction, electricidal, plumbing and mechanical and combined they came in just under \$22 million and within 3% of the estimate. The consultants did a good job and they brought in the four low bidders last week to ensure they understood the scope of work. The notice of intent to award were put out later that day and over the next several weeks the contracts will be executed. He further stated that it will take about 14 months for completion and will put them out to the summer of 2024. Overall, the budget cost is approximately \$24 million and of that \$22 million will be for construction and \$1.8 million for soft cost for design, construction management and special inspections. Previously there was \$3 million in local funding that was approved back in the design phase and \$14 million in ARPA funding has been released and the Budget and Finance Departments will be coming before the Ways and Means committee for additional ARPA funding.

Mr. Tuohy expressed his appreciation that this was finally coming to fruition.

Ms. Tautel requested that Mr. Denega's notes be provided to the committee.

Ms. Tautel asked if they received a revised architectural rendering because during the last update, they pointed out issues with the visitor's room and its location and a few other issues that they felt should be included in the building.

Mr. Amo stated that several months ago, he expressed concern about accommodations for the Orthodox Jewish community in the county and would the new building be accommodating and/or was it just a matter of security.

Mr. Titsworth responded that it was discussed with a representative from Kiryas Joel who agreed that it would be okay.

Chairwoman Bonelli pointed out that a meeting was held after the last meeting to make sure accommodations were made with respect to viewing concerns. There were conversations about where the physical attributes of the building would work with respect to what they are now discussing and that the Commissioner of Health and the Medical Examiner would work the logistics out with that community, and it was deemed that it would not be necessary to move anything with regard to plans they had previously seen.

Mr. Amo reiterated his concerns on the cultural diversity in Orange County and were they contacted to address this issue. He is concerned that the RFP did not look at the needs of these communities.

Mr. Luján agreed with Legislator Amo.

Mr. Titsworth responded that there was a large dialog with the Needs Assessment.

Dr. Roman addressed Mr. Amo's concerns, nine out of ten times this is not an issue as she is available to come in and do the examination. The issue they would need security for would be if a body needs an x-ray and she cannot get an x-ray tech until morning and she cannot release the body until that has been done. At that point, members of the community would want to stay with the body and that has only happened once in her time with the county. Typically, she is able to come in and do the external examination with her investigator acting as the autopsy tech and members of the community are present along with her investigator who is a member of that community and they all work together to perform the examination and the body is then released. Therefore, security would not be needed. In her opinion, it would not be an exorbitant security cost or a cost at all.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.