

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2018  
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Acting Chairwoman  
Mike Anagnostakis, Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel,  
Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator  
Rob Sassi, Legislator  
Joel Sierra, Legislator  
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator  
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel  
Harry Porr, Director, Operations and Cost Control  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services  
Ann Marie Maglione, Director, Office for the Aging  
Christian Farrell, Director of Veterans' Services  
Colleen Grogan, Chief Budget Analyst

Ms. Bonelli opened the committee meeting at 3:32 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Ms. Tautel who arrived at 3:35 p.m. and Mr. Amo who was absent.

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

Ms. Miller explained that there was a slight increase with Temporary Assistance and Safety Net numbers from December. SNAP benefits remain consistent and due to the lack of permanent housing they continue to be challenged with emergency housing and housing the homeless. They recently reached 60 hotel/motel rooms that are being used and all of their shelter beds are full with warming stations closing on April 1, 2018. Their application to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance has been accepted and they are fully funded for all expenses connected to their warming stations. So, the \$60,000.00 that was allotted by the Legislature for the homeless will be reimbursed to them.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked how the 60 hotel/motel rooms were distributed geographically. Ms. Miller replied that she does not have the specific locations but they have contracts with nine hotel/motels that charge approximately \$70.00 per night.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they were randomly distributed across the county. Ms. Miller responded that their greatest challenge is in the Port Jervis community because a motel option is not available in that area. The hotel/motels are primarily in the Middletown, Newburgh and New Windsor areas which is where a majority of their homeless come from.

Ms. Miller added that Medicaid, Child Protective Service and Foster Care numbers remained consistent.

Ms. Bonelli asked about HEAP. Ms. Miller replied that they continue to accept applications and the second-round of emergency funds runs until April 27, 2018. In addition, the HEAP staff handles approximately 1,000 applications a week and she anticipates the total cost coming in at around \$6 or \$7 million.

Ms. Maglione explained that their board appointments have expired and they are seeking to reappoint and appoint members. The three-year terms are N. Climes, E. Flynn, J. Mandelbaum, G. Townsend and J. Weintraub, two-year terms are D. LeClerc-Moser, P. Mathieu, M. Russo, C. Farrell and Donna Ramlow and one-year terms are S. Altman, L. Force, F. Hannes, D. Rubinsky and D. Frazier. However, she would be back on one more appointment as she is waiting on their confirmation.

Ms. Bonelli clarified that the reappointments and appointments would be broken out in the resolution.

Ms. Tautel moved confirmation of reappointments to the Orange County Advisory Council (S. Altman, N. Climes, L. Force, E. Flynn, F. Hannes, J. Mandelbaum, P. Mathieu, D. LeClerc-Moser, D. Rubinsky, M. Russo, G. Townsend, J. Weintraub), seconded by Mr. Anagnostakis.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Anagnostakis moved confirmation of appointments to the Orange County Advisory Council (C. Farrell, D. Frazier, D. Ramlow), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Mr. Cheney asked when the Orange County Advisory Council meets. Ms. Maglione replied that they are required to meet eight times a year.

Mr. Cheney asked if attendance records were kept. Ms. Maglione replied yes.

Mr. Cheney asked about the attendance of the individuals up for reappointment. Ms. Maglione replied very good, as they can either be present or can call in; however, out of the eight required meetings they must attend or call into at least six.

Mr. Cheney asked if the reappointments have satisfied that requirement. Ms. Maglione replied that they have attended at least four meetings.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Anagnostakis moved request establishment of petty cash in the amount of \$750.00 for after-hours emergency repairs or parts (heavy equipment), and for unforeseen veteran and cemetery related expenses,

especially cases where the proper and timely interment of veterans in the Orange County Veterans Memorial Cemetery is involved, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Mr. Farrell explained that currently the Veterans' Service Agency does not have a petty cash fund but on occasion funds are needed due to an emergency. In 2017, the cemetery conducted 245 burials and issues can arise with a dump truck, excavator or backhoe that needs to be addressed immediately.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was an overview of the Veterans' Services Agency.

Mr. Farrell presented the committee with a brief overview of his military background and his time with Orange County. He presented the committee with three handouts (see original minutes) which included their office locations and hours, Veterans' van schedule, and their mission statement and services offered such as the delivery of nearly 200 bags of food to veterans in need. Two years ago the Hudson Valley Veterans' Task Force was created to address veterans in crisis and to help them whether they are homeless, hungry or unemployed, etcetera. They meet on the second Wednesday of the month at 9:00 a.m. in the Larkin room at the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. They are a county service agency that offers comprehensive counseling and assistance in all VA matters and provide outreach in Port Jervis, Middletown, Castle Point and Newburgh; pension benefits, comprehensive benefits, VA Home Loans, Real Property Tax Exemptions, Military Records and Medals, VA Health Care, Burial Benefits and the Veterans Cemetery.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked for the number of veterans in Orange County. Mr. Farrell replied 22,000; however, they are unsure as to their specific locations.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they are distributing food to every veteran in need and what the percentage would be. Mr. Farrell replied that in January during the Point-in-Time homeless count he worked closely with City of Middletown Police Department and reached out to their homeless veterans and with the help of Shoprite Supermarkets, they were able to distribute \$25.00 gift cards to homeless veterans.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if there was anything they could do as legislators to assist them. Mr. Farrell replied that if they come across a veteran in need that they provide them with their phone number. There are good organizations out there that assist veterans in crisis situations above and beyond what they can do.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if Mr. Farrell has worked with Department of Social Services Commissioner Darcie Miller with respect to services that veterans could qualify for. Mr. Farrell replied yes.

Mr. Luján asked if Mr. Farrell could elaborate on the van service. Mr. Farrell replied that the van service operates twelve stops to Castle Point VA Medical Center on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and the Bronx VA Medical Center on Wednesday. The van service is free and is a courtesy to Orange County veterans. However, they do adhere to a strict schedule and cannot pick up veterans at other locations as the van drivers are part-time and limited to 19 hours a week.

Mr. Luján asked if services needed to be increased. Mr. Farrell replied that based on the volume of calls received he does not see the need to hire additional drivers.

Ms. Bonelli pointed out that after Mr. Farrell was appointed to his position he increased the number of locations and some of the towns and/or villages also offer transportation.

Mr. Tuohy thanked Mr. Farrell for his active duty service and for all that he is doing for the 22,000 veterans in Orange County.

Ms. Tautel asked for clarification that they do not receive permission on the 22,000 veterans in Orange County from the federal government. Mr. Farrell replied yes; however, Congressman Maloney has introduced legislation called the "Know Your Vet Act." The legislation would have a veterans DD-214 (military separation record) sent to the county level which would help them immensely.

Ms. Tautel asked if the van schedule was advertised. Mr. Farrell replied that it is promoted through the American Legion Posts, VFW's, various veteran organizations and town halls.

Ms. Tautel noted that in the town of Highlands Dial-A-Bus is offered but it cannot go out of their community. She would like to see if there is a need and if so could they be serviced because veterans in the Town of Highlands cannot use the hospital or medical facilities at West Point. She would hate to see that area of the county be left out and/or not know that this service is offered.

Ms. Tautel asked if the Veterans Food Pantry was connected with the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley. Mr. Farrell replied yes, they have a grant and work with them periodically to supplement.

Ms. Tautel asked if they do anything on a county level with respect to what services are offered to those servicemen and women returning to civilian life after serving for years and could they boost the advertising of those services. Mr. Farrell replied that they could increase their use of social media and use of billboards but they continually try to reach out to their veterans in any way they can but if they see a veteran in their community tell them about their services and offer them their number so that they can reach out to them so that they can determine if a need is there.

Ms. Tautel commented that they are not doing enough and could they be more proactive. She suggested that Mr. Farrell reach out to Justin Rodriguez, the County Executive's communications and media person, to get the word out there. Mr. Farrell replied that he would contact Mr. Rodriguez.

Ms. Sutherland added that her husband and two of her neighbors are veterans. Her husband is very active with various veteran's organizations and he has found that many members are much older and would like to see them target the younger veterans and have them work with the older veterans and those that are just coming out of service. Mr. Farrell replied that the numbers in many of their organizations are dwindling as the younger generation veterans are not joining. There are things that are geared to younger veterans such as Team Red, White and Blue in West Point and Play for your Freedom both recreational based groups with many organizations participating with Hudson Valley Veterans' Task Force.

Mr. Farrell added that on Saturday, May 5, 2018 the county will be holding its annual veterans picnic at Thomas Bull Park.

The meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.