

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022
4:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Peter V. Tuohy, Chairperson
Michael Amo, Mike Anagnostakis, Glenn R. Ehlers, Thomas J. Faggione,
Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel

ALSO

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Chairwoman
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Dan Bloomer, Director, Operations and Cost Control
Dr. Irina Gelman, Commissioner of Health
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental 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
Erin Sztendor, Budget Analyst

Mr. Tuohy opened the committee meeting at 4:16 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

Ms. Tautel moved request to appropriate funds awarded from the NYS Office of Mental Health to be used to expand and implement the Systems of Care approach with other cross-systems partners, \$25,000.00, seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Amo moved request to reallocate one (1) Community Relations Coordinator, Grade 13 to Community Relations Coordinator, Grade 15, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

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 all legislators (see original minutes). They continue to monitor New York State budget items that impact the Mental Hygiene System. They are also monitoring the proposed extension and possible changes to Kendra's Law (Assisted Outpatient Treatment). They received \$25,000.00 from the New York State Office of Mental Health for the Children's Mental Health System of Care expansion to work with Social Services, Probation, and Community agencies and focus on

single point of access for youths and families. Welcome Orange has started to plan events for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in May and flyers will be forthcoming. The Columbia HEALing Communities Study Orientation for wave 2 communities and school-based satellites are offering \$25,000.00 startup grants available through the New York State Office of Mental Health and they are applying for the Monroe–Woodbury School District. They will continue to apply for funds as **additional school districts come on board**. They continue to work with pediatricians and child prescribers for psychiatric needs and are working on a product to expand collaboration and access to care. They continue to face challenges with workforce hiring and retention across the system. Please consider supporting social media marketing messages regarding the increase in substance use and opioid overdoses and dissemination and posting as part of their education and prevention efforts. Additionally, they are partnering with law enforcement, first responders and emergency rooms to expand overdose response as a prevention and intervention strategy and services can be accessed by calling 3-1-1.

Mr. Luján moved request to accept and appropriate funds from NYSDOH for Childhood Lead Primary Prevention Program grant for the period of 10/1/21 - 9/30/22, \$533,000.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

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

Dr. Gelman addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to all legislators (see original minutes). Calls coming into the Call Center related to COVID-19 has decreased significantly allowing them to suspend that part of the operation. They are now focused on seasonal operations such as children's camps, pools, beaches and public functions as well as mandated Public Health programs and infectious disease surveillance. They are currently working with the New York State Department of Health, local physicians and hospitals on a syphilis study as they were able to identify a novice strain of syphilis not found anywhere in the world outside of Australia. They are working diligently and reconvened their immunization coalitions regarding measles vaccination and regular vaccine schedules especially in the more densely populated areas of Orange County. The Wastewater COVID-19 analysis project at six different wastewater treatment plants in Orange County continues. Quantifiable results have shown a significant and stable decrease in the viral load of COVID-19 municipalities throughout Orange County, but they continue to monitor these results for any spikes that may occur in the future. The Orange County Department of Health is holding COVID-19 vaccinations by appointment in their Newburgh and Middletown offices. They are also working with interested school districts in having vaccinations for their students. As of March 17th, Orange County has 109,650 cases since the beginning of the pandemic, an increase of 1,538 cases since the last report on February 7th. There is new CDC guidance that provides a county-by-county assessment that uses new metrics to categorize risk and based on those new metrics Orange County has been classified as "low" by the CDC. Their 10-day rolling average as of March 17th was 26.3 cases per day a decrease of 83.1% since the last report. The median age for COVID-19 cases for the month of March was 39 years of age and there were two deaths in March and the median age for those deaths was 77.5 years. At home COVID tests become significantly more popular in December and are not included in these totals.

Mr. Tuohy asked about the Omicron variant BA.2. Dr. Gelman replied that is a subvariant of Omicron and they could face a new COVID-19 wave driven by BA.2; however, community acquired transmission is not broad at this time. The federal government needs to do more to prepare for this potential surge by ramping up therapeutics and urging immunization and boosters. Currently there is not a cause for alarm despite BA.2 transmissibility, it does not cause more severe disease compared to the original Omicron variant BA.1 globally at this time. In addition, BA.2 is not drastically different from BA.1 and currently it is not shown to escape vaccine immunity or immunity from prior infection.

Mr. Tuohy asked about recent reports on the Avian Influenza. Dr. Gelman replied that the Orange County Department of Health released Public Health Alert No. 3 regarding the highly pathogenic Avian Influenza virus that has been detected in New York State.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked about the 30% weekly increase in COVID cases in New York City, longevity of booster shots and the potential for a fourth booster shot. Dr. Gelman replied that they anticipate an increase in cases and clinical tests have shown that boosters could be recommend at around four months depending on comorbidities and immunocompromised status.

Mr. Luján asked if applications for the Fellowship Program were still being accepted. Mr. Ericson replied that six have been brought on board; however, the hiring process is conducted through the New York State Public Health Corps (NYSPHC) Fellowship Program on the New York State Department of Health website.

On the agenda was the monthly report on Valley View.

Ms. Strecker presented the committee with the updated December 2021 financials as of March 2, 2022. IGT funding was at \$7.9 million. Other revenues were at \$38.3 million, and emergency disaster assistance at \$86,445.00. On the personal services side, personal services were at \$21.2 million, contractual was at \$13 million, employee benefits at \$16.2 million and serial bond interest at \$104,218.00. In addition, their yearend audit is currently being conducted and these figures are subject to change. She added that while they received Provider Relief Funding under phases I and II and submitted applications for phases III and IV they did not receive anything for phase III and are waiting on a determination for phase IV.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they anticipated phase III and IV funding to be around the same amount. Ms. Strecker replied that phase I was an immediate recognition and infusion of funds based on circumstances and to respond to the needs created by the pandemic. The applications for phases III and IV were more complex as it deals with expenses, revenues, lost revenues, and looks back by quarter from 2019 to 2020.

Mr. Anagnostakis commented that if they do not receive any emergency relief funding, they will be in the hole by approximately \$6 million with last year's loss breaking a five-year profitable streak. If they look at employee benefits, they see \$35 million; however, that includes Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) and he suggested that Ms. Strecker footnote that information in the financials going forward as it is a book entry and a non-operating expense to the facility.

Ms. Strecker explained that for February 2022, IGT funding was at \$2.1 million and other revenues were at \$2.8 million. On the personal services side, personal services were at

\$3 million, contractual was at \$389,663.00, employee benefits at \$2 million and serial bond interest at \$10,283.00. Their census for February was 68.50%. Their medicaid utilization was at 82.81%, medicaid (HMO) at 2.14%, medicare at 7.91% and private pay at 6.56%.

Discussion ensued on profitability concerns, building census, recruitment issues, sign-on bonus/referral bonus program, countrywide industry concerns, use of Valley View reserve funds to offset losses, no cost-of-living increase to the medicaid rate in years, hazard pay and frustrated employees.

Mr. LaDue encouraged committee members to reach out to their Assemblymembers and Senators on two key issues. First, regarding the 1% increase to the medicaid rate which is not sufficient based on their financial status and the funds that are available in this year's budget. Second, support for Medication Aides which are highly trained CNA's to provide medication. This has passed in twenty-five states and is used primarily in assisted living facilities and would help Valley View with respect to staffing.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Laurence LaDue, Commissioner of Valley View.

Mr. LaDue addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to all legislators (see original minutes). Valley View's census on March 21, 2022, was 69.44%. Two units remain closed; however, they are accepting short-term admissions (up to twelve on one unit). They currently have no COVID-19 positive residents; however, two staff members have tested positive. All units are off precautions (residents can leave units for activities, visits, rehab, etc.) and visitation restrictions have been lifted. Lastly, nurse recruiting continues to be a struggle. They received one referral for a full-time LPN from their Sign-On Bonus/Referral Bonus program, however, the LPN resigned during orientation citing that long term care was not a desirable setting. They received only one LPN resume from Indeed.com in February and one LPN and one RN resume, to date, for March.

Mr. Luján moved resolution amending Resolution No. 143 of 2019, which created the "Orange County Legislative Valley View Advisory Committee", a special committee of the Orange County Legislature, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Mr. Amo explained that the amendment is to restructure the committee's membership and amend its mission. The committee shall be comprised of seven (7) members: three (3) members of the Legislature, appointed by the Chairperson of the Orange County Legislature; a representative from the County Executive's Office; the Commissioner of the Valley View; the Real Property Tax Director or designee; and a CSEA representative who works at Valley View. The committee's mission is to specifically address the feasibility of establishing long-term care services.

Motion carried. All in favor with the exception of Legislator Tautel who left the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.