

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
(REMOTELY)**

**TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021  
3:30 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader  
Mike Anagnostakis, Legislator  
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator  
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator  
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator  
Kevin W. Hines, Legislator  
Paul Ruskiewicz, Legislator  
Janet Sutherland, Legislator  
John S. Vero, Legislator  
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel  
Harold J. Porr, III, Deputy County Executive  
Dan Bloomer, 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  
Liz Delaney, Budget Analyst

Mr. Sassi opened the committee meeting at 3:31 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

Mr. O'Donnell moved to request supplemental appropriation to the 2021 budget to receive and expend funds from the New York State Office for the Aging for the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) in the amount of \$44,750.00. Resolution No. 182 of 2020 was adopted in the amount of \$46,607.00; however, \$44,750.00 of these funds were not used in 2020, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Ms. Maglione explained that the funds would be used to purchase a commercial refrigerated delivery vehicle for their cook/chill meals.

Ms. Tautel asked about the initial intent of these funds. Ms. Maglione replied that it was always intended for the vehicle; however, it took longer than anticipated due to the bid process.

Motion carried. All in favor.

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 due to expanded unemployment benefits and eviction moratorium. However, once the expanded unemployment benefits stop many people will be in need and they continue to monitor that information closely with Employment and Training and the struggles they are facing with getting people to return to the workforce. SNAP applications have decreased to under 200 per week which should give the staff in that unit the opportunity to catch up and to meet the 30-day regulatory requirement. There were three emergency benefits for HEAP allotted and their staff has done an exceptional job in processing those applications. The \$20 million allotted to Orange County between the U.S. Treasury Funds and American Rescue Plan and redirected to New York State allows for utility arrears back to March of 2020; however, the recently revealed New York State's plan does not seem to be consistent with that and they are continuing to monitor that closely to see if the state plan will allow for utility arrears for those that don't need rental arrears because they have been referring everyone to HEAP and utility forgiveness but they hopeful that they will allow utility only arrears payments. They have been in contact with Central Hudson and there are a number Orange County residents with utility arrears who may not have rental arrears. Emergency housing placements continue to see a downward trend due to the eviction moratorium that runs through August 2021. They are only using hotel/motels to isolate someone due to COVID-19 and quarantine requirements. They have been informed by New York State that information in regard to the rental assistance program is now available on their website and that the portal should be open by the end of May or early June. They have been working with Focus Media to have marketing material ready for distribution and targeting address specific areas to get the information into the hands of renters and they have also been collecting landlord information and are prepared to assist them with the application process. The \$20 million allocated to Orange County should be spent in Orange County; however, any remaining funds would be distributed throughout New York State and/or New York City. They are committed to doing application assistance and appropriate outreach to get the funds spent in Orange County with the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) stating they would have a call center staffed by at least 600 individuals to process the applications coming through the portal and anticipate it taking up to seven weeks from the time the application is received to cutting a check to the landlord. The Department of Social Services, Nicole Andersen from Community Development and Alan Sorensen from Planning to discuss permanent housing and possible federal funds and the need for workforce housing across Orange County and with all the new development in Orange County they need workforce housing to attract more employees to the county they need to be able to afford to live here. Child Protective Services numbers have increased to their typical averages and they have met with the school board association and school superintendents and offered for their consideration preventive workers located within their districts to help them problem solve and sort through issues and challenges with children and truancy. They anticipate that when remote learning completely goes away there will be challenges with getting students to comply with in school learning. Raise the Age numbers remain low, and the month of May is Foster Care Awareness month, and there are 175 children placed in foster homes across Orange County.

Mr. Sassi asked if the county would see any savings with respect to hotel/motel. Ms. Miller replied that they would not see a savings with the shelters as they have had to maintain them as whole to keep them operating. They do have less expenses going into hotel/motel because they have less numbers so they could have some savings in that area; however, it is very unpredictable with the eviction moratorium.

Mr. Craner clarified that while they would have less expenditures for 2021 just like 2020; however, by 2022 they anticipate those expenditures going back to pre-COVID-19 numbers as caseloads and the need for homeless locations increase with the end of the eviction moratorium.

Mr. Sassi noted that once the moratorium ends those numbers are going to increase and any savings they have would be gone in the next year.

Ms. Miller added that any expenses not accrued using county taxation would be returned to fund balance.

Ms. Tautel asked if the media outreach with Focus Media would be done multilingual and not just bilingual. Ms. Miller replied that they state has indicated that they will have marketing material that will be multilingual. Anything on their website can be translated into multiple languages and with respect to the current outreach with Focus Media they are looking at Spanish, English and Yiddish. The information that will be going out in their mailer also matches what is available on their website. There could be a need for additional information and the one constant is 3-1-1 as a portal for Orange County specific assistance and use language line to communicate in all languages in order to assist with applications and connecting them to other services.

Ms. Tautel asked if there would be a way to add a multilingual box to the mailer for individuals to contact 3-1-1. Ms. Miller replied that she would look into it as they have not gone to print.

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.