

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
MINUTES
(REMOTELY)**

**TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021
4:00 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Michael D. Paduch, Minority Leader
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator
Kevin W. Hines, Legislator
Paul Ruskiewicz, Legislator
Rob Sassi, Legislator
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Harold J. Porr, III, Deputy County Executive
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Dr. Irena Gelman, Commissioner of Health
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst
Liz Delaney, Budget Analyst

Mr. O'Donnell opened the committee meeting at 4:00 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

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

Ms. Miller addressed the committee stating that New York State will be receiving additional \$8 million in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds from the Mental Health Block Grant and over \$90 million from the Substance Abuse Block Grant. She recently attended a webinar on the legalization of recreational use of marijuana in New York State that was put out by New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) and presented by Governor Cuomo's staff. They presented some of the safety factors they have put in place to not repeat the mistakes that other states have made including high density sales within minority and lower income communities and to spread out licensing and good accountability connected to the distribution of marijuana and associated products throughout New York State. Her view remains the same in that it was not a wise move, but the presentation discussed what counties and municipalities have control over such as the hours of operation. They cannot stop it in their county and/or municipality and

anywhere someone can smoke cigarettes they can smoke marijuana. They discussed how revenue would be shared and/or split and she would share that presentation if the slides were released from the state so they can stay informed as they are active with the legalization of marijuana. In addition, Project Hope services remain active in their community and they are providing face to face as much as possible to support the community.

Mr. O'Donnell commented that many new laws will be coming forth from the legalization of marijuana. This is a gateway drug that was passed for revenue and they will quickly see the consequences.

Ms. Miller agreed.

Ms. Tautel moved to request supplemental appropriation to the capital projects budget for the purchase of an X-ray machine for the Medical Examiner's office. This is proposed Capital Plan No. 125 in the 2021 Capital Plan, \$133,000.00 (bonding), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if the new X-ray machine would fit in the new Medical Examiner's office. Mr. Ericson replied yes.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate third year funds in the amount of \$39,166.00 into the operating budget for the period 4/1/21 – 3/31/22 from the NYSDOH for the Tuberculosis Prevention and Control program, seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate fifth year funds in the amount of \$225,000.00 into the operating budget for the period 1/1/21 – 12/31/21 from the State of New York Department of Health AIDS Institute for the Disease Intervention Services, seconded by Mr. Luján.

Mr. Ericson explained that the funds would be used for the salary and fringe benefits for one full-time public health investigator and full-time support staff person to conduct the various investigations for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) in Orange County.

Mr. Tuohy asked for the term length of the funds. Mr. Ericson replied that is five years of funding and they are in the last year.

Mr. Tuohy asked if the funds would continue. Mr. Ericson replied yes.

Mr. Luján asked if these funds would assist with the position that was discussed during the budget process as it seemed to be a pressing and important issue. Mr. Ericson replied that this does not include that position but for positions that were already in place and the need for additional staff in that unit is still needed.

Mr. Luján asked if Dr. Gelman would be bringing the position forward. Mr. Ericson replied that they have not fully examined their budget for 2022 but they would be looking at their positions and where they are looking to fill positions and/or created in the 2020 budget.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to accept and appropriate grant funds from the NYSDOH AIDS Institute/Health Research, Inc. for the Expanded Partner Services Program. The grant contract period is 4/1/21 – 3/31/22 in the amount of \$105,000.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Mr. Ericson explained that the funds cover one full-time public health investigator whose primary focus is to identify persons who have fallen out of care for their HIV infection and link them back to care and other services in the community. In addition, they can work traditional Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) cases and help respond to their increasing STD rates in Orange County. In 2020, Orange County Public Health Investigators investigated 138 syphilis cases with five being pregnant woman for the first time since 1995, three confirmed cases of congenital syphilis and 36.8% increase in gonorrhea from 2019 to 2020 and they continue to see an increase in cases.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Mr. Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health.

Mr. Ericson addressed the committee stating that the Orange County Department of Health continue to support two separate missions. 1) COVID-19 Case Investigations: reviewing positive test results and preparing the information for contact tracing, developing and implementing Quarantine/Isolation Orders and Public Health Notifications when "large scale" potential exposures have been identified. 2) Vaccination Implementation: tracking vaccine distribution throughout the county, helping residents determine where they can get vaccinated and implementing Points of Distribution (POD's). The department's Call Center remains active with most calls from county residents with questions on state regulations and guidance as they are changing constantly. Months ago, the county set up an online vaccine information request form that residents could use to give their contact information. The county has now activated a link that allows people to register for vaccine clinics directly and a link for homebound residents to register for the vaccine. In addition, the Office for the Aging will also take calls and register people that do not have access to a computer and/or the internet and they can call 845-615-3700. The Department of Health continues to conduct Points of Distribution (POD's) at 23 Hatfield Lane in Goshen; however, they are much smaller as the number of people looking to be vaccinated has diminished greatly. That location has given over 60,000 doses of vaccine since starting in January and has proven to be very successful with conducting POD's at least twice a week. Over the last

month the county has operated smaller "pop-up" POD's at Woodbury Common Premium Outlets, Galleria Mall in Middletown, Hannaford's parking lot in Walden, Village of Montgomery Senior Center and the Armory in the city of Newburgh. They will continue to explore options each week for vaccine distribution as well as transition from mass vaccination POD's to smaller scale, clinical based vaccination model. As of May 13, 2021, Orange County has had 46,958 cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic last March and an increase of 1,948 cases since the last report on April 15th. Their rolling 10-day average as of May 13, 2021 was 37.9 cases per day, a 75.2% decrease from the last report and since April 15, 2021, their median age was 34, which was slightly lower than the last report of 35. They have had 16 deaths from April 16th to May 13th with an average age of 78.5 years and slightly higher than the median age in deaths from January to March 2021 of 77.5 years of age. Since the last report, they continue to see household transmission and social gatherings continue to fuel the spread of COVID-19 with the increase of vaccinations and warmer weather likely playing a role in the decline of cases. The Epidemiology Division continues on hepatitis and arthropod borne diseases. They are currently investigating 40 hepatitis cases and 51 arthropod borne diseases (Lyme, Babesiosis and Anaplasmosis). They finished hosting an undergraduate student who completed the update of their 2021 Community Health Assessment Data Review Guide which will help them isolate the priority areas of public health concern in Orange County. At the end of March, the Health Department closed and transferred the operation of their WIC Offices in Harriman it and was a smooth and well implemented process. The New York State Department of Health decided to transfer the operations of that location to Cornerstone who has taken over the program at the same location. The Orange County Health Department Division of Community Health Outreach has moved its Middletown office from Academy Avenue School to the Seward Avenue Campus which now puts WIC, Nursing, and Community Health Outreach in the same building and offers services to residents under one roof. Lastly, on May 6, 2021 they along with the Department of Public Works and the Medical Examiner's office, met with Hyman Hayes Associates for its "kick off" meeting to discuss construction of a new Medical Examiner's building.

Mr. Amo asked if Mr. Ericson or Dr. Gelman has seen the recent media reports on autoimmune diseases and the COVID-19 vaccine. Testing has shown that individuals who have been vaccinated are showing they have zero antibodies for COVID-19 with some individuals receiving three and/or four additional shots. Mr. Ericson replied that he would have to defer the question to Dr. Gelman as he was unaware of the study.

Ms. Tautel expressed her concerns with the low number of people vaccinated by ethnicity based on the New York State vaccine tracker website the current statistics show 83% White, 10.9% African American, 4.6% Asian and 1.2% other have received at least one dose of the vaccine. While vaccine hesitancy could play a part was there anything they could do in Orange County to reach the right demographics. Mr. Ericson replied that there is some vaccine hesitancy, and they have conducted outreach in various cities and locations. Last weekend they worked with the Newburgh Armory and have collaborated on vaccinations at Montefiore St. Luke's Cornwall

Hospital in Newburgh and Orange County Community College in Newburgh. Getting the correct information to the public is very important to them and trying to get to that socioeconomic

populations has been one of their goals; however, they have not had much uptake which continues to be a challenge. They have been trying to address it from various angles and after putting a great deal of time and effort in they may only get 50 people who register, and this is not unusual as they have also seen it with the flu vaccine.

Ms. Tautel asked if leaders from local cultural centers and/or groups had been contacted to breach that language barrier. Mr. Ericson reiterated that they have done a great deal of outreach; however, he does not have that list readily available, and they are currently dealing with a local food pantry to place pamphlets in their bag telling them when to come in for a vaccination and they are trying some unorthodox approaches in order to get people vaccinated.

Mr. O'Donnell commented that on Saturday the Newburgh Armory vaccinated approximately 200 people and turned away at least 40 people and there will be another POD with 200 vaccines at the Newburgh Armory in two weeks. Mr. Kaplan has been doing everything he can and has reached out to nearly every ministry in the city of Newburgh. Obviously more needs to be done with the population percentage in the city of Newburgh at about 11.5% black and 16.9% Latino, more work needs to be done to convince people to be vaccinated.

Mr. Luján commented that the Orange County Department of Health has been working very hard and have been boots on the ground in the city of Newburgh since the beginning. He has seen the collaboration between the Department of Planning and the Orange County Sheriff's office as they went into senior buildings and helped people get vaccinated and obviously that unorthodox way has worked. The POD at the Newburgh Armory was an event that was planned over a few weeks to ensure community outreach and location in which there should have been enough vaccines because they may have turned away someone who was already leery of the vaccine or being told to back on a different day. It has been very difficult to get many individuals in their community to convince them that the vaccine is something they should do with many either paying for a taxi or walking to get to a POD only to be told that vaccine is not available. The city of Newburgh has the highest poverty level in Orange County, is the most diverse and hit the hardest by COVID-19. He has advocated for outreach since the beginning and while there has been changes and there are many in the African American and Latino communities that are reluctant but also do not have the information needed and he agrees that going to the food pantries is very important. However, in his opinion, the pamphlet will not be enough they need mobile sites that Dr. Gelman spoke about early on with a vaccine site available at food pantry locations. That is the outside of the box approach they need to take for those communities where transportation and mobility issues exist to ensure that as many people as possible are vaccinated.

Mr. Luján asked for the percentage of Orange County residents with a first dose and second dose. Mr. Ericson replied 54.7% have receive their first vaccine dose and 33% have received their second dose of the vaccine. However, those percentages do not include federal vaccination data such as West Point or any veterans that went to the VA for vaccine. In addition, 25% of their population is under the age of 18. They are also seeing a lag in data

being input to the system across New York State because when people go for their vaccination their information is put into a clinical management system and that must be uploaded into the New York State Immunization Program but it is not showing up which is a data migration issue resulting in incomplete data. He agrees that their vaccination numbers are not where they should be but, in his opinion, they are not as low as 33% for fully vaccinated individuals.

Mr. Luján asked why Orange County's numbers were lower than other counties and are they doing something they could be doing differently and/or learn from. Mr. Ericson replied that every county has different challenges with how their populations are dispersed within their cities and municipalities; however, all county Health Department's are doing the same thing in regard to outreach.

Mr. Luján stated that they need to boost their outreach in order to reach the rural parts of Orange County who also do not have access to transportation and are struggling to get access to healthcare and what can they do to reach those communities. He would like to tell residents that they have a plan to get them vaccinated which he has not seen and do they need funding to provide additional outreach. Mr. Ericson replied that since the pandemic started, they have put many positions in place; however, that would never be enough positions to deal with what Mr. Luján has mentioned. Their vaccination POD's consist of approximately 90% volunteers and they could never have gotten 60,000 vaccine doses administered without the help of the Bruderhof Community and the Orange County Medical Reserve Corps volunteering their time. They had conducted over 60 POD's with people dedicating their entire day and they could not have gotten that done with only their staff. They are doing the best they can with what they have and they will be coming to them with next year's budget and requesting more positions where they will have a lasting approach and not just for a pandemic. It is a challenge with the geography in the county due to the rural areas and the difficulty in getting in touch with them and the densely populated cities and a totally different population. For departments with approximately 120 employees, it is very defeating.

Mr. Luján emphasized that he was in no way diminishing the work that the Department of Health has done as they have been amazing and have gone above and beyond. However, he would be remised if he did not address the important needs and concerns in Orange County.

Mr. O'Donnell asked that Mr. Ericson advise legislators of the next pod in the city of Newburgh and advertise it to get as many people as possible vaccinated.

Mr. Anagnostakis commented that based on the percentages provided by Mr. Ericson 44% of the over 18 population has had both doses, those vaccinated at West Point and the VA centers, and those individuals with antibodies he would speculate that they are closer to 50% so at what point would they consider themselves to have herd immunity. Mr. Ericson replied that he would have to defer that question to Dr. Gelman but 70% has been mentioned; however, he was unsure if they would get to that point. Due to the decrease in people coming for vaccinations they are looking to offer vaccines at their offices and smaller "pop-up" POD's.

On May 11th they administered 913 second doses, May 12th 25 Johnson & Johnson vaccines in Walden, 37 Johnson & Johnson vaccines at 23 Hatfield Lane in Goshen, May 14th they administered 272 second doses and 9 Johnson & Johnson vaccines at Woodbury Commons Premium Outlets, May 15th they administered 139 second doses and 18 Johnson & Johnson vaccines at the Galleria Mall in Wallkill and approximately 200 first doses of the Moderna vaccine at the Newburgh Armory. While it is more efficient to be in one location, they are going all over in order to increase those vaccination numbers with the vaccine now widely available throughout the county.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if the data includes vaccines that were administered by sources other than Orange County. Mr. Ericson replied yes.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if it was fair to say that they are at the tail end and would be lucky to get another percent or two at most. Mr. Ericson replied that unfortunately, they have hit that wall.

Mr. O'Donnell agreed that the number of people seeking a vaccine have dropped drastically and cannot see them forcing anyone to get it done. It is on all of them to try and educate and encourage people to be vaccinated.

Ms. Sutherland commented that at last month's meeting Dr. Gelman indicated that she did not believe they were near herd immunity.

Ms. Tautel asked about the new mask regulations and would Orange County be being putting out any guidance or are they relying on what New York State has provided. Mr. Ericson replied no, it would be the state guidance which goes into effect tomorrow.

Ms. Tautel asked if business owners can ask if a person has been vaccinated. Mr. Ericson replied that he has not heard a legal opinion on it.

Ms. Tautel moved to request supplemental appropriation of funds in the amount of \$569,250.00 for a proposed 2021 capital expenditure to refurbish three (3) elevator cars in the Glenmere building (Appropriated Surplus), seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved to request supplemental appropriation of funds in the amount of \$400,000.00 for a proposed 2021 capital expenditure for new walk-in coolers and freezers (Appropriated Surplus), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved to request supplemental appropriation of funds in the amount of \$248,400.00 for a proposed 2021 capital expenditure to replace the emergency generator in the Couser building (Appropriated Surplus), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was the monthly report on Valley View.

Ms. Strecker explained that IGT funding remains at \$1.5 million, \$22,000.00 in emergency disaster assistance and \$8.5 million in other revenues. The facilities census will be the driving factor for their financial performance in 2021. They have lost 130 residents over the last year and the census will be a very slow climb at possibly 2% a month and at that rate they will not achieve 90% occupancy until December. On the personal services side, personal services were at \$6.7 million, equipment at \$14,538.00, contractual at \$4.6 million, employee benefits at \$6.1 million, serial bond interest at \$57,836.00 and overtime was at \$595,000 and their average census for the first quarter was at 71.95% and they are averaging just over 74.4% for the month of April.

Mr. Tuohy asked if they were accepting new residents and/or are they holding off on accepting new residents. Mr. LaDue replied that they have been accepting new admissions for a few months and they do have a wait list for long-term residents. Since March 2020, Valley View has had 130 deaths and 72 from COVID-19 and it has and will be difficult to recoup that census. They are relying on hospital census and their procedures and they are taking both short-term and long-term residents, but they cannot fill their empty beds at once.

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

Mr. LaDue stated that they have one COVID-19 positive resident and three staff members that are out because they have either tested positive for COVID-19 or are out of work because they were exposed to a COVID-19 positive person outside of work. 92% of their residents and 58% of staff have been vaccinated and they continue to regularly offer the vaccine to residents and staff. In addition, COVID-19 staff testing continues twice per week. Family in-person visitation has resumed based on the New York State Department of Health's visitation guidance changes on March 25, 2021 with visitation occurring both inside and outside. The Valley View CHHA currently has 15 patients with each patient typically receiving 4 rehab visits/week, two by physical therapy and two by occupational therapy. These visits occur after an initial visit/assessment is completed by the RN and the assessment develops the patient's plan of care. New York State has recently passed new nursing home legislation that requires 3.5 hours of nurse staffing per resident per day and may be comprised of a minimum of 1.1 RN/LPN hours and a minimum of 2.2 CNA hours (the remaining 2 hours could be filled as needed by providers) with this law taking effect in January of 2022. Valley View is currently meeting those requirements and is one of the leading nursing homes in Orange County in total number of nursing hours per day. While they are leading in nursing hours staffed, they are struggling to find CNAs, LPNs and RNs for part-time (per-diem) and full-time positions. They currently have twelve full-time CNA openings, eight full-time LPN openings and five full-time RN

openings. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused nursing staff to leave the profession and it is increasingly difficult to recruit and hire new staff. They conducted a job fair on May 13th with only two CNAs attending, no LPNs or RNs. Even though Valley View offers a great starting rate for CNAs at \$20.00 an hour for full-time (plus shift differential) and \$17.00 an hour for per-diem (plus shift differential) he believes the extension of unemployment benefits to September and the increased competition for this hourly range (\$17.00 to \$20.00 an hour) from Legoland, Amazon etc. is negatively impacting their ability to recruit CNAs.

Mr. Tuohy moved resolution of the Orange County Legislature designating June 27, 2021 through July 3, 2021 as "Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week," Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.