

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2018  
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Michael Amo, Chairman  
Katie Bonelli, Mike Anagnostakis, Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel,  
Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader  
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator  
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator  
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services  
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View  
Colleen Grogan, Chief Budget Analyst

Mr. Amo opened the committee meeting at 3:30 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present **with the exception of Legislator Luján** who was absent.

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

Ms. Miller commented that while their numbers have remained constant, they had 47 families in hotel/motels in March. They recently conducted a meeting with all their providers through the Departments of Social Services and Mental Health which resulted in a productive brainstorming session. They discussed the preventions of evictions, how to expand affordable housing options, ancillary support and flex funds. She explained that when someone is evicted they come into temporary housing services and stay for a long time so they would like to see them remain housed.

Ms. Sutherland expressed her concern with the numbers from March of 2018 as compared to March 2017.

Ms. Miller replied that in prior years they could manage all the homeless that were coming forward in their housing programs. However, they are challenged due to the lack of affordable long-term housing and while they have not changed any of their services, they have changed the way they respond to the needs of the community.

Ms. Tautel pointed out that the first three months of 2018 are double the total for 2017.

Ms. Miller explained that they are looking at the Housing First model which has seen great success but they are looking at what the impact has been on medical costs so that they can have their own pilot program.

Ms. Bonelli commented that in June 2017 they started to see a dramatic spike that continues to escalate.

Ms. Miller explained that at that time the City of Newburgh changed their rental housing/apartment inspection policy. If a landlord in the cities of Port Jervis, Middletown and Newburgh rent to a client of the Department of Social Services an inspection must be done before payments can begin. Landlords prefer to rent to other individuals as they do not have the same requirements which has resulted in limited access to permanent housing options in that specific community with a saturated housing market also to blame.

Ms. Bonelli asked if there was a correlation between the revised Orange County Sanitary Code and this increase. Ms. Miller replied no, it is a matter of having enough investment and interest in developing affordable housing. A single client brings in \$417.00 a month; however, they cannot rent an apartment for that amount and a request for an enhanced benefit for singles is under review with the state.

Mr. Amo asked if they could conduct any statistical testing on this issue as they should be made aware of any significant changes. Mr. Craner replied that in addition to the other issue in June and July of 2017, Transitions at 44 Grand was closed and reopened in August under a new vendor and something they would not have been aware of unless they were told.

Ms. Miller joined in stating they are trying to think outside the box and expand their contract for housing resource case management to assist with those individuals in the hotel/motels along with the Department of Employment and Training to help people with jobs and child care services.

Ms. Miller added that their point-in-time count in 2017 was at 351 with 349 temporarily house but in 2018, it was at 500.

Mr. Anagnostakis questioned why the numbers were stagnant from 2015 to 2016 because in his opinion, this was not a trend that just started but something that goes way back. Ms. Miller agreed, it goes back to 2014 when an incident in the City of Newburgh led to changes.

Mr. Craner added that if they look at the numbers for 2014 it only shows the last three months with the numbers and years prior to that being minimal.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they expect these numbers to increase or have they reached a peak level. Ms. Miller replied that it was still unclear because housed families are 100% reimbursable if they receive benefits under 60 months. If they are over 60 months, the county pays a large local share it could be spent differently and led to permanent housing. They have asked the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance and the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene to consider how they spend federal funds and the housing homeless. If they did the Housing First models the cost would be significantly less than what it costs to temporarily house people at a hotel/motel at \$70.00 per night when Housing First would cost \$13,000.00 a year.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked what it is preventing them. Ms. Miller replied that because they are federal funds, a plan must be submitted.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they were working with their Congressman and US Senators. Ms. Miller replied that this is a top priority as it not only effects Orange County but the entire state and discussed at all their conferences. New York State has been working with them and they are trying to make an attempt to solve this problem.

Mr. Sutherland asked if these numbers included the McKinney Vento kids. Ms. Miller replied yes, but not the ones that are sleeping on a family member or friends coach.

Mr. Amo asked about the process of reporting elder abuse. Ms. Miller replied that they should call Adult Protective Services and report the alleged abuse. Adult Protective Services does not have compulsory reporting and is not a 24/7 call line such as the child abuse hotline but their office responds to every call within 24 to 72 hours depending on the triage of the need.

The meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.