

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES
(REMOTELY)**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 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
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator
Kevindaryán Luján, Legislator
John S. Vero, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Harold J. Porr, III, Deputy County Executive
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 3:37 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

Mr. Sassi stated that Ann Marie Maglione, Director, Office for the Aging would be moved to the beginning of the agenda.

Ms. Tautel moved to request supplemental appropriation to the 2021 budget to receive and expend \$212,100.00 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding. Resolution No. 184 of 2020 was originally adopted in the amount of \$393,460.00, however, \$212,100.00 of these funds were not used in 2020, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Tuohy moved request to accept inter-municipal agreements between the County of Orange, the Village of Montgomery, and the Village of Greenwood Lake to operate the Senior Dining Program on behalf of the Office for the Aging within their respective areas. The term of the Village of Montgomery's agreement is 1/1/21 through 12/31/21 and the term of the Village of Greenwood Lake's agreement is 7/1/21 through 12/31/21, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

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 trend downward. She has discussed with Stephen Knob, Director of Employment and Training on several occasions the challenge of getting people back to work and the need for workers in Orange County. They are hopeful that when day camps and daycares are fully open and schools are back in full session they will see a trend back to work. They are also concerned with the implications once the unemployment benefit ends and Temporary Assistance and Safety Net Assistance increases. During the height of the pandemic, they saw over 300 applications for SNAP weekly, but those numbers have begun to return to their pre-pandemic numbers, and they are able to respond to 90% of the calls through the call center. The New York State application portal for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program has opened and anyone eligible for rental arrears can also apply for utility arrears. New York State did not include utility arrears in their application process so individuals with only utility arrears must go through HEAP or Utility Arrears Forgiveness. From June 1, 2021 to June 13, 2021 Orange County submitted 741 applications with 676 of those applications requesting not only arrears payments but the 3-month future rent payments and 239 have requested utility assistance. The cities of Newburgh and Middletown submitted the highest number of applications with Port Jervis and New Windsor coming in well behind them. They would like to see a larger percentage of applications coming in from Orange County as New York City submitted 45,000 applications from June 1, 2021 to June 10, 2021. Because they need to move quickly in supporting their community and getting applications in a second mailer would be going out this week and they are using their providers as ambassadors of the message and 3-1-1 to assist with the application process. If the \$24 million is not spent in Orange County, it will go to New York City; however, they need to ensure they meet the needs of Orange County first. They contacted the various courts across the county, and they have agreed to share the list of pending and/or adjourned eviction cases. The eviction moratorium does not lift until August and they are required under the New York State legislation on rental assistance to provide information on the rental arrears program. They would be reaching out to those tenants proactively to try and get them to complete the U.S. Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) application. With respect to landlords they must commit to renting to that tenant for one year following the receipt of the funds for rental assistance. However, some landlords are ready to evict regardless of these funds. If a tenant applies and the landlords refuses to cooperate the landlord must give up the arrears rent and cannot take the tenant to court and sue. Homeless and/or temporarily housed numbers continue to decrease and they are working with their providers on assisting with rental arrears once the eviction moratorium lifts. Their total number of Orange County residents on Medicaid as of August 2020 was 114,435 and during the pandemic renewals for Medicaid were waived and they retained their benefits throughout the pandemic. They saw a \$2 million reduction in Medicaid transportation expenses in 2020 and a reduction in dental and practitioner visits due to the pandemic; however, they still reached the \$1 billion expense mark for Orange County. Child Protective Services caseloads have begun to increase and get closer to their typical numbers and their Child Advocacy has been a resounding success. Raise the Age numbers remain low, Foster Care was at 294 and the lowest number in years, Adult Protective Services remained consistent, and Child Support Collection came in at approximately \$44 million for 2020.

Mr. Amo asked about medicaid reimbursement and the cap. Ms. Miller replied that they are contributing approximately \$70 million in county taxation.

Mr. Craner added that in the last six years they have seen an increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) and below the cap figure on what they are paying; however, when they get to 2022 they could get closer to the true cap number and slightly higher than where they have been the last few years.

Mr. Amo asked how their percentage compares to other counties. Ms. Miller replied that 33% of New Yorkers are on medicaid.

The meeting adjourned at 3:59 p.m.