

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES
(REMOTELY)**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2020
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
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Thomas Faggione, Legislator
Kevindaryán Luján, Legislator
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator
John S. Vero, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, 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
Stephen Knob, Director, Employment and Training
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Mr. Sassi opened the committee meeting at 3:32 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 Ann Marie Maglione, Director, Office for the Aging.

Ms. Maglione explained that they have been very busy as COVID-19 targeted older adults. Their numbers have increased drastically, in May of 2019 they served 13,000 meals and in May of 2020 they served over 19,000 with COVID-19 highlighting food insecurities in older adults. When an individual contacts them for a meal and they are not on the program they are asked a few questions to determine if they financially need the help or do they need someone to go grocery shopping for them and once the need has been recognized they plan accordingly. They have added nearly 50% more to their program and they could not do it without the help of their community partners. Of their 600 volunteers, over 400 are over the age of 60 and when the pandemic hit in March, they asked their volunteers to stay home and they were fortunate when people from the community stepped in to help. Some of their volunteers have come back; however, it will be a new normal. They have started a virtual Caregivers Support Group, Elder Abuse Awareness Coalition and a YouTube video that is done every Monday on various topics. They have also started conducting friendly visitor calls once a week to ensure their older adults are okay and to let them know that someone is thinking about them. In the near future they will begin Parking Lot Bingo and a virtual book club.

Ms. Maglione thanked the legislature for all their support, and they have begun to receive a little COVID-19 funding. Kevin Monahan, Nutrition Director, Office for the Aging has applied for two grants from Meals-on-Wheels for \$12,500.00 and \$75,000.00 which they will be coming to the legislature to accept shortly.

Mr. Sassi commented that many seniors look forward to the calls they receive from the Office for the Aging as it shows that someone is looking out for them.

Ms. Maglione added that the 1800 farmers market coupons would be dispersed shortly. They consist of four \$5.00 vouchers and is income generated for those under 185% of the poverty level. While they would be going out to the community with the coupons if anyone asks about them please have them call the Office for the Aging.

Chairman Brescia commented that Randi Greene from Eat This Bakery in the village of Montgomery has arranged for the farmers market to be rotated between the villages of Montgomery, Maybrook and Walden starting in July. He suggested Ms. Maglione contact Ms. Greene to see what is being offered and for advertising.

Ms. Tautel added that the Highland Falls Farmers Market is now open with social distancing being observed. Congratulations.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Stephen Knob, Director, Employment and Training.

Mr. Knob explained that unemployment numbers are through the roof with over 30,000 Orange County residents collecting unemployment insurance. Even though weekly claims have decreased, they did have 1400 new claims last week. They continue to call people every day and are starting to see people go back to work. Services continue to be provided virtually with a YouTube channel setup for orientations and workshops. Because they lease the property the Career Center in Middletown was able to have a soft reopening, however, the Newburgh Career Center is operated by the New York State Labor Department and they have been given no indication on when that office will be reopened. Staff is being rotated in the Middletown office as they are not prepared to welcome the public in at this time but they are still able to provide services via telephone, ZOOM and Microsoft Teams for as long as they can and as long as it is working. In his opinion, the fewer people they have coming into the office the better if it stops the spread of COVID-19 and when they are able to accept clients back into the office it will be by appointment only. They are currently dealing with their Summer Youth Employment Program. While Governor Cuomo did place the funds in the budget the New York State Division of Budget is holding onto those funds and they seem to be hoping that if enough time goes by they will not have to be dispersed but they are hoping that does not happen. They have sent letters to their local state representatives describing the program, the number of disadvantaged kids it serves and its importance. Although they do not have worksites for these kids to work, they do have 80 hours of virtual work experience that they have used on a couple of different websites. They have a contract with New York Wired for Education an online metrix learning program. They have designed several packages that would enable them to give these children 80 hours of work experience training and/or virtual work experience to satisfy the program requirements. However, until they hear from New York State they are at a standstill.

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

Ms. Miller explained that many staff members are back in the office with some still working remotely. While they have had many months and/or years with decreases in their benefits; however, they have seen an upward trend in Temporary Assistance, SNAP and Safety Net and they will continue to see those numbers increase throughout May and into June and the number of individuals on medicaid is approximately 105,000. They are working with Community Development in order to assist people and to prevent further homelessness once the eviction process begins again. Emergency Housing placements in HONOR and other shelter programs decreased throughout April; however, hotel/motel numbers increased as a result of social isolation and the ability to have people temporarily housed during the pandemic. They are hopeful that there could be FEMA reimbursement for those additional expenses, and they will be applying for those benefits along with working with Community Development to cover those uncovered expenses.

Commissioner Miller left the meeting at approximately 3:45 p.m. due to a departmental emergency.

Mr. Sassi requested that any questions for Ms. Miller be sent either to her directly or to him.

Mr. Amo addressed a recent article in the Times Herald Record from Sanford R. Altman. The article stated that Community (Homecare) Medicaid has implemented a 30-month lookback period. The suspicion is that it would affect a lot of people that would need a home healthcare aide to avoid going into a nursing home. He suggested the that Ms. Miller address this issue and the impacts it could have on their community and the healthcare industry at an upcoming meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.