

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2019
3:30 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: Michael D. Paduch, Minority Leader
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Harold J. Porr, Acting County Executive
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services
Irina Gelman M.D., Commissioner of Health
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center
Christian Farrell, Director of Veterans' Services
Kerry Gallagher, Deputy Commissioner of Finance
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Colleen Grogan, Chief Budget Analyst
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst
Doug Hovey, CEO, Independent Living Inc.
Joe Ranni, Esq., Board member, Independent Living Inc.
Andy Weyant, Past Chairman, Independent Living Inc.

Mr. Sassi 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 Amo who was absent.

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

Ms. Miller stated that they continue to analyze their caseloads to determine how many people are exempt from employment and continue to receive cash payments. The caseloads that remain with Orange County have a great deal of complexity with between 50% and 55% having mental health and/or substance abuse needs or medical issues. Raise the Age numbers remained low, SNAP saw a slight increase and while April's Child Protective Services numbers showed a decrease, May's numbers have nearly doubled. With respect to Foster Care, by 2021 kin gap needs to be increased to 30% and children in residential care must be reduced to 12%, if not, the federal government will not provide the state with reimbursement.

Mr. Tuohy asked about the gap in emergency housing numbers as they have not received a figure since February. Mr. Craner replied that there were issues with the March

transmission that have been corrected and they anticipate both March and April's numbers being included in the next report.

On the agenda was a discussion on Homelessness.

Ms. Miller explained that at last month's meeting the committee requested trending data. Ms. Miller presented the committee with a chart showing the overall homeless and unsheltered homeless from 2009 to 2019 (see original minutes). The HUD report consists of hundreds of pages that she will forward to the committee electronically. New York State has the second largest increase in homelessness at 2.7% from 2017 to 2018 and Orange County's overall homeless numbers have remained consistent with the exception of two years with reduced numbers. The unsheltered homeless numbers show that in earlier years they had a much larger number of unsheltered individuals who were not being supported by the system. Since 2016, those numbers have declined due to collaborative efforts and engaging people and bringing them forward. In addition, it also coincides with Governor Cuomo's Code Blue legislation which brought additional partners together to help and engage people especially when the temperature is 32 degrees or below.

Ms. Tautel asked when the Code Blue legislation went into effect. Ms. Miller replied that he signed the Executive Order in 2016 but it did not become official legislation until 2018.

Mr. Anagnostakis pointed out that the overall homeless number of 480 was actually higher than in the middle of the great recession.

Ms. Miller stated that with a rich economy prices increase. The Office of the State Comptroller issued the Housing Affordability Report in New York State which shows rents in Orange County at 54.3% above the affordability threshold in New York State.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked for clarification that with an improved economy rents have increased, and people are being priced out. Ms. Miller replied yes, with Orange County at a severe cost burden of 30%, one of the highest across the state. This is why affordable housing and rent stipends are so important in reducing the homeless number in Orange County.

Mr. Sassi asked if they have a recent comprehensive homeless study. Ms. Miller replied yes, by Mount St. Mary College and a comprehensive report was submitted to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and to this committee a few months ago, it is their blueprint for how New York State wants them to move forward in addressing homelessness. She requested a listing of the available rental properties in Orange County from the Office of Real Property. She reviewed over 200 properties and a 386 square foot apartment in Newburgh costs \$1,000.00 a month but a single individual only receives \$412.00 a month. In addition, 50% of those receiving benefits are exempt from working and do not have the ability to help themselves as they continue to need support.

Ms. Miller added that there are many challenges, and the Mount St. Mary College report was well done and provides them with the factual researched based anecdotal they have today. While she would do what they request, she cannot see putting more funds into what they already know as it would not be helpful.

Mr. Sassi asked for the date of the Mount St. Mary College report. Ms. Miller replied that it was completed eight or nine years ago.

Mr. Sassi stated that in his opinion, it is outdated.

Ms. Miller respectfully disagreed as the information provided does not outdate itself.

Mr. Sassi added that in Governor's Cuomo's budget approximately \$850 million was appropriated for 2020 for intergenerational housing, however, Orange County does not have enough intergenerational housing.

Ms. Miller agreed and most of the housing they receive requires that a special need be attached to the housing stipend. They have spoken previously about possibly taking some of the county's portion of the \$5 million that goes toward temporarily housing people and put it into Housing First. Their first pilot case came through today and they will attempt to do more with the goal to move people into permanent housing which is less costly than temporary housing.

Mr. Anagnostakis thanked Ms. Miller for the data but does either of the reports Ms. Miller mentioned have the comparison of each county throughout New York State on a per capita basis and how do they rate. Mr. Craner replied that it would be in the Office of the State Comptroller who issued the Housing Affordability Report.

Ms. Miller reiterated that she would send all the reports mentioned electronically to committee members.

Mr. Tuohy asked if Ms. Miller had the opportunity to look into Community Development Block Grants for housing. Ms. Miller replied yes, Ms. Tochio continues to meet with them on the possibilities of rent stipends. In addition, they have directly funded an outreach position with HONOR.

Mr. Sassi granted a request by Mr. Ranni to address the committee on the Independent Home Care realignment crisis.

Mr. Ranni addressed the committee stating that Independent Living Inc. has service centers in Newburgh, Middletown and Monticello with the goal of independence for the disabled and elderly. They began deinstitutionalizing people from mental health hospitals decades ago and now work toward preventing institutionalization of individuals. They are facing an incredible crisis through the State of New York relative to Consumer Directed Payments. They are currently the fiscal intermediary for many disabled individuals in the community; however, that funding may be cut, and the effects will not only affect services provided to the individuals but could cause institutionalization and they are asking for their assistance. The law may not be handed down immediately, but it is an issue that the Department of Health is actively engaged in and actively considering cutting the funding as early as July 1st. This will result in huge impacts to individuals and their ability to provide support and services to the disabled community; however, they are unsure as to how they can solve this problem. They are seeking the legislature's assistance, support, advocacy and direction on how they can stop this devastating mandate and \$150 million cut.

Mr. Sassi asked if they had contacted their state representatives. Mr. Ranni replied yes; however, it seems to be falling on deaf ears.

Mr. O'Donnell asked how much of the \$150 million would affect Orange County. Mr. Hovey replied that it would be approximately \$14 million with several agencies being impacted if the Consumer Directed Home Care program was cut. In New York State, 90,000 people receive this service with over 500 providers but the governor is trying to reduce the agency administration rate from 15% to 4% and wipeout any provider supplying this service in the state. They are concerned with the process of converting, lower rates and possible elimination of the program and leaving many without services. There are about a thousand participants in Orange County that use the program and are very concerned about the welfare and integrity of the program. They are trying to create more awareness and attention around this issue. They have a fact sheet and several letters that he would forward to the committee, and he has met five times with the Medicaid Director, Donna Frescatore but they are not willing to talk about any changes in the rates, but they will talk about best practices but nothing on how it will be financed.

Mr. O'Donnell asked for the number of constituents receiving their services. Mr. Hovey replied around five hundred.

Mr. Benton asked for the number of providers in Orange County. Mr. Hovey replied possibly between eight and eleven.

Mr. Sassi suggested that they compile all the information and send it to him and he will forward it on to the Legislature.

Messrs. Ranni and Hovey thanked the committee for their time.

Mr. Tuohy moved request to accept and appropriate State and Municipal Facilities Program ("SAM") grant from the Dormitory Authority State of New York (DASNY). The source of the funds is state grant funds. The grant will be used for improvements at the Orange County Veterans Cemetery, \$350,000.00, seconded by Mr. O'Donnell.

Mr. Farrell explained that through former Senator John Bonacic they received the first grant for \$250,000.00 and since then an additional \$100,000.00 was made available bringing the total to \$350,000.00 for improvements to the Orange County Veterans Cemetery and expansion.

Mr. Paduch asked for a breakdown of improvements. Mr. Farrell replied that the funds would be used toward the continued expansion of the cemetery and second memorial shelter.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Sassi noted that he would like to table the "Request to approve and appropriate funds for the 2019 Capital Expense Project Fund No. CP-240 for the continuing Orange County Veterans Memorial Cemetery Maintenance and Expansion, \$750,000.00 (bonding)" for one month as it is incomplete.

Mr. O'Donnell motioned to table the request to approve and appropriate funds for the 2019 Capital Expense Project Fund No. CP-240 for the continuing Orange County Veterans Memorial Cemetery Maintenance and Expansion, \$750,000.00 (bonding) until the July meeting, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.