

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023  
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Janet Sutherland, Chairwoman  
Michael Amo, Mike Anagnostakis, Glenn R. Ehlers, Genesis Ramos, Laurie R. Tautel,  
Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: Katherine E. Bonelli, Chairwoman  
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator  
Lisa M. James, Assistant County Attorney  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services  
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center  
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center  
Alison Tyack, Deputy Commissioner, Human Resources  
Ann Marie Maglione, Director, Office for the Aging  
Liz Matis, Budget Analyst

Ms. Sutherland opened the committee meeting at 3:31 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

Ms. Tautel moved request to create one (1) Full-Time Aging Services Specialist (Spanish/English Speaking) position, Grade 9, in support of the New York Connects Expansion and Enhancement program. This position is contingent on grant funding and shall be automatically abolished upon cancellation of such funding, seconded by Mr. Amo.

Mr. Amo asked how many languages are available in the department. Ms. Maglione replied that they have the language line with nearly every language, and a person that speaks Creole and one that speaks French.

Mr. Amo expressed his concerns for the aging Yiddish speaking population in his community.

Ms. Maglione agrees that the community continues to grow with respect to the Office for the Aging. They do have a congregate site in the village of Kiryas Joel and a site manager that speaks Yiddish, Hungarian and English.

Mr. Amo suggested that if a Yiddish speaking grant becomes available that they apply. Ms. Maglione agreed and added that they are also seeing more and more people needing sign language.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked for the percentage of Yiddish speaking seniors. Mr. Amo replied that it would be a small number now but it will grow.

Ms. Tautel asked how they communicate with sign language residents. Ms. Maglione replied that they have a contract for dealing with the hearing and visually impaired and Mount St. Mary's College will often provide a signer for events.

Ms. Tautel asked if they have access to visual phones. Ms. Maglione replied no, but normally a child or relative will call for the individual.

Ms. Tautel asked if that contract was countywide. Ms. Maglione replied yes.

Mr. Tuohy asked about the status of contracted home health aides. Ms. Maglione replied that they continue to struggle but a new contract will be going out and several agencies are interested.

Motion carried. All in favor

Mr. Tuohy moved request to authorize an additional appropriation to the 2023 budget in the amount of \$179,342.00. The total grant funds (\$223,011.00) were originally appropriated in 2022, and the current amount reflects the total remaining following the 2022 expenditures. These federal funds had been made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and are administered by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Funds provided will continue to be used to enhance, improve, and expand Adult Protective Services' ability to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. There are no local funds involved, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved to request an additional appropriation to the 2023 budget to receive and expend \$500.00 donation from the Newburgh Elks Lodge. The funds are specifically earmarked for the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) at Social Services and will be used to support and facilitate activities for children, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Ms. Miller expressed her gratitude to the Newburgh Elks Lodge for choosing the Child Advocacy Center.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Tuohy moved request to create one (1) Chief Social Welfare Examiner, Grade 16 position. The position will be allocated to the Economic Independence Division and will serve as a significant benefit allowing the Department greater flexibility in meeting challenges relating to supervision/oversight, overall management and compliance. Funding to come from vacancy savings in operating budget, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to create one (1) Associate Account Clerk I, Grade 9 position and abolish one (1) Typist I, Grade 4 position. This position will be allocated to the Fiscal Department allowing for additional supervision/oversight and increased efficiencies. Funding to come from vacancy savings in operating budget, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Motion carried. All in favor.

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

Ms. Miller explained that they continue to see a decrease in temporary and family assistance, but that will increase over time. Unemployment numbers remain low. SNAP applications continue to rise with 300 plus applications. HEAP season has closed with 24,327 payments, and cooling season has begun. Emergency Housing placement remains a struggle with 460 families and singles currently being housed. Orange County has 386 shelter beds which are all full and 60 motel rooms and they are struggling to find permanent housing. Medicaid recertifications are coming in and New York State has given a five-month leeway for those that may not meet the deadline for recertification. Child Protective Service numbers have increased, and Foster Care numbers continue to decline. She recently reported that the Child Support Collection Unit received the accolade for "Best Performing Large County Unit of 2022." She is pleased to announce that for four years in a row they were the "Best Performing Large County Unit."

Ms. Tautel asked if they expect to receive cooling funds. Ms. Miller replied yes and are already receiving applications. The fuel fund has closed out and the remaining balance of approximately \$30,000.00 has been rolled into the cooling season.

Mr. Amo asked if the county was doing anything to prevent people from losing their homes. Ms. Miller replied that they strongly encourage people to call prior to being evicted as there are emergency funds that can be used to assist them. Once the eviction moratorium was lifted it become even more difficult for people to remain in their homes. The demand is so high that landlords can demand more for their rental space resulting in extreme costs for an apartment. The rental assistance program states that they cannot pay more than fair market rent and every apartment that they have assisted with has been above what is considered fair market rent. This means that people moving in have to pay a higher percentage to get the apartment.

Mr. Amo asked if there was any process in place to address the root cause of the situation besides money. Ms. Miller replied that they are trying to address mental health and substance abuse issues with the homeless. HONORehg will have Safe Options Support Team (SOS) conducting critical time intervention to connect them with services and gain permanent housing. They have always been challenged with the number of available affordable housing units in not only Orange County but the state. They never had enough housing to begin with and with the pandemic, economic change, increased population, stricter building inspectors and denial of affordable housing building options it has only become worse. The Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) grants to support affordable housing are not being built with only 30% of what is being awarded

being built because many do not want it in their community and pilots not being enough of an incentive. If that continues, they will continue to struggle with not having permanent housing options and in the end, they need affordable permanent housing.

Mr. Amo asked if they have a relationship with the Builders Associations. Ms. Miller replied that she along with the departments of Real Property, Planning and Community Development are looking to meet again to discuss and share their knowledge within their expertise and see what is coming forward so they can plan successfully.

Ms. Ramos commented that there is a misconception that this only impacts low-income residents; however, there are many that do not qualify for assistance because they do not meet the eligibility requirements. They are seeing landlords raise the rent to whatever they want because of demand. Mixed income housing is the model they should move toward as affordable housing is definitely needed and still capture those people that are just above the eligibility requirements. She agrees that they need more housing development, and she would personally like to see more houses built as opposed to warehouses in Orange County. They need mechanisms to keep people housed and does Ms. Miller see anything regarding that.

Ms. Miller replied that it should be called workforce housing because there is a misconception that people who are homeless do not work, and most do work. They try to place people close to their employment so they can continue to work, and she agrees that many people are working. For those that do not qualify for services is where it often ends but they do have some support services that they do qualify for such as SNAP and childcare which is 300% of the median income which can be a lot for a single mother trying to work.

The meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.