

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023
4:00 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: Katherine E. Bonelli, Chairwoman
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Anthony Cardoso, Assistant County Attorney
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Dr. Alicia Pointer, Commissioner of Health
Lisa K. Lahiff, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center
Kerry Gallagher, Commissioner of Finance
Erin Sztendor, Budget Analyst

Mr. Tuohy opened the committee meeting at 4:08 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.

Ms. Sutherland moved request to accept and appropriate New York State Office of Mental Health WOGI (Welcome Orange Geriatric Initiative) Grant COLA increase for Year 2 in the amount of \$16,200.00. Additionally, appropriate unused Year 1 2022 funding in the amount of \$20,000.00 into the Department of Mental Health's 2023 budget, \$36,200.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health.

Ms. Miller addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to legislators. Department staff attended Governor Hochul's Children's Mental Health Summit – A call to action to fill the gaps with cross system partners. The National Association of Counties in partnership with RAND has selected Orange County's Crisis Continuum 311/911 interoperability to study as a best practice and to share nationwide. Deputy Commissioner Lacey Trimble was selected to co-chair the New York State Substance Abuse and Mental Health work group for the master plan on aging. The New York State Local Service Plan was completed and reviewed by their Community Services Board and will be submitted this week. The Columbia University

NIDA funded Healing Communities Study is scheduled for a NIDA site visit on June 27, 2023 with Department of Mental Health and select partners. Think Differently sponsored the "Starts with a Smile" event and they received a donation from Light it Up Blue of nearly \$18,000.00 that will support the sensory room at the HONOR Family and Adult Shelter. They have also partnered with the Orange County Department of Health to implement an additional 38 naloxone boxes at both SUNY Orange and SUNY Newburgh. Moving forward the same partnership will be adding boxes to County buildings and departments. They already have them in approximately seventeen locations. Lastly, HONOR was awarded \$950,000.00 annually from the New York State Office of Mental Health to develop Safe Option Support Teams (SOS) for Orange and Dutchess Counties.

On the agenda was the monthly financial report on Valley View.

Ms. Strecker explained that for May 2023, IGT funding is at zero and they have no new information on when they could receive a payment. They continue to follow-up with LeadingAge and the New York State Department of Health. Other revenues were at \$14 million. Personal services were at \$7.9 million, equipment at \$32,343.00, contractual at \$3.4 million, employee benefits at \$7.3 million and serial bond interest at \$36,764.00. Their census for May was 61.96%. Medicaid utilization was at 75.17%, medicaid (HMO) at 1.43%, medicare at 13.38% and private pay at 8.39%.

Mr. LaDue added that they are trending in the right direction with the census for June at 63.49%.

Mr. Tuohy asked when they last received IGT funding. Ms. Strecker replied in 2022.

Mr. Tuohy asked if they were still waiting on \$4.8 million for 2022. Ms. Strecker replied yes.

Mr. Tuohy stated that it seems that they are slipping back into their old pattern and not staying current with the IGT payments. Ms. Strecker agreed, as they were very timely on their payments, and they have not seen this type of delay in years. Talks continue with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the federal government, and they are waiting on them to approve the upper payment limit.

Mr. Anagnostakis commented that the private pay increase is good; however, he expressed his concern on the 12% increase in workers compensation.

Mr. LaDue responded that he would get the information on the increase in workers compensation to the committee.

Ms. Strecker added that with the continued growth in their Medicare census they would like to open another short-term rehabilitation unit, however, they are challenged with hiring staff.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Laurence LaDue, Commissioner of Valley View.

Mr. LaDue addressed the committee and highlighted several key points in the update that was emailed to legislators. Valley View's census on June 19, 2023, was 62.78%. They have three units closed. They currently have zero COVID positive residents or staff. The Attendance Incentive Results are as follows: Week 5: 69 employees received the incentive, Week 6: 62

employees, Week 7: 52 employees, Week 8: 61 employees, Week 9: 72 employees and Week 10: 73 employees. They are taking short-term admissions and the CHHA census is fourteen. In May the CHHA had ten new admissions, nine discharges and conducted two hundred and thirty therapy sessions. They are still struggling to hire Home Health Aides and they will be working with staffing agencies for assistance. The New York State Department of Health was onsite for their Nursing Home Medicare Recertification Survey from June 1, 2023 to June 8, 2023. The New York State Department of Health was also onsite for their CHHA Medicare recertification survey from June 12, 2023 to June 14, 2023. They are still awaiting the official survey results; they will receive minor deficiencies on both surveys (which is normal) and survey results will be shared next month. Unfortunately, they do not have an update on the latest IGT payment, and they anticipate closing the 2022 audit without accruing for this payment. As of April 1, 2023, they received twenty applications for LPN's and RN's and of those applications four were not licensed, they repeatedly tried to contact six applicants with no response, one applicant declined for salary reasons, one per-diem LPN declined with no reason provided, four applicants were hired one full-time LPN was hired; however, she resigned after two-weeks due to personal issues, they hired two per-diem LPN's that are still employed and one per-diem nurse care supervisor that initial declined due to salary decided to take the position but has delayed their start date. They are still working on hiring one full-time LPN and one per-diem LPN. They received thirty-two applications for CNA's and of those, ten were not licensed, one person's certifications were expired, they attempted to contact six but received no response. Six interviews were scheduled for various applicants, and all were no call/no shows, four were not interested, one was a previous employee that was terminated and out of the thirty-two positions they hired, four full-time CNA's. The positive is that they are getting more applicants; however, the hiring rate is low.

Mr. Tuohy asked where the applicants were coming from. Mr. LaDue replied primarily through Indeed.

Ms. Sutherland asked if they were getting applicants from county job fairs. Mr. LaDue replied that he does not recall any nursing applications, but they did get an applicant for one of their open maintenance positions.

Mr. Amo asked if they offer in-house training for CNA's and if not, why. Mr. LaDue replied no, and there are not many locations to get CNA licensing.

Mr. Tuohy asked if it was offered at OCCC. Mr. LaDue replied that it was offered through BOCES and a private company in Orange County.

Ms. Sutherland clarified that it is a two-year program through BOCES.

Mr. Anagnostakis commented that between 2014 and 2016, Valley View did not receive their IGT payment before their audit was completed which resulted in double payments for the following year. Therefore, because it will not show for 2022, they will be even higher in the red with 2023 looking like a miracle occurred when in reality it did not.

Ms. Tautel moved to request supplemental appropriation of Year 5 funds into the operating budget for the period 4/1/2023 – 3/31/2024 from the New York State Department of Health for the Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Program, \$39,166.00, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Ms. Tautel asked if this would cover the vaccine. Dr. Pointer replied no, it covers testing and treatment for the uninsured.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was a Department Update from Dr. Alicia Pointer, Commissioner of Health.

Dr. Pointer addressed an item that was not included in the update provided to the committee. They were recently informed that at the end of 2023, the Funeral Directors Association will not be providing medical examiner decedent transport. They are looking at going out to bid or having it done internally to ensure that decedents are transported to the Medical Examiner's Office. This only applies to those that must go to the Medical Examiner's Office which is a small percentage of deaths in the county.

Mr. Tuohy asked what transpired with the funeral directors. Dr. Pointer replied that it was based on several factors such as the aging population of funeral directors and lack of staff.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if there was a contract in place and if so, when does it expire and were they being compensated. Dr. Pointer replied that a contract was not in place, and they were kindly doing it and being compensated per transport. The Funeral Directors Association as a group decided that they would no longer offer this service and they are grateful that they are giving them until the end of the year.

Mr. Ehlers asked for the amount received per transport because he understood it had to do with the amount they are receiving per transport. Dr. Pointer replied that they receive \$125.00 per transport. They did meet with the Funeral Directors Association who indicated that it was not due to cost but manpower and physical demands; however, she cannot speak for them.

Mr. Ehlers stated that \$125.00 is not a reasonable amount to pay when you often get up in the middle of the night to transport a decedent.

Dr. Pointer agreed, and that is why they are going out for bid as there could be people that are still willing to do the service for a hire payment.

Chairwoman Bonelli asked for last year's expenses regarding the transports. Dr. Pointer replied that approximately 500 bodies were transported at a cost of about \$115,000.00.

Chairwoman Bonelli asked if the prior year was about the same. Dr. Pointer replied yes, the number of deaths has increased as the population increases, and the opioid epidemic has added to that number.

Chairwoman Bonelli asked for the projected number of transports in the bid. Dr. Pointer replied that 500-600 transports would be a reasonable number and there is also a possibility that it could be split amongst more than one bidder and/or group.

Chairwoman Bonelli asked where they were in the RFP process. Dr. Pointer replied that it was currently with the Law Department for review.

Dr. Pointer clarified that funeral directors are currently being paid \$250.00 per transport.

Mr. Amo stated that based on Dr. Pointer's comments they will be going out to bid as opposed to having it done in-house.

Dr. Pointer explained that their preference would be to go out to bid; however, if that is unsuccessful, they will consider other avenues.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if the average transport per night is 1.5. Dr. Pointer replied one to two in a 24-hour period, however, occasionally they could have more than one at a time. If the death occurs at a hospital, the hospital will receive it until the following morning; however, if it's an unattended death such as at home or car accident it must be picked up immediately. This is very challenging as there are physical requirements with the transport issue itself because if they use a county vehicle a county employee must drive the vehicle.

Dr. Pointer continued on with the monthly update and highlight several key points in the update that was emailed to legislators. Infectious Diseases are as follows: COVID: Hospitalization rates are low. WASTEWATER: Trends are showing a decrease. VACCINES: 40% of adults over 65 years of age have a bivalent (COVID-19) booster and 13% of the total population have a bivalent (COVID-19) booster; they have ad campaigns in malls and the Let's Talk Shots collaboration with pediatricians and Johns Hopkins. PERTUSSIS: From January to May 31st, Orange County has had 39 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) and the rate of new cases has slowed but continues to be over their baseline. PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: The Orange County Department of Health has worked closely with schools, businesses, and other county departments to help residents stay safe and healthy during the recent air quality event and they have updated air quality/smoke plans accordingly. They will also be hosting a Public Health Emergency Law conference on July 17th and 18th. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: The county is growing and is updating its infrastructure. They continue to have unprecedented numbers of plans for review and housing and nuisance concerns continue to increase.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked about the community spread of COVID-19. Dr. Pointer replied that the CDC no longer looks at community transmission rates.

Mr. Tuohy asked if they have records showing the rates of Pertussis over the years and what causes the spikes in cases. Dr. Pointer replied yes, it is transmitted through close contact and there are natural ebbs and flows with the unvaccinated more likely to contract it during those periods.

Mr. Amo expressed his concerns with nursing home census and direct admissions from hospitals and are they seeing a breakdown between the two systems and would that be a county problem. Dr. Pointer replied that it is a significant issue and county concern. She is a member of the long-term care subcommittee and one of the work groups within that subcommittee has been discussing how they can improve that process and to ensure it is done seamlessly. While they do not have any solutions yet, the state and this work group are considering all different directions.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.