

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021  
4:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: James D. O'Donnell, Chairman  
Michael Amo, Kevindaryán Luján, Janet Sutherland, Peter V. Tuohy, Laurie R. Tautel

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader  
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator  
Rob Sassi, Legislator  
Betsy Abraham, Legislative Counsel  
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health  
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  
Kerry Gallagher, Deputy Commissioner of Finance  
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Mr. O'Donnell opened the committee meeting at 4:00 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Anagnostakis who was absent.

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

Ms. Miller stated that the Director of Chemical Dependency Services coordinated and co-facilitated a 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training in partnership with the Orange County Police Academy for twelve seasoned officers from Towns of Montgomery, Chester, Warwick, Crawford and Highlands and city of Port Jervis and have worked diligently with law enforcement to expand the **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)**. The New Windsor Police Department was awarded a MAP grant to provide training and tolls to collaborate with the Mobile Mental Health Team virtually. The Department of Mental Health has submitted their annual Local Services Plan to New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), New York State Office of Addition Services and Support (OASAS) and **New York State** Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). They are on the cusp of scheduling appointments with several well-known pediatricians who are committed to understanding mental health challenges related to children. The Department of Mental Health has submitted a proposal in response to the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) RFP for "Partnership to Support Aging in Place in Communities Severely Impacted by COVID-19." They are close to completing three Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements with several school districts including Monroe-Woodbury with the issue coming down to cyber-security and how to maintain secure networks. The Orange County Department of Health and The Orange County Department of Mental Health fiscal staff has met multiple times to plan on how to increase harm reduction strategies that address substance use disorders and opioid use disorders; to increase Narcan training and availability; expand training for prescribing Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and overall

prevention efforts. They would ask that you please consider supporting social media marketing messages regarding the increase in substance use and opioid overdoses. According to OD Map, they had two spikes consisting of 5 or more overdoses in 24-hour period. They are working on a campaign to activate the community response to increase active outreach and they have been partnering with law enforcement, first responders, emergency rooms to expand overdose response as a prevention and intervention strategy. All mental hygiene services continue to actively provide services and are going back to in person sessions; however, a majority of services are still being offered remotely/virtually. Statistics across New York State shows that only 59% of beds were utilized for rehabilitation and detox in 2020 and while they understand that the pandemic kept some individuals out there were other reasons as well.

Ms. Sutherland asked about the success of Text4Teens and are youths utilizing the program. Ms. Miller replied yes.

Ms. Sutherland asked about the number of available beds for mental health services with respect to youths in local hospitals. Ms. Miller replied that youths are presenting at emergency rooms with one in a local hospital for 36 days before they were able to be moved to location for mental health treatment services. They are working closely with hospitals because youths are not being moved into the appropriate level of care in a timely manner. They are working on a plan with Garnet Health to prevent the use of emergency rooms for children and youths and to put in place safety plans to prevent that level of care as they have had between 77 and 120 emergency room visits a month.

Ms. Sutherland commented that quite often by the time a mobile mental unit gets to a home the child is no longer presenting and/or by the time the child is seen in the emergency room they are no longer presenting but that is something that needs to be looked at further.

Mr. Luján asked about challenges with the opioid epidemic. Ms. Miller replied that they are working on a response team with law enforcement. Throughout the pandemic many people were isolated, and relationships help recovery and not having that can result in relapse for many and the use of Fentanyl can lead to the use of cocaine along with the use of marijuana.

Mr. Luján asked about challenges with the rental and housing market as rental prices have increased significantly with the eviction moratorium set to expire next month. Is the county prepared and how are they ensuring that the residents of Orange County have affordable housing. Ms. Miller replied that they have capacity in their temporary housing options and any overflow would go to hotel/motels. When the eviction moratorium is lifted, they anticipate an increase in request for services with the challenge being to find permanent housing. They have found that with the recent competitive market as soon as an apartment becomes available it is taken. They are aware of this challenge and are addressing several low-income housing projects.

Mr. Tuohy moved Local Law to amend the Orange County Sanitary Code, pursuant to Section 7.05 of the Orange County Administrative Code, seconded by Mr. Amo.

Dr. Gelman explained that there is a section in the current Sanitary Code which states that when they have hearings, they must have a court reporter or stenographer. This local law would amend that by not having a court reporter or stenographer for hearings and to record it digitally. If a transcript is needed the cost would be to the individual requesting the transcript.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Sutherland moved request to accept and appropriate funds from the New York State Department of Health for the Public Health Emergency Preparedness grant for the period of 9/1/2021 – 8/31/2022 to be used for the Opioid Crisis, \$72,000.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to accept and appropriate funds from the New York State Department of Health for the Childhood Lead Primary Prevention Program grant for the period of 4/1/2020 – 9/30/2021, \$584,873.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Mr. Ericson explained that this grant has been in place for a long time and is a state mandated program and children are required to be tested for lead at the ages of one and two. If an elevated blood lead level is detected which is 5 micrograms per deciliter or above. When he started with the program in 1994, the action level was 20 micrograms per deciliter, and he conducted approximately 200 inspections per year where they are now doing less than 50 inspections per year. That would be attributed to the work being done in public health to address this issue. When a child has an elevated blood lead level it puts their community health outreach division into action who contacts the family, educational component, nutrition information and/or basic information. The Environmental Health Division also takes action by conducting the actual investigation and where the child is getting the lead poisoning. That investigation takes them to the original dwelling/immediate housing and/or any location the child may visit for at least 8 hours per week. That investigation also includes testing parts of the house with an X-ray fluorescence (XRF) that does not disturb the paint. The challenge is that nearly all of their older building stock in the cities of Newburgh, Port Jervis and Middletown have lead in them and to get all of the lead out of those buildings really cannot be done effectively and safely. It was determined many years ago that they need to make it lead safe and as long as it was not in a condition that was conducive to lead poisoning (chipping, flaking or creating dust) they do not have to do anything. Their priority and/or concern is to ensure things are lead safe and that the environment is safe for the child. If lead is found and conducive to lead poisoning a notice and demand letter is sent out to the landlord/property owner who then have to submit a plan on how it would be corrected and often it can be accomplished by cleaning and repainting. Certification classes are offered free of charge to landlord/property owners, and they are allotted a certain amount of time to have the work completed with the property then being reinspected to determine if the work was completed in an appropriate manner.

Mr. Cheney asked if they have good compliance by the landlord/property owner with respect to remediation. Mr. Ericson replied typically yes, as building inspectors are also contacted on

these cases and a landlord/property owner could lose their certificate of occupancy if they do not comply.

Mr. Cheney asked for the time frame from when lead is detected to the work being completed. Mr. Ericson replied that they try to get it done within 60 days.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to accept and appropriate funds from the Department of Health and Human Services for the Orange County COVID Response to Advance Health Equity grant for the period of 7/1/2021 – 6/30/2023, \$800,000.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Dr. Gelman explained that Orange County received one of the 73 grants awarded from the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. Over the next two years the Orange County Department of health will partner with SUNY Orange and Cornerstone Family Health to develop health literacy plans to increase the availability, acceptability, and use of COVID-19 public health information and services by racial and ethnic minority populations in the cities of Newburgh and Middletown and surrounding areas.

Mr. Luján asked about projects on what they anticipate doing to improve equity. Dr. Gelman replied that they are one of a few counties with a Health Equity Director. The CDC is currently in the county, and they are in conjunction with their staff, NYSDOH staff are conducting the rapid community health assessment specifically addressing vaccine hesitancy. While they are looking across the county, they will be focusing on certain areas with reported high incidence of disease early on and throughout the pandemic as well as low vaccination rates and the reasons for the vaccine hesitancy as they are different and vary throughout the county.

Mr. Luján asked if the language barrier remains an issue with respect to vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. Dr. Gelman replied that vaccine hesitancy is definitely multifactorial, and they are in the process of assessing that. She presented completed vaccine percentages by zip code as follows: Monroe, 10950 has the lowest percentage of 27.1% and Tuxedo Park, 10987 with the highest at 91.5% and this shows a tremendous barrier in some areas and something the CDC is attempting to establish and what are the underlying causes. They will also be visiting at the following areas: Middletown, Newburgh, Port Jervis, 12771 at 37.4% Sparrowbush at with Cuddebackville, 12729 at 29.9%, Huguenot at 39.9% with the hope that the CDC can shed some light on best practices.

Ms. Tautel asked for the current fully vaccinated rate in Orange County. Dr. Gelman replied that they are in line with the New York State vaccination percentage of 52% to 55% if they include the federal vaccination data. She knows they have heard of the alluded 70% vaccination rate statewide; however, that is for adults 18 and older with one vaccine dose.

Ms. Tautel asked for the current COVID-19 positivity rate and hospitalizations. Dr. Gelman replied that she would forward that information to the committee but as of July 14<sup>th</sup>, Orange County has had 47,874 cases of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic last March. That is an increase of 251 cases since June 15<sup>th</sup> and they are seeing a steady uptick in new cases.

Ms. Tautel asked if anyone has tested positive for the delta variant in Orange County. Dr. Gelman replied that they have not had a lab confirmed case in the county. Their rolling 10-day average as of July 14<sup>th</sup> was 11.6 cases per day and a 4.13% decrease from the last report of 12.1 cases per day on June 10<sup>th</sup>; however, as of today they are seeing a slight increase. They are also seeing a younger cohort with four deaths reported in June, and one in July. The average age was 75.28 years old, and the median was 77 years old.

Mr. Amo asked if the completed vaccine percentages for the 10950 zip code was based on the total population or just for those 18 years of age and older. Dr. Gelman replied that they take the total population. Of the 47,874 cases of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic last March, 5920 were 17 years of age and under and children can contract and transmit COVID-19. They are seeing that the Delta variant is spreading more rapidly among the unvaccinated populations regardless of previous COVID-19 status and is more transmissible with children. The delta variant has been reported to be 200% more transmissible so children and the unvaccinated will be contracting and transmitting the virus. The Delta variant also has a much higher viral load of 1000% which is good for testing and results. In addition, the CDC is currently going around with staff to conduct rapid assessments.

Mr. Amo commented that the 10950 zip code also includes the Town of Palm Tree with approximately 50% of the population being children under the age of 18 which needs to be taken into consideration. Dr. Gelman agreed.

Mr. Tuohy asked if they are testing for the delta variant when testing for COVID-19. Dr. Gelman replied that the baseline PCR test does not test for the delta variant, and it was almost a separate test in itself.

Mr. Tuohy asked for clarification that if someone gets a positive COVID-19 test result what would trigger the test for the delta variant. Dr. Gelman replied that with the higher prevalence of the delta variant they could see more facilities request the supplemental testing.

Mr. Tuohy asked if New York State has requested that some of their tests be for the delta variant and, if so, how many. Dr. Gelman replied that out of thousands of tests they have had no confirmed cases of the delta variant in Orange County.

Mr. Luján asked if Orange County has any cases of COVID-19 from fully vaccinated individuals. Dr. Gelman replied that vaccine breakthrough rates both statewide and locally have been low as compared to unvaccinated reinfection rates for which they have had hundreds. Statewide they have seen a 1% vaccine breakthrough but that could be a little higher at 4%, 5% or 6% depending on the vaccine and they are presenting with mild symptoms and/or asymptomatic and even if they were symptomatic, they were not hospitalized.

Mr. Luján asked about the possible need for a vaccine booster. Dr. Gelman replied that with the delta variant and the mRNA vaccine, and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has been tested and with the delta variant both mRNA vaccines and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have proven to be very effective but not as effective as it was with previous variants. Clinical trials have shown that with the current dosage the vaccine was highly effective with the previous variants; however, with the delta variant it seems to still be fairly effective, and they are not seeing hospitalizations and that is the driving factor.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Tuohy moved request to accept and appropriate additional funds from the New York State Department of Health for the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) – COVID-19 grant for the period 7/1/2020 – 3/31/2023 to be used for enhanced detection, surveillance and prevention of COVID-19, \$1,050,508.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Mr. Tuohy asked if they were conducting wastewater testing at treatment plants. Dr. Gelman replied yes, to see if there was an increase over time in that area/municipality.

Mr. Tuohy asked about the tracking process because in the 10950-zip code they have a sewer district that encompasses the Towns of Palm Tree, Monroe, Woodbury, and parts of Blooming Grove and Chester. Dr. Gelman replied that the pilot test done in Newburgh has shown an increase in viral detection approximately a week to a week and half prior to receiving conformed lab results. As an early detection system, it is great because it provides them with area overview of which municipalities are seeing a sustained increase over time and, if so, they can go into the congregate areas and monitor the saliva pool testing.

Mr. Tuohy asked how they would determine which community the increase was in when it is coming from multiple municipalities. Mr. Ericson replied that the Newburgh plant takes in the Towns of Cornwall and New Windsor and the city of Newburgh. The Newburgh plant is designed to know the inflow from each municipality and when they were testing at the Newburgh plant, they were not only testing at the plant but also locations by municipality. If a plant is designed that way, it could then be narrowed down.

Dr. Gelman added that if the plant was not designed that way a public health announcement would be made to that area.

Mr. Cheney asked how the system deals with asymptomatic individuals and is there enough data to make sound judgements. Dr. Gelman replied yes, it has been a great tool for early detection. Once they see the increase which is a fairly inclusive increase as it detects the virus in the wastewater and if it's a sustained increase over time and not a random sampling, they would know that that area has either a cluster or potential for outbreak. They would then go to areas of either high congregate housing and/or employers with a large number of employees, schools or other facilities with large numbers of people that are there at any given time. She presented a brief overview of saliva pool testing.

Mr. Cheney asked about the time frame from when the samples are taken from the wastewater to results. Mr. Ericson replied that the lab testing is outsourced and samples are collected every few days and receive results within 24 hours.

Motion carried. All in favor.

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

Dr. Gelman stated that the Orange County Department of Health received one of 73 grant awards from the United States Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health as part of a new, two-year initiative to identify and implement best practices for improving health literacy to enhance COVID-19 vaccination and other mitigation practices among underserved populations. The award was for \$800,000.00. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is visiting Orange County from July 19<sup>th</sup> through July 23<sup>rd</sup> to help the Orange County Department of Health conduct a Rapid Community Assessment (RCA) around vaccine confidence in Orange County. The service was offered after a one-hour technical assistance call regarding strategies to increase vaccination rates in specific populations. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) experts would be deployed with a diverse group of Orange County Department of Health staff to conduct sessions and casual conversations with community leaders and general public. The areas of focus are the city of Newburgh, the areas encompassing the zip code of 10950, and the western part of the county including Port Jervis, Cuddebackville, Westtown, Huguenot and Sparrowbush. The areas of focus were chosen based on vaccination rates provided by the New York State Department of Health. The goal of the visit is three-fold: 1) To carry out a Rapid Community Assessment (RCA) with the communities identified at risk for low uptake of COVID-19 vaccine, maximizing established relationships with local community organizations (e.g. faith-based, non-profits, and businesses) and local Public Health Department; 2) Identify appropriate solutions to increase vaccine confidence in selected communities; and 3) Build Orange County Department of Health and partner capacity for similar assessments in other Orange County communities of focus. COVID-19 vaccination clinics are held twice a month (in Middletown & Newburgh) by appointment only and anyone can call 845-291-2330 to make an appointment or residents can go to [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov) and enter their zip code to look up the closest vaccination location with available vaccine type. The Orange County website COVID-19 page continues to have information for the public regarding New York State and Federal guidance documents. Lastly, the Nursing Division continues to vaccinate the homebound population who can register on their website or contact the Office For The Aging at 845-615-3700 or <https://www.orangecountygov.com/2080/Homebound-Vaccination> to register.

In other department news, they continue to track age-appropriate vaccinations of school age children in Orange County. As reported nationwide, there was a substantial decrease in age-appropriate vaccination as it pertains to school age children in the United States. They saw this last year in Orange County and expect to see it again this year with children going back to school. It is important to note that parents are encouraged to make an appointment to see their pediatrician sooner rather than later, to avoid issues with school participation as it relates to maintaining age-appropriate vaccination for children. In addition, they are seeing a resurgent in measles cases globally due to direct travel.

Mr. Luján asked for an update on their STD rates and does Orange County continue to lead in statewide numbers. Dr. Gelman replied yes; however, with congenital syphilis they are at 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Westchester County.

Mr. Luján asked about the age demographics. Dr. Gelman replied that it is primarily with the younger population, but they have seen some in the middle age population.

Mr. Tuohy asked for the overdose numbers for Orange County. Dr. Gelman replied that she did not have the information with her, but she would get it to the committee.

Ms. Tautel moved to request approval and appropriation of funds for a proposed 2021 capital expenditure for the water sewer treatment plant, \$250,000.00 (Appropriated Surplus), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Sutherland moved to request approval and appropriation of funds for a proposed 2021 capital expenditure to continue upgrading patient care mechanical lifters, \$70,000.00 (Appropriated Surplus), seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Tuohy moved to request approval and appropriation of funds for a proposed 2021 capital expenditure for engineering services. Engineering to perform a facility wide condition assessment relative to buildings, grounds, mechanical, structural, roofing, electrical systems, plumbing and code compliance, \$172,500.00 (Appropriated Surplus), seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Mr. LaDue explained that they need to conduct a facility wide condition assessment to determine what they need to prioritize going forward in their capital plan.

Mr. Cheney asked when the study would be done as it seems to be counterintuitive to put aside \$250,000.00. Mr. LaDue replied that that they did have work that needed to be done last year or they would have been out of compliance. They must prioritize the projects they have done as they are affected by time limitations and while they do have projects that will be done before this, they would like it done as soon as possible. This should be more streamlined as opposed to their boiler room project or Couser building HVAC project which require detailed specifications and issues that must be addressed by the Law Department and not as involved as some projects.

Mr. Cheney expressed his concerns on spending a great deal of money on the wastewater treatment plant when they have known of the problems. The technology could also change as a result of the study and anything they are spending now could potentially be lost. In his opinion, there is a level of expediency with respect to the sewer plant that may not exist for some other areas of the facility.

Mr. LaDue agreed, however, the funds spent on the sewer plant is a capital project and part of their medicaid rate and they will get a portion of those funds back.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was the monthly report on Valley View.

Ms. Strecker explained that IGT funding remains at \$1.5 million, \$22,200.00 in emergency disaster assistance and \$15 million in other revenues. On the personal services side, personal services were at \$10 million, equipment at \$18,500.00, contractual at \$3.8 million, employee benefits at \$8.5 million, serial bond interest at \$57,836.00 and overtime at \$942,651.00 and their June census was 79.76%.

Ms. Tautel asked if they had anything on additional IGT funding as they budgeted \$7.5 million and have only received \$1.5 million. Mr. LaDue replied that they normally do not get notified until September/October.

Ms. Tautel recalled getting two or three checks. Mr. LaDue replied that it has been more consistent over the last few years and that is why he is confident they will hear something in the fall. In past years, they could go years without a check and then get two or three large checks.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if they received all their IGT funding for 2020. Ms. Strecker replied yes.

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

Mr. LaDue stated that Valley View's census as of today was 80.55%. They currently have no residents with COVID-19; however, they have one staff member out due to COVID-19 contact precautions. 91% of residents and 61% of staff have been vaccinated and they continue to offer the vaccine to residents and staff. COVID-19 staff testing was just changed, staff that have had the COVID-19 vaccine no longer need to test regularly (except during new outbreak of COVID-19 positive resident and/or staff) and staff that aren't vaccinated still must get tested twice per month. The Valley View CHHA currently has ten patients, and each patient typically receives four rehab visits a week, two by physical therapy and two by occupational therapy. These visits occur after an initial visit/assessment has been completed by the RN and the assessment develops the patients plan of care. New York State recently passed new nursing home legislation that establishes Personal Caregiving and Compassionate Caregiving Visitors. They have also started additional group activities with residents.

Ms. Tautel asked if the CHHA was taking patients from local hospitals. Mr. LaDue replied yes, but most come from Valley View.

Mr. Tuohy asked about the hiring issues for the CHHA. Mr. LaDue replied that they are still having a difficult time recruiting and that is not just a Valley View issue but an industry wide issue. For them it is specific to LPN's and RN's and they are currently discussing strategies to increase their hiring numbers including possible incentives.

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.