

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2019
3:30 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Michael D. Paduch, Minority Leader
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
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center
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 with the exception of Legislator Sutherland who arrived at 3:34 p.m. and Legislator Anagnostakis who was absent.

On the agenda were the highlighted important issues from the Department of Social Services monthly reports for May and June.

Ms. Miller stated that Temporary Assistance and Safety Net continue to trend downward, and SNAP benefits have decreased slightly. They have seen an increased use of food pantries; however, that is common during the summer months because children are not in school and therefore not receiving their lunch programs. Emergency Housing and overall homeless remains the same; however, they have seen a reduction in hotel/motels which can be attributed to the pilot for Housing First and the use of the counties contribution for temporary housing to provide rent stipends for Housing First. To date they have placed four families and one individual with the intention to go to ten placements. They are watching the pilot closely to ensure that it is being balanced, sound decisions are made on who is placed, moving them toward independence and not having increased costs to the county but redistributing funds in a positive way that puts people into permanent housing. They are working closely with these families to ensure that the required house searches are being conducted as per their independent housing plan. New York State has requested specific information and discussions held on block grant funding; however, it is an unpredictable population and because block grant funding is usually capped, they did not want to have any unfunded mandates so they will continue to fund it as is but work with the state to be creative. Child Protective Service cases have increased over last year, and while Raise the Age numbers remain low, they anticipate an increase as 17 year-olds will be added as of October 1, 2019. Lastly, none of the six positions allotted for Raise the Age have been filled but they will continue to monitor it closely.

Mr. Sassi asked how the stipend was distributed and the process that follows. Ms. Miller replied that they are following the same practice as HONOR who manages the federal Housing First stipend. In addition, HONOR holds the lease for these individuals with the stipend

paid through county funds. Many individuals are already employed but some will be employed and/or receive social security benefits which will then allow them to increase their percentage toward rent over time.

Mr. Sassi emphasized that the key is to avoid homelessness.

Mr. Sassi referred to the last page of the May Monthly Report under Revenues and Expenditures and the difference between the 2019 modified budget of \$221 million and the year-to-date of \$151 million with only \$70 million left for the year. Mr. Craner replied that because local taxation is provided in the beginning with the largest portion of the local taxation being the approximately \$70 million for the medicaid program makes it appear that it has been used but it has not.

On the agenda was a discussion on medicaid transportation.

Ms. Miller thanked them for their advocacy regarding the medicaid transportation rate. She has reviewed both the document that was submitted by their assembly members on April 4, 2019 to Commissioner Zucker of the New York State Department of Health and the proposed resolution. She has reached out to their contact at medicaid transportation and was advised that Commissioner Zucker responded to the letter sent by their assembly members and that a copy of the letter would be forwarded to her tomorrow and once received would be forwarded to the committee. She cannot comprehend why Orange County is so much less than the surrounding counties as medicaid transportation has doubled since it was locally administered and medicaid enrollment has increased by approximately 30% which could account for the additional cost; however, this issue is about unfair rates as compared to surrounding counties.

Mr. Sassi asked for clarification that the rate was not established by Orange County but the state. Ms. Miller replied that they have no role in the rate nor did she have any knowledge that they were receiving rates that were less than the surrounding counties.

Mr. Tuohy asked if Ms. Miller knew when the increases were applied to the other counties and could they recoup any of those funds. Ms. Miller replied no, as they have had no involvement since it was taken over by the state in 2012-2013.

Mr. Tuohy inquired as to whether they could recoup any of those funds. Ms. Miller replied that based on the information she received from Robert Schmidt, her contact in transportation, Commissioner Zucker replied to the letter submitted by their elected officials and she would hope that it would explain the reasoning behind the differential in rates. In her opinion, until they receive that information, they are advocating for whatever is best whether the current change is reimbursable to when the changes occurred.

Mr. Tuohy moved resolution requesting the New York State Commissioner of Health to adjust the Medicaid Transportation reimbursement fee schedule for Orange County, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Mr. Amo explained that based on the information he received the comment from the New York State Health Department was that Orange County never asked for an increase, therefore implying that the other counties had. In his opinion, they should send up the resolution and ask them to look at the disparity as it is crippling some of the transportation services in the county.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Tuohy moved request to accept and appropriate funds received via individual donations to the Orange County Veterans Memorial Cemetery, \$610.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.