

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2023
3:30 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: Katherine E. Bonelli, Chairwoman
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Esq., Legislative Counsel
Richard B. Golden, County Attorney
Lisa James, Assistant County Attorney
Cedric Cooper, Assistant County Attorney
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services
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
Samantha Sweikata, Commissioner of General Services
Christian Farrell, Director, Veterans Service Agency
Danielle Diana-Smith, Assistant Director, Office for the Aging
Liz Matis, Budget Analyst
Christopher Molinelli, Executive Director, HONORehg, Inc.

Ms. Sutherland 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 Ramos, who arrived at 3:34 p.m. and Legislator Tautel, who was absent.

Mr. Tuohy moved request to accept and appropriate 2023 funding award from New York State Office for the Aging, \$333,833.00, seconded by Mr. Ehlers.

Ms. Diana-Smith explained that approximately 75% of the funds will go into the 2023 budget and the remaining 25% into the 2024 budget.

Mr. Anagnostakis noted that the agenda says the amount is \$333,933.00; however, the legislative request reads \$333,833.00.

Ms. Diana-Smith replied that \$333,833.00 is correct.

Ms. Sutherland asked if it needed to be changed. Legislative Counsel Abraham replied no.

Ms. Sutherland clarified that the amount of the request is \$333,833.00.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Tuohy moved request to accept and appropriate the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF) award from the U.S. Department of Treasury to purchase and install POW-MIA monument at the Veterans' Cemetery in Goshen, \$50,000.00, seconded by Ms. Ramos.

Mr. Farrell explained that this is the second part of the grant and the addition of a POW-MIA monument at the Veterans' Cemetery. The first part of the grant was used for a monument honoring the forty Orange County residents that died on September 29, 1918. The plan is to unveil that monument on September 29, 2023.

Mr. Tuohy asked where they would be located. Mr. Farrell replied that the POW-MIA monument will be in the rear of the cemetery near the pavilion and the monument honoring the forty fallen soldiers will be near the main monument area. It is a six-hundred-pound grant monument embossed with the names of the forty men who lost their lives on September 29, 1918.

Motion carried. All in favor.

On the agenda was an update on HONORehg, Inc.

Mr. Molinelli addressed the committee and presented a handout (on file in Clerk, Legislative Office) and a brief overview of HONORehg. During his last visit in early spring, they discussed funding opportunities that New York State was making available, and he's pleased to announce that their application was approved. HONORehg recently completed a ten-month \$3.6 million renovation that consists of renovated bedrooms and bathrooms, a mural created by the Bruderhoff Community, Merlin's Magical Space which is the tenth in the United States and fiftieth in the world and was gifted to them by Legoland New York, Sensory Room/Spaces: multi-sensory room, calming room and multi-purpose room for adult retreat/educational support and this will be the first Sensory Room/Spaces in an OTDA licensed shelter in New York State and anyone of any age can utilize these spaces. HONOR was awarded a four-year \$3 million award through an RFP announced by New York State and the outcomes are to expand the food pantry and extended hours of operation with early morning hours for seniors and those needing to get there early and early afternoon and evening hours for working families. They are working with Nourish New York (NNY) to support New York State farmers through the purchase of grown and produced food products that are directed to HONOR's food pantry, and integral part of Orange County's emergency food relief network with 85% of the grant funding received will be used to source New York foods, in consultation with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The contents of every food packaged will be tracked and they will have the capability of tailor making diabetic food packages. They anticipate serving approximately 275 households a week (14,300 per year) with this funding.

Mr. Amo asked if they have kosher food. Mr. Molinelli replied that they can accommodate that request.

Mr. Molinelli continued on regarding Safe Options Support Critical Time Intervention (SOS). SOS Teams started in the five boroughs of New York City with seventeen teams. The New York State Office of Mental Health put out an RFP for seven additional teams to cover different

geographical locations with Orange County and Dutchess County being partnered together. This is a five-year commitment from New York State of about \$5 million. SOS is a time-limited care transitions model that utilizes a number of evidence-based Interventions: harm reduction, recovery orientation, motivational interviewing and peer support. Each Team will have nine members: a team leader, two licensed clinicians, four care managers, and two peer specialists with the hope that they will be active seven days a week and covering slightly more than 1,800 square miles. The goal is to have offices in both counties. SOS Teams will work closely with law enforcement, outreach providers, County Departments of Social Services, Directors of Community Services and Single Point of Access (SPOA) to identify targeted outreach areas. They are hoping to have boots on the ground over the next few months but hiring has been a challenge for the team leader. This will be an additional support to an increasing population, it will not create housing stock, but they are hopeful that with the securing of this team they will have other funding opportunities through New York State such as housing first options that could help to put individuals into apartments.

Mr. Amo stated that at last month's meeting Commissioner Miller provided the committee with an Executive Summary on the California Study on housing. While he did not see a root cause many people said a large percentage had mental illness related to housing issues. Does Mr. Molinelli have the percentage of the people in need of housing and/or homeless that have a definable mental illness. Mr. Molinelli responded that he could not get a percentage without data, but those numbers are available, but it would be a high percentage.

Mr. Amo asked if Mr. Molinelli gets that percentage to please submit it to the committee.

Ms. Sutherland thanked Mr. Molinelli for coming before the committee with this update and for the great things that are happening at HONOR.

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

Ms. Miller addressed Mr. Amo's question that 89% of the homeless have experienced trauma with many having mental health challenges.

Ms. Miller addressed the committee stating that they are seeing slight increases in temporary and family assistance and SNAP applications remain high and they have started the preplanning and eligibility for the HEAP season. Homelessness remains a great concern with the total number of homeless being served and housed by the Orange County Department of Social Services in July at 485 as compared to 260 in 2019 this is the highest number in a decade. Medicaid numbers remain high, and they do not see any decrease due to recertification and people being removed and Raise the Age has stayed consistent.

Mr. Tuohy asked about the increase in hotel/motel occupancy. Ms. Miller replied that they have 386 temporary shelter housing slots between all their temporary housing providers and their homeless numbers are at 485 so they are using hotel/motels to supplement. Because they do not have enough housing stock and they are not competitive with the stock they have, they are not getting the housing.

Mr. Tuohy asked if they are finding shortages on hotel/motels. Ms. Miller replied not yet, but they could.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they ever attempted to quantify the total county outlay to service that 485 homeless population and has any one potentially thought that because they do not have the housing stock that the county could create its own housing stock. Ms. Miller replied that they have looked at the cost to permanently shelter versus the cost to temporary shelter. They have also creatively used funds to house singles by creating ten additional housing first beds, which was successful. They have not discussed county becoming a "landlord" for housing. They do not have zoning rights and are no different than any other provider looking to build housing. A meeting will be held this Friday with their county stakeholders to look at their current housing stock, what stock they need and what projects are in the hopper. It's not only the homeless population that is struggling as there are waitlists for aging housing. If they can build more aging housing, they could move those individuals out of the housing stock and move these individuals into those homes.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they had the annual cost to service those individuals. Mr. Craner replied that it cost around \$7 million.

Mr. Anagnostakis commented that several years ago the county owned houses that were sold and could those houses be used.

Ms. Miller responded that the Office of Real Property Tax Services will be participating in the Friday meeting. If a family receives benefits, they do not use county taxation; however, if they have been receiving benefits for over 60 months, the County pays 70% of their housing and if they are single, they pay 70% of their housing.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if the \$7 million was the county cost. Mr. Craner replied no, it would be lower.

Mr. Anagnostakis asked if they could get the county cost, he would appreciate it.

Legislator Ramos left the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

Ms. Miller continued stating that there was no change to Child Protective Services numbers and Foster Care numbers continued to decrease.

The meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.