

**HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
MINUTES
(REMOTELY)
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2021
3:00 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Chairwoman
John S. Vero, Majority Leader
Michael D. Paduch, Minority Leader
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator
James M. Kulisek, Legislator
Rob Sassi, Legislator
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator
Betsy Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Harry Porr, Deputy County Executive
Steven M. Gross, Commissioner, Human Resources
Irina Gelman M.D., Commissioner of Health
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Michael Ventre, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Jamie Shock, Fiscal Manager, Department of Health
Lisa DeNisco, Accounting Supervisor, Department of Health
Jennifer L. Roman, D.O., Orange County Medical Examiner
Kathleen McCubbin, D.O., Deputy Medical Examiner
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Lacey Trimble, Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health
Sandra Atkin, Administrative Officer, Mental Health Department
Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center
Tammy Conklin, Reimbursement Analyst, Valley View Center
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Gretchen Riordan, Deputy Budget Director
Liz Delaney, Budget Analyst

Mr. O'Donnell opened the committee meeting at 3:05 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Amo, who arrived at 3:22 p.m.

Ms. Tautel moved to request approval and appropriation of funds in the amount of \$45,000.00 for a proposed 2021 capital expenditure to continue upgrading resident furniture (APPROPRIATED SURPLUS), seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to create (3) Medical Billing Clerks, Grade 10 (these positions represent the reclassification of (2) principal account clerks, grade 8 and (1) senior account clerk, grade 7), seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Ms. Strecker explained that this process began just prior to the pandemic. They requested that the Department of Human Resources conduct a class study of all the positions in their fiscal department. As a result, these are the recommendations they are bringing forward today. This will not increase staff and the net financial impact would be \$24,000.00 and the (3) three medical billing clerks, Grade 10, will be filled by existing staff. They represent the reclassification of two (2) principal account clerks, Grade 8, and one (1) senior account clerk, Grade 7. These positions have not been reviewed for approximately 15 years and, over time, these positions have evolved with respect to regulatory requirements and the multiple systems within the residential health care billing system.

Mr. Paduch asked if the two (2) principal account clerks, Grade 8, and one (1) senior account clerk, Grade 7, positions would be eliminated. Ms. Strecker replied no, the positions would be defunded and replaced with the medical billing clerks.

Mr. O'Donnell asked for clarification on what replaced by medical billing clerks meant and if that means that the old titles would be off the books. Ms. Strecker replied that they would be defunded.

Mr. Paduch asked if the positions were funded in this year's budget. Ms. Strecker replied yes, both in 2021 and 2022.

Mr. Paduch pointed out that if they eliminate these positions, they could save taxpayer money.

Ms. Strecker clarified that because the positions have not yet been approved the old positions need to remain, but they have adjusted their budget to ensure that the funds would be included. They are basically swapping one position for the other and the vacant position would be defunded.

Mr. LaDue clarified that they are seeking to create six (6) new positions with each new position listed on the legislative request including the current hourly rate and the proposed hourly rate with the annualized difference.

Mr. Paduch asked if they were using the salary in the old position to supplement the new position and if they are eliminating the old position. Mr. LaDue replied that they cannot eliminate the position until the legislature approves the new position.

Mr. Paduch stated that he understands that; however, even though the position is being defunded it is still a position if it is not removed from the books. If they reclassify the position the old position stays on the books unless eliminated.

Ms. Slesinski clarified that it remains on the books and becomes an unfunded vacant position and they will use the funds from that position to fund the new position.

Mr. Paduch emphasized that they would still have an opportunity to fill that position.

Mr. LaDue replied that they would not as they are swapping one position for another position.

Mr. O'Donnell agreed with Mr. Paduch that if a position remains on the books, they could still fill that position by coming back to the legislature to have the position refunded because they have not abolished the position. He suggested that the three caucuses meet to discuss this concern as this issue is brought up every year and there is no reason to keep positions on the books as unfunded because they have been eliminated.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to create one (1) Senior Medical Billing Clerk, Grade 11 (this position is for the reclassification of (1) principal account clerk, Grade 8, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Ms. Strecker explained that this was similar to the prior positions and based on the study they decided to create one (1) Senior Medical Billing Clerk, Grade 11, position and defund the principal account clerk, Grade 8, position.

Mr. O'Donnell asked how long the person was in the position. Ms. Strecker replied about 5 or 6 years.

Mr. Tuohy asked for clarification that they are reclassifying the principal account clerk, Grade 8, to the Senior Medical Billing Clerk, Grade 11, position. Ms. Strecker replied yes.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to create (1) Prescription Insurance Clerk, Grade 9 (this position is for the reclassification of (1) principal clerk, Grade 7), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Ms. Strecker explained that the principal clerk is responsible for all of the Medicare D plans for the population they serve. The position has evolved over time due to regulatory requirements, benchmark plans, annual enrollments and, as a result of the recommendation by the Department of Human Resources, they will replace the principal clerk with the Prescription Insurance Clerk, Grade 9.

Mr. Paduch asked if the current principal clerk, Grade 7, was doing the work of the Prescription Insurance Clerk, Grade 9. Mr. LaDue replied yes.

Motion carried. All in favor

Ms. Tautel moved request to reallocate Reimbursement Analyst from Grade 16 to Grade 17, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Ms. Strecker explained that this person is the lead in their finance department. The position has not been reviewed since 1989 and a great deal has evolved with regard to accounting standards, regulatory requirements, billing and budget responsibilities and as a result of the recommendation by the Department of Human Resources they will reallocate the Reimbursement Analyst from a Grade 16 to a Grade 17.

Mr. Tuohy asked if the same person was still in the position and for how long. Ms. Strecker replied yes, for 26 years.

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, other revenues at \$28.3 million and emergency disaster assistance at \$22,200.00. On the personal services side, personal services were at \$15.8 million, equipment at \$75,036.00, contractual at \$7.3 million, employee benefits at \$12.4 million and serial bond interest at \$103,332.00.

Ms. Tautel asked if they had received any communication on IGT funding. Ms. Strecker replied yes, LeadingAge has stated that they are still on schedule to receive the payments they normally would; however, they do not know how much those payments would be.

Ms. Tautel asked if they anticipate getting close to the \$8 million, they budgeted. Ms. Strecker replied that she was hopeful that they will, but it is tied to the Medicare upper payment limit. Therefore, it will depend on what they decide.

Ms. Tautel asked for the census for today. Mr. LaDue replied 75%.

Ms. Tautel reiterated the need for Mr. LaDue to let this committee know when communications go out to family members of residents at Valley View. She was at a recent town board meeting and was blindsided when she was approached by family members on a correspondence they received from Mr. LaDue because she was unaware of the situation. She did contact the Deputy County Executive who explained that Valley View had ten (10) COVID-19 positive staff members and she was not sure of the number of residents that tested positive for COVID-19. She was told that these residents were being held in their current rooms; however, she was under the impression that COVID-19 positive residents would be moved to one of the unused wards for isolation. Mr. LaDue apologized for not informing them of the first set of COVID-19 positive cases however, they were updated on Friday with their most recent COVID-19 positive cases at Valley View and, most recently were provided a communication today on the additional positive cases. When a staff member and/or resident tests positive for COVID-19 they must notify family members per the New York State Department of Health regulation. They currently have six (6) residents that have tested positive, and they do not stay on their unit. They are moved to one of the short-term rehabilitation units with a plastic curtain indicating the COVID-19 positive area. As soon as the resident tests positive they are moved off their unit and to that area. There are six (6) staff members still out.

Ms. Tautel asked if any of the individuals were vaccinated. Mr. LaDue replied that he understands that they were all vaccinated; however, some had not received their second dose.

Ms. Strecker continued, stating that in September their census was 75.73% and they are averaging 75.72% with two units currently closed and staffing issues.

The Department Update from Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center was a written report only.

Mr. LaDue presented the 2022 recommended budget for the Department of Residential Health Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Ms. Tautel moved to accept the 2022 recommended budget for the Department of Residential Health Care and Rehabilitation Center, seconded by Mr. Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Benton commented that the Capital Plan Committee amended the Capital Plan for Valley View to include \$75,000.00 for a bus; however, it is not in the Capital Plan being presented and should be added.

Mr. O'Donnell motioned to create a Capital Project in the amount of \$75,000.00 for a bus at Valley View, seconded by Mr. Luján.

Mr. LaDue disagreed with the need for a bus a Valley View.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved to approve the 2022 Capital Plan as amended for the Department of Residential Health Care and Rehabilitation Center, seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to create one (1) Community Health Outreach Worker, Grade 10 position (a stipulated position that will be contingent on grant funding and shall be automatically abolished upon cancellation of such funding), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Mr. Luján asked for the position's parameters and goals as compared to the Health Equity Director. Dr. Gelman replied that the Health Equity Director position is drastically different. Their Community Health Outreach Workers are "boots on the ground" and ensure they have a connection with their different communities. The Health Equity Director is tasked with ensuring that their policies and programs contain the health equity component.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to abolish one (1) part time Senior Clerk, Grade 6, position and create one (1) full time Senior Clerk, Grade 6, position (position is grant funded and will be abolished if the grant ends and funding is no longer received), seconded by Mr. Luján.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Tautel moved request to accept and appropriate year three funds for the Migrant Health Services from the NYSDOH for the period 10/1/2021 – 9/30/2022, \$59,940.00, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Mr. Paduch asked for the time frame on reimbursement from the state. Dr. Gelman replied within the fiscal cycle.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved request to accept and appropriate funds from the NYSDOH for the PH Corps Fellowship Award grant for the period 9/1/2021 – 7/31/2023, \$3,547,330.00, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Dr. Gelman explained that in 2021 New York State established the New York State Public Health Corps Fellowship Program. The program was tasked with building public health capacity to support COVID-19 response operation and increase preparedness for future public health emergencies. This funding will fund public health fellows under two titles: Public Health Fellow I and Public Health Fellow II. The selection goes through New York State and, typically, the difference between Fellow I and Fellow II is dependent on the level of educational attainment. They would normally work in the epidemiology nursing and/or community health outreach divisions. This funding was made available statewide and the funding was based on populations of the counties.

Mr. Luján asked about the breakdown of the funds such as \$40,000.00 for telephone, \$4,000.00 for advertising, \$20,000.00 for mileage, \$1.9 million for specialty payments as they seem very broad. Dr. Gelman replied that a great deal of this is proposed projected funding that must be submitted to the state and may not look like this once the program is in place.

Mr. Luján asked if they planned on using these funds for other purposes. Dr. Gelman replied that these funds would be used specifically for the Public Health Corps Fellowship Program within the grant allowable spending and cannot be supplanted.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The Department Update from Dr. Gelman, Commissioner of Health was a written report only.

Mr. Luján commented on the concerning STD numbers amongst youth and their status within the state. He stated that Dr. Gelman has emphasized, on multiple occasions, that they could be doing better and during the last budget process they discussed a position that would help address those concerns. He does not see it in their budget.

Dr. Gelman agreed that they do not want to lead the charge on STD's in New York State. They are hoping that two of the fifteen or so Public Health Fellowship positions will be upgraded to their Sexually Transmitted Infections Division to ensure that they are decreasing this negative trend. In addition, they are discussing the potential of the state providing the County with more STI counselors but that is still in the preliminary stages.

Mr. Amo asked about the CDC rating on COVID-19 cases in Orange County and the metric they use to generate the rating. Dr. Gelman replied that the CDC measures it by new positive tests. The CDC continues to designate Orange County as "High" since transferring from their "Substantial" level of transmission. In weeks past they were seeing over 100 newly diagnosed cases daily, but they are seeing a slight decrease in daily positive tests; however, the wastewater testing has been confirming that they are seeing a high viral burden in the wastewater.

Mr. Amo asked if it was based on a percentage of the population. Dr. Gelman replied that it was based on the number of individuals that have tested positive.

Mr. Tuohy commented that last week it was widely reported that migrant flights from Texas had flown into Westchester County Airport and that migrants were bussed to certain areas in New York State with one being the city of Newburgh. He would like to know what the Orange County Health Department was doing to locate those individuals and to try and get them tested and/or vaccinated for COVID-19.

Dr. Gelman replied that they normally do not receive the metric, statistics, and/or reports of individuals coming into the County. However, when they come across their farms, migrant housing units, or anything under the purview of the local health department, that would be when they are responsible for their health. They have vaccinated migrants in their vaccination clinics and they monitor over sixty communicable diseases but they do not receive plane manifests or bus passenger lists.

Mr. Tuohy asked if it would help their efforts if the Orange County Department of Health was notified prior to these individuals coming into the County. Dr. Gelman replied that any individual coming into the county from anywhere outside would have the potential of not only transmitting COVID-19 but over sixty communicable diseases. She was unsure as to how effective Mr. Tuohy's suggestion would be as it could be counterproductive for their effort which is to gage the spread of disease and propagation throughout a population.

Mr. Tuohy pointed out that they are being classified as a high-risk County and that any kind of information that could be provided to them would help to mitigate the situation.

Mr. O'Donnell suggested that Mr. Tuohy send a letter to the State on behalf of the Legislature to try and get those numbers as they are not talking about just one or two people but possibly significant numbers. It is not fair to the people that they are bringing here that they do not know about in order to offer them services.

Dr. Gelman presented the 2022 recommended budget for the Department of Health.

Ms. Sutherland moved to accept the 2022 recommended budget for the Department of Health, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Dr. Gelman presented the 2022 recommended budget for the Medical Examiner.

Ms. Sutherland moved to approve the 2022 recommended budget for the Medical Examiner, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. O'Donnell added that based on recent conversations with Steven Gross, Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources. The following will be addressed at an upcoming Personnel and Compensation committee meeting: finding positions for three WIC employees and a few home health aides who could possibly go to Valley View.

Mr. O'Donnell motioned to decrease the 2022 Capital Plan for the Medical Examiners new building from \$23 million to \$17 million, seconded by Mr. Tuohy.

Motion carried 5-2 with Legislators Anagnostakis, Luján, Tautel, Tuohy and O'Donnell voting in favor and Legislators Amo and Sutherland voting against.

Ms. Tautel moved to approve the 2022 Capital Plan as amended for the Medical Examiner, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The Department Update from Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health was a written report only.

Ms. Miller presented the 2022 recommended budget for the Department of Mental Health.

Mr. Tuohy moved to accept the 2022 recommended budget for the Department of Mental Health, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.