

Health & Human Services Committee

June 30, 2020

Minutes

Members Present: Committee Chair John Peck, Legislators Allen Drake, James Naabywaniec, Jeremiah Maxon, Robert Ferris, Anthony Doldo and Board Chair Scott Gray

Others Present: Legislators Robert Cantwell, William Johnson, Daniel McBride, Patrick Jareo, and Frances Calarco, County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Sarah Baldwin, County Attorney David Paulsen, Information Technology Director and Conf. Asst. for Fiscal Affairs Gregory Hudson, Public Health Director Ginger Hall, Secretary Torri Richmire, Confidential Secretary Jill Jones

Chairman Peck called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m. and offered privilege of the floor, however no one present wished to speak. The Committee approved the minutes of the May Committee meeting, as written.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement for Early Warning Wastewater Surveillance Platform in Relation to COVID-19 and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Doldo and seconded by Legislator Nabywaniec. Administrator Hagemann advised that is a proactive approach to monitoring the Covid-19 virus through Syracuse University utilizing a new testing platform of the wastewater system which will be done through the Watertown Wastewater Treatment Plant, and that will give us a few weeks heads up to provide education before the virus can spread.

Public Health Director Ginger Hall advised that wastewater epidemiology/surveillance has been used to detect polio, antibiotic resistant bacteria, and most recently the prevalence of opioid abuse in the US community. With Covid-19 it accounts for people who have not been tested and may have very mild symptoms or no symptoms, and it can be picked up three days before any symptoms are present. The goal of doing the surveillance is that the virus will be picked up in the wastewater much sooner than having to wait for symptoms or exposure in order to get tested and then waiting for the results. They are looking at doing it in the City of Watertown as that covers 55,000 people (half the population of the County) so it would give us a good indicator for what is going on in the County. Public Health would then increase education (masks, social distancing, good hand washing, etc.) and measures to prevent future damage to the health and economic environment that we have already experienced with the virus. She said they are looking at this with the anticipation that there will be an increase in the virus again this Fall, and it is another tool in the toolbox they can use moving forward to decrease damage from the virus. There was discussion concerning narrowing down where a specimen comes from as many areas of the County are pumped into the Watertown system. She advised that there will be a protocol at the Wastewater Treatment Plant for collection of specimens so they will know where a particular specimen was draining from. In response to questions Director Hall said detection can be up to 14 days before an outbreak happens and samples will be collected weekly now so


that a baseline can be established and any future spikes can be detected quickly. Mr. Hagemann advised that this is not a general fund expense, it is paid for through Covid funding. There was brief discussion concerning the continued need for sanitation and cleaning supplies for businesses and individuals. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Accepting Funding and Authorizing an Agreement in Connection With Public Health Emergency Preparedness and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Doldo seconded by Legislator Maxon and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

County Administrator Hagemann and Chairman Gray advised that the bags of masks that were distributed to legislators this evening were made of jersey material and were donated by the NY Mets and Yankees organizations for distribution to youth sports teams in their respective districts; hand sanitizer was also included in the bags for distribution. Chairman Gray said legislators should contact him if they need more masks as he does have an additional supply available. He also advised that distribution of hand sanitizer and cleaning products for businesses is being done through the JCIDA and the Chamber of Commerce.

There being no further business of the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Doldo and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board