

Health & Human Services Committee
June 29, 2021
Minutes

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

Others Present: Legislators Robert Cantwell, William Johnson, Michael Montigelli, Daniel McBride, and Patrick Jareo, County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Sarah Baldwin, County Attorney David Paulsen, Community Services Director Timothy Ruetten, Public Health Director Ginger Hall, Veterans Services Agency Director David Pavey, JCC Executive Vice President and Treasurer Daniel Dupee, JCLDC/JCIDA CEO David Zembiec, Watertown Daily Times Reporter Alex Gault, Confidential Secretary Jill Jones

Chairman Peck called the meeting to order at 6:00 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.

Public Health Director Ginger Hall provided an overview to the Committee of where we have been, where we currently are, and where we anticipate we are going in terms of Covid-19. She said in 2020 they worked on case investigation and contact tracing and they continue to work with virtual case investigators and contact tracers; they recently received a school specialist that will help them work on getting all the cases done very timely and reaching out to all the contacts. They are now seeing cases that are unvaccinated so their push is still to improve the vaccination status. Current Covid-19 statistics are: over 130,000 have been tested, over 72,000 positive cases, 87 deaths, 17 current positive cases, positivity rate is down to 1%. In terms of case investigation one of their concerns is the Delta variant (a very transmissible virus) it is in one of about every five cases in the US, which has doubled in the last two weeks. The only way to determine if that variant is present is special testing and the Wadsworth lab is just starting to accept those specimens for testing.

Director Hall said in 2021 they have been focused on vaccinations which started out at Public Health, expanded to a clinic at JCC with community partners and as those numbers decreased, they reached out to the community and schools for pop up clinics. The Public Health Service has currently administered over 22,000 vaccinations, there are currently over 177 vaccine providers in Jefferson County which includes hospitals, pharmacies, dialysis clinics, and some providers have signed up to give vaccines but have not administered any yet. They are working with primary care physicians and pediatricians to capture anyone in their offices who could be vaccinated. In terms of vaccine manufacturers, they have administered 56% Moderna, 35% Pfizer and about 8% J&J. She said there is a new vaccine Novavax which is about 90% effective and right now is finishing phase 3 of the trial. Director Hall said she has always wanted a paramedicine program and the State did allow them to do a community paramedicine Covid vaccine program; Emergency Medical Service in South Jefferson, Carthage and Indian River are

able to go out into the community and do vaccinations which has been a huge help in getting vaccines to the homebound patients that couldn't make it to any clinics; this program will also be instrumental in going out to farms to administer vaccines.

For the future Public Health continues to do wastewater testing, and is focusing on the young adult vaccination rate as that is where we are currently seeing positive cases. Public Health will be working with schools to be proactive as they will be returning to in person instruction in the Fall, and will be setting up a Comprehensive Workplan that includes testing information, testing machines, testing kits and anything else they decide to put into the Plan. Once the kids are in school they will be able to do contact tracing and case investigation, identify individuals having the symptoms, test them and keep them in their environment if they are negative. They will work with communities to obtain tests when there are signs and symptoms, and work with them on vaccinations. She said there are three resolutions on the agenda tonight with Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) funding to position Public Health to get up front and be prepared for Fall and Spring with New York opening up and schools going back to in person. She advised that New York is following the guidance of the CDC with regard to masking mandates for non-vaccinated persons, and in health care facilities, schools, correctional facilities and homeless shelters. She answered questions of legislators, and indicated Jefferson County's current vaccinate rate is 2,700 from being at the 70% benchmark.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending the 2021 County Budget to Allocate Additional State Aid for Community Services Programs and Authorizing Amended Agreements in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Doldo and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending the 2021 County Budget to Reappropriate Funding for Community Services Department and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Nabywaniec and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Appointing Member to the Community Services Board and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Doldo and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreements for Provision of Mental Hygiene Services and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Nabywaniec and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending the 2021 County Budget Relative to Public Health Department Accounts and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Nabywaniec and there being no

discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

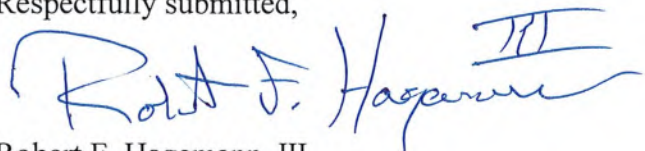
Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Accepting Funding for New Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) COVID-19 Local Health Department Allocation Funding and Amending the 2021 County Budget and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Drake and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Accepting Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Reopening Schools Funding Award and /authorizing Agreement with BOCES in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Doldo and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Committee members and Community Services Director Tim Ruetten engaged in a lengthy discussion concerning NYS Office of Mental Health Commissioner Sullivan's response to the letter sent to her by Board Chair Gray, Committee Chair Peck and Finance & Rules Chair Montigelli concerning competency restoration and the 100% County costs related to it. Discussion centered around the arbitrary decision by the State to change cost responsibility from 50% State/50% County to 100% County, and the difference in the definition of "treatment" by the State within these programs to bring the individual to competency, and actual treatment they would receive for their mental illness if they were not in restoration services. At approximately \$1,200/day, this is very expensive "treatment" that in Mr. Ruetten's opinion isn't benefitting the individual. The Commissioner suggested that programs or treatment before they get into the criminal justice system may be more beneficial for everyone. Director Ruetten said some counties are doing an outreach to the courts, however he is starting with the District Attorney's Office, and Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement to put in place a more robust crisis response program into the mental health system to catch individuals at the gate, and get them a higher level of treatment. He said this would provide a non-criminal solution to mental health issues that have in the past been criminalized. He advised that his office has applied for grants to set up the crisis response mechanism. Mr. Ruetten said this is not a problem unique to Jefferson County, all his counterparts in the NYS Council of Mental Hygiene Directors express the same frustrations with the costs and treatment issue. Chairman Peck said next steps are to have a small group conference call with the Commissioner concerning the possibility of changes to the 100% County responsibility of these costs and/or more County involvement on the treatment side if individuals are sent for restoration services.

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert F. Hagemann, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "H" and "M".

Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board