

Health & Human Services Committee
March 27, 2018
Minutes

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

Others Present: Legislators Robert Cantwell, William Johnson, Philip Reed, Michael Montigelli, Daniel McBride, and Patrick Jareo, County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Sarah Baldwin, County Attorney David Paulsen, Community Services Director Roger Ambrose, Public Health Fiscal Director Bert Burnham, Social Services Commissioner Teresa Gaffney, Planning Director Michael Bourcy, Probation Director Martin Morrison, Treasurer Accountant Anne Converse, Watertown Daily Times Reporter Brian Molongoski, Confidential Secretary Jill Jones

Chairman Peck called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and offered privilege of the floor, however no one present wished to address the Committee. The minutes of the February Committee meeting stand approved in the absence of objection or correction.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution authorizing an agreement for provision of personal emergency response systems (PERS) funding with the Henry Keep Home and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Nabywaniec seconded by Legislator Fitzpatrick and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution amending the 2018 County Budget relative to DSRIP funding for Community Services Department 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 2018 County Budget relative to Community Services Department and entertained a motion for consideration. Mr. Hagemann advised that a revised resolution is on legislators' desks to take the money out of the contingent account instead of fund balance, and that is what should be considered for action by the Committee. A motion was duly made by Legislator Fitzpatrick seconded by Legislator Doldo and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Legislator Maxon said he appreciates receiving the Office for the Aging monthly report, but wondered if it was possible to get numbers from the prior month or year on the same report so a comparison can see the trends.

Chairman Peck advised that the Social Services Ad Hoc Committee consisted of Legislators Jareo, Gray, Montigelli, Johnson and himself and they did an in depth review of the

programs offered by the Department of Social Services. He said it was eye opening to see the passion that the employees have, and the Committee found that services are delivered very efficiently. He added that the startling aspect was learning how much we cover, how much it costs, and how little say the County has in either instance as a majority of it is mandated by the State. Teresa Gaffney presented and outlined a report from the Ad Hoc Committee. She stated that following a review of the programs, and because most programs are mandated, the Ad Hoc Committee decided their focus should be on improving fraud/investigation efforts. Their first focus was on front end detection (FEDS) referrals which are mandated by the State and would catch any irregularities before benefits are given. She said DSS staff updated FEDS indicators and submitted the revisions to the State in March, 2017 and approval was received on October 31, 2017. Training of staff was done in January, 2018 and implementation in February, 2018.

In addition, staff also prepared an Eligibility Verification Review (EVR) plan, which is not mandated by the State, and submitted that for State approval in March, 2017. EVR is a fraud and abuse control program designed to prevent and/or identify fraud and overpayments; the Committee decided the focus of EVR will be the Safety Net Assistance program. She said the intent of the EVR program is to reduce the amount of benefits issued fraudulently by initiating investigations of these open cases at set time frames to verify household composition is accurate and inquire about changes in income. They received final approval of their EVR plan on January 16, 2018. Due to the State takeover of certain Medicaid cases she said no additional staffing was needed for these two initiatives because staff was shifted from other program areas.

She said another issue that became evident in discussions was the need to address staff (caseworker) turnover, especially in Child Protective Services. Following discussion of the contributing issues it was suggested that the Department explore the implementation of flexible work hours for caseworkers, starting with a pilot in CPS. It also became evident that there is a need to assist this mobile workforce by providing them with the necessary tools so they can do their job efficiently. To that end, the Department is continuing to explore various mobile technology options that would allow caseworkers access to needed documents and the ability to complete tasks without having to come back to the office.

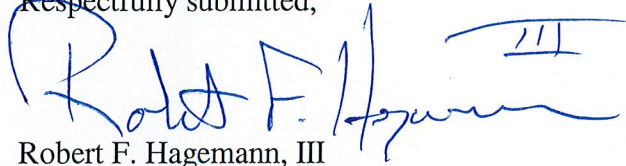
Mrs. Gaffney advised that the County's share of Medicaid health care expenses is the highest mandated expense in the Department's budget, and there are no opportunities for the Department to reduce those costs. The high cost is because New York has decided to cover the expanded populations of adults with incomes between 133% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, and also the optional benefits the state has chosen to cover. She provided a list of mandatory Medicaid services that are required under federal law, and a list of the optional services that New York State decided to provide. Commissioner Gaffney answered questions of legislators regarding the report.

Chairman Peck said the consensus of the Board to move forward and the agreement of the union to implement the changes for the employees are the next steps in the process of implementing the initiatives in the report. He said the delay in getting the report out to legislators was seeing how some of the information was going to pan out at different points in time, but this is now a fully vetted document. Mr. Hagemann stated that the Ad Hoc Committee

has been working on this for some time, but the intent right now is for Committee members to look the material over, but ultimately the Committee/Board will need to endorse the report. At such time as the report is endorsed, the Department will then begin to move forward with the initiatives, establish some benchmarks to be able to have measurable outcome results in terms of cost savings and job retention that they can report back. He envisioned a resolution endorsing the report to be brought forward for consideration of the Committee next month.

There being no further business of the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Fitzpatrick 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 initial "R" and "H".

Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board