

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 27, 2021

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Clary, Campbell, Skellie, Ferguson, Losaw, Ward, Wilson

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Fedler, Hicks, O'Brien, Griffith

Debra Prehoda, Clerk

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Melissa Fitch, County Administrator

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

1) Call to Order

2) Accept Minutes – December 30, 2020

3) Department Reports/Requests:

A. OFA/ADRC

1) Request to Carry over 2020 Unspent Funds

2) Program Updates

B. Department of Social Services

1) State Budget Impacts

2) Program Updates

C. Veterans

1) VA Law Change/Updates

2) Service Recognition – Dep. Director Michael Alexander

D. Youth Bureau

1) Department Updates

E. Public Health

1) Discuss Preschool Transportation Resolution Rates for COVID

2) PH/EMS Partnership for Points of Distribution Update

3) Miscellaneous

4) Other Business

5) Adjournment

Chairwoman Clary called the meeting to order at 10:03 A.M.

A motion to accept the minutes of the December 30, 2020 meeting was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Ferguson, and adopted.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS/REQUESTS:

OFA/ADRC – Gina Cantanucci-Mitchell, Director, addressed the following items:

• Budget Amendments to Carry Over 2020 Unspent Funds:

○ COVID 19 ADRC Stimulus Funds – A motion to amend 2021 budget to carry forward unspent 100% Federal COVID 19 ADRC Stimulus funds increasing Family Assistance A.6109.4290 \$18,818.10 and increase A.599 Appropriated Fund Balance \$18,818.10 was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Messrs. Losaw and Skellie and adopted.

○ COVID 19 Stimulus Funds for Home Delivered Meals (HDC3) – A motion to amend 2021 budget to carry forward unspent funds 100% Federal COVID 19 Stimulus funds for home delivered meals (HDC3) increasing A.6010.440 Subcontractor \$7,423.32 and increase A.6772.4772 Federal Aid for ADRC \$7,423.32 was moved by Mr. Ward, seconded by Messrs. Losaw and Wilson, and adopted.

• Program Updates:

○ Contract with GF Hospital Medical Alert Services – Have had a contract with the GF Hospital for their personal emergency response program also known as medical alert services and were advised that the hospital is transferring its medical alert services and

responsibilities under that program to American Medical Alert/Connect America. Apparently the hospital has been operating this program under Connect America for over ten (10) years but no longer and the County has to contract directly with Connect America. Transition will happen without disruption of service and the contract pricing will not change. A motion to enter into contract with Connect America program was moved by Mr. Wilson and seconded by Mr. Ferguson. Discussion. Mr. Wilson asked if we have a choice or are they sole source. The OFA Director stated there are competitors. A motion to amend to authorize a waiver from the procurement policy was moved by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Messrs. Campbell and Ward, and adopted. The motion to enter into contract with Connect America program was moved by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Ferguson, and adopted as amended.

- Received application for Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) that they submit every year. The funding amount is 100% state funding in the amount of \$13,144 and it is allocated to personnel who operate this project in the office. This total is \$407 less than last year's total. The application requires the Chairman's signature to submit. A motion to authorize the Chairman of the Board to sign Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers submittal to the state for approval was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Messrs. Skellie, Losaw, Wilson and adopted.
- Put in place an emergency plan for the senior nutrition program. Working with the Sheriff's Department should their kitchen experience a shutdown or no operations put in place an emergency plan to freeze six meals for 370 older adults in Washington County. Golden Goal in Fort Ann offered freezer space to store meals if needed. They are very grateful for this offering and hopefully there will be no situation where we will have to use it. Thank you to Golden Goal.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – Commissioner DeLorme addressed the following items:

- State Budget Impacts:
  - Overall, the Governor did a two pronged approach based on whether the federal relief is \$6B or \$15B and it does contain language to continue to withhold payments.
  - Substantial impact is the proposal to reduce funding categories by 5% and this is instead of the 20% withhold that had been in place. There is a proposed 3% cut to the foster care block grant and DSS always exceeds that amount. Last year exceeded grant amount by \$139,000 over and above the \$1,009,414 grant amount and will exceed by more this year because of the 3% cut. Other areas subject to the 5% cut: child welfare services, adoption subsidies, adult protective and domestic violence, detention, and supervision and treatment services program for juveniles STSJP combined with Community optional preventive services COPS (not a funding stream used by the county) for a reduction of \$4.1M. Legislative add ons part of the executive proposal and could negatively impact Safe Harbour and Care Center – Child Protective Services funding. All of these budget cuts are within the Office of Children and Family services section of the budget.
  - Office of Temporary Disability Assistance Section - 5% cut to code blue appropriations. Last year claimed \$56,000 to code blue which was 100% funded and this year budgeted \$62,000 and will be cut by 5%.

- The 20% withholds that we have already experienced will be reconciled and repaid in the final quarter of fiscal year 2021.
- Good news no change in Medicaid costs. Better for us is the Governor's proposal requires a statewide implementation of family assessment response (FAR) by January of 2024 and Washington County implement this in January 2010.
- NY Public Welfare conference has been holding the conference virtually. The Commissioner was inducted as president of the association for the upcoming year.
- Program Updates:
  - Bandwidth – DSS is on a State system and it has been an issue for them and being more and more in a virtual world during this pandemic that trying to use their systems are having trouble utilizing applications/programs and need to find a solution locally and has been working with Information Technology. Programs and trainings are slow and a solution they have come up is to replace the current circuit they are operating on because DSS is all on State systems and their programs are separate from the bandwidth that the county has for all of the rest of the departments. Currently have 10MB and can switch to 100MB with this circuit to migrate the data traffic. The one-time implementation cost is \$7,919 and also recurring annual charges of \$23,286 and DSS would be eligible for reimbursement of these cost at 75% state and 25% county cost but did not budget for this expense. The Commissioner recommends making this switch and sending this request to the Information Technology Committee for discussion. She will be advocating strongly that the State assume all of the charge because it is their programs.
  - Staffing Structure – DSS has 133 full time permanent positions and since the start of the pandemic have not filled certain positions due to the building being closed holding eight (8) positions open and have not asked for backfills; four (4) clerical and four (4) Examiner positions. Three (3) other positions were approved to fill but having difficulties getting them filled and continue to be open; two Caseworker positions being impacted by provisional status with no test being given and the temporary Computer Operations Coordinator – vacant due to employee deployed with National Guard and recommends discussing this position at the Information Technology Committee meeting.
  - NYS Office of Children and Family Services care and maintenance chargeback statement of obligation in the approximate amount of \$11,000 the local share of the expense associated with the care and maintenance of a Washington County youth placed in secure detention facility during the fourth quarter of 2019 and he continues to be in placement. It is not unusual to be billed a year later but instead of paying the State back by check, the State is now using a system to recoup through reducing our revenue that would be due from other claims to us. DSS has \$166,000 in a State Training appropriation line in the 2020 budget and the Treasurer recommends waiting to see if any additional chargebacks come in before he closes the books for 2020 to make any budget adjustments.
  - DSS Commissioner and supervisory staff have eased their dress code for staff because the building is closed to the public due to the pandemic.
- Budget Amendments to Carry Over 2020 Unspent Funds:
  - A motion to amend 2021 budget to carry forward unspent 100% Federal CARES Emergency Solutions grant funds (ESG-CV) increasing A.6010.4625.01 Grants Other

\$259,579 and increase A.6010.4489.08 Federal Aid for Other Public Health for MED Stimulus \$259,579 was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Messrs. Wilson and Ward, and adopted.

- A motion to amend 2021 budget to carry forward unspent Family First Transition funds for the recruitment of Foster Care homes increasing A.6119.4290 Foster Care \$30,000 and increase A.6010.3619 State Aid Foster Care \$30,000 was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Messrs. Wilson and Ferguson, and adopted.

VETERANS – Ken Winchell, Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

VA Law Changes/Updates are numerous and highlighted some of the larger changes:

- National Defense Authorization Act - three more illness added from agent orange exposure – bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. Tricare extended health care option improvements which improved assistance for Gold Star children.
- Signing HR7105 increased the timeframe of the Vietnam war era of military service from February 28, 1961 to November 1, 1955 so that expands eligibility. Also allows National Guard and Reserve Service under the title 32 orders to account for VA home loan eligibility.
- Services for Women – Devotes \$20M for retrofitting healthcare facilities to make facilities safer and easier for women veterans to get care and facilities have at least one women's health primary care provider and created a permanent Office of Women's Health within the Veterans Health Administration.
- Services for Student Veterans – restoring the GI bill entitlement to eligible student veterans who school was closed in the middle of a semester without the ability to transfer those credits, changes due to the COVID 19 pandemic allowing the VA to continue paying educational assistance benefits during the pandemic if the VA determines the student was adversely impacted and to view a withdrawal from school as COVID pandemic as a mitigating circumstance and will not charge the students entitlement to VA educational benefits.
- Services for homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness – expands HUD-voucher program to veterans with other than honorable characterizations of discharge a benefit previously they were not eligible for.
- Service Recognition – Deputy Director Michael Alexander – Shared a letter from a surviving spouse who very much appreciated the outstanding service Deputy Director Michael Alexander provided.

YOUTH BUREAU – Mike Gray, Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Department Updates:
  - Advised the committee of an opportunity presented to him two weeks ago from the State Director of Youth Development inquiring whether or not there would be interest in merging with the Warren County Youth Bureau. He has briefly spoken with the Chairman, Budget Officer and County Attorney about just meeting to look at the scope of services that Warren County would be looking for so he met with Warren County and there are a lot of parallels with the funding. He does see some possible benefits, i.e. shared administrative costs, better positioning for future funding. Requesting permission

to pursue this further to see if it is advantageous. Committee consensus to further explore.

**PUBLIC HEALTH:**

Preschool Transportation Resolution Rates for COVID – Tina McDougall, Fiscal Officer, addressed the preschool transportation contract. The preschool transportation provider requested a rate increase due to COVID. The former County Administrator gave them the go ahead to pay those rates but a contract amendment is needed to continue to pay those rates. Provider was requesting an 8.5% increase to rate and this would be more of an add on with an end date. They have sufficient money in the budget to pay those rates. A motion to approve entering into a side agreement for a COVID surcharge to the preschool transportation contract for the remainder of this contract year (re-evaluate at the end of August) and allow Public Health to continue to pay invoices at this increased amount was moved by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Campbell, and adopted.

PH/EMS Partnership for Points of Distribution (POD) Update – Kathy Jo McIntyre, Assistant Director of Patient Services, thanked everyone who has helped out at the PODS and they have run very well. A little concerned with glitches in the CDMS (state run program for scheduling appointments) and have another POD on Thursday. The eligible populations (law enforcement, first responders and over 65) cannot be mixed in PODS so they are scheduled on different dates and last week vaccinated 848 people in total. Allocated another 400 doses and have another POD scheduled for Thursday. Partnered with EMS for vaccinations and recovery oversight and screening and it is working out well. The vaccine is not just for Washington County residents but for all New York State residents.

Miscellaneous: Patty Hunt, Director of Public Health, addressed the following items with the committee:

- High risk school sports – This was something they did not anticipate they would have to deal with. Public Health has engaged the Incident Management Team and met with other counties and our medical directors for a regional approach. Positivity rates remain high. Need to make informed decisions based on the data and trying to contain the transmission of COVID. This has to be done in a safe manner and the number one consideration has to be the safety of our communities. The deadline for a response is Sunday. A motion that we are in support of our County Incident Management Team and the supporting medical and other personnel involved in their decision to delay school sports until sometime determined appropriate under certain health conditions was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Messrs. Ward, Wilson and Losaw and adopted.
- Public Health is part of the Capital District hub for vaccine and our leader in the hub as set up by the Governor's Office is Albany Medical Center and there are daily phone calls about vaccine distribution, issues and how everyone can work together in distributing vaccine. The limiting factor is the vaccine supply. Public Health would typically not be responsible for vaccinating 65 and above as the plan is currently set up by the State. They are responsible for 1b. People need to be patient just because they are eligible does not mean they can be vaccinated right away. There is just not enough vaccine. She thanked all the department for

their generosity of their time and their staff time helping them in many ways during the pandemic.

- This was the Director's last meeting and she stated it has been an honor to represent the County. The team at Public Health is strong, ready to work and will continue.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 A.M.

*Debra Prehoda, Clerk*  
*Washington County Board of Supervisors*