

MINUTES

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, January 31, 2022 9:00 a.m.

Present: Supervisors Verno, Leonard, Johnson, Donalty, Mettler, Bender and Miller, County Administrator Rick House, Fiscal Assistant Brian Sams, Veterans Service Officer Renee Maybee, Commissioner of Social Services Dr. Ellen Wayne and Aging and Youth Department Director Amy Haskins.

Minutes from the January 3rd Committee meeting were approved as written.

The monthly report for the Veterans Service Agency was distributed with the agenda. During December 361 Veterans and/or family members made contact with the local Office, the majority by phone and mail. There were 10 Veterans transported to the Canandaigua VA Medical Center and five to the Syracuse VA. The Office was contacted regarding 26 Veteran burials and paid for two indigent burials at a cost of \$4,780. A long-time employee of the Department retired at the end of 2021. At this time the Department is not scheduling any in-office appointments for the health of staff and Veterans. Office space has been re-arranged to allow for additional space between staff and clients. The Department's Service Officer will complete his accreditation training by the end of this week. The position of full-time Motor Vehicle Operator has been posted and interviews will take place later this week.

Mrs. Maybee informed Supervisors the Governor's proposed State budget includes an increase in Veteran program funding; this would increase Wayne County's appropriation from \$10,000 to \$25,000 if passed. There is also talk about additional grant funding opportunities for Veteran programs in the coming year.

Monthly reports for the Department of Social Services were presented and reviewed:

- Temporary Assistance: At the end of December there were 173 cases each for Aid to Dependent Children and Home Relief. Staff are working additional hours to get all the applications that are being received processed on time.
- Medicaid: Cases continue to rise slowly, ending December with 3,758 cases. There were 2,180 individuals receiving Medicaid/SSI at the same time. The requirements are still in the COVID loosening phase with a less investigative process for qualification. Dr. Wayne is not sure how long it will continue.
- Child Welfare: In December the Department received 207 reports, 135 of this number were regarding the welfare of children, 14 of those child abuse reports. Dr. Wayne noted the severity of cases continues to increase. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find emergency housing for youth.
- SNAP (Food Stamps): There are 4,372 individuals receiving SNAP benefits and no other form of Public Assistance, 178 receiving SNAP benefits along with Public Assistance and 76 individuals receiving SNAP benefits with more than one Social Service benefit.

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SNAP applications continue to increase; staff are working overtime to get applications processed.

- Financials: Through December Social Services expended 76% of their County budget. Both revenues and expenses were under budget during 2021. Dr. Wayne noted the time and energy dedicated during the past year to reduce Departmental cost. Some areas where reductions have been made are not working out as well as others. Overtime expenses continue to be high as additional people request, and are placed, on public assistance. At this time, it appears it is more cost efficient to have employees work overtime than to hire additional staff; that may not always be the case.

This month's Program Spotlight was on the Department's Angel Tree. The number of individuals requesting Christmas gifts for children increased again this year, and the number of agencies that could assist dropped. Through the program gifts were provided to 170 children and some parents. The Agency also receives toys, books, and crafts from Toys for Tots.

Supervisors were informed Deputy Social Service Commissioner Shelly Bentley will be retiring at the end of February.

Dr. Wayne informed Committee members the number of homeless cases and intensity of cases being seen by staff. She and staff are in the process of forming teams to strategically respond to this issue.

A number of Social Service staff have been out due to COVID. Dr. Wayne said this, and the inability to fill vacant positions in the Office, contributes to staff shortages.

The County's Child Advocacy Center has been in operation since this summer and has been very busy. Dr. Wayne said she is looking into a Federal grant that would allow for the hiring of a Sheriff's Officer to work full-time with the Center. She noted the high number of child sexual abuse cases in the County and the need to supply counseling and support to youth as soon as possible so the cycle does not continue.

Work continues on the provisional single room housing facility Social Services is working on. Last week the plans for the building were approved by the County's Planning Board; the Department is waiting Town Planning Board approval before proceeding. The Department will not own this building, but lease it from the owner, who will remain responsible for building upgrades. The facility, as proposed, will have a secured entry system.

The following transmittals were presented for the Department of Social Services:

--Authorization for the Department of Social Services to accept funds from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services in the amount of \$50,020 to be used to continue development of a system response to commercially sexually exploited children, trafficked and at-risk youth. The local Department must submit a plan to the State on how they are handling such cases. Approved 5-0.

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--Authorization to adjust Foster Care payment rates and to add a rate to be used for high risk youth placed in the custody of the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services. Changes would allow for an additional financial reimbursement to be paid when a family takes in a child with exceptions or in need of bridge care—additional funding to address child care needs that may be a barrier for families to take a youth into their home. Approved 5-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign an agreement with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services in relation to Child Care Development Block Grant funds totaling \$123,662. Funding is utilized to register and inspect child day care programs. Dr. Wayne reviewed the need for day care centers in the County and how they contributed to the workforce. Approved 5-0.

--Authorization to abolish the position of full-time Support Investigator and create and fill the position of full-time Senior Support Investigator. Dr. Wayne reviewed how this unit is in need of a supervisory staff member due to the recent turnover of staff. There are funds within the personnel lines of the budget to cover the salary increase. Approved 5-0.

Dr. Wayne thanked those Supervisors and employees who worked this past weekend in the distribution of COVID test kits.

Mrs. Haskins presented a graph of stimulus funding received by the Aging and Youth Department. Nearly \$400,000 has been received for nutritional programs and \$160,000 for general services, \$377,000 was expended on programs through 2021. Stimulus funding was received as part of an emergency package make usages of funds different from other appropriations received by the Department.

Mrs. Haskins noted there are small waiting lists for case management, aide services, legal services, PERS units, and Home Delivered Meals. She noted the increase caseload staff members have taken on during the pandemic.

Mrs. Haskins presented a transmittal requesting authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign a contract with Eidda, LLC, in the amount of \$600 a month for rental space for the Sodus Congregate Meal Site. Approved 5-0.

The Governor's proposed State budget has many areas of increased funding for senior programs. It does not reflect any reductions, or cuts, in youth program funding. Mrs. Haskins informed Supervisors the State Comptroller Office issues a report on the handling of COVID funds by the State into senior citizen programs, saying the State Director withheld reporting information and was not utilizing the funds that were made available.

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 a.m. The next meeting of the Human Services Committee is scheduled for Monday, February 28th at 9:00 a.m.