

MINUTES

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, February 28, 2022 9:00 a.m.

Present: Supervisors Leonard, Johnson, Donalty, Mettler and Miller, County Administrator Rick House, Fiscal Assistant Brian Sams, Director of Veterans Service Renee Maybee, Commissioner of Social Services Dr. Ellen Wayne, Deputy Commissioner Alyssa Rittenhouse and Aging and Youth Department Director Amy Haskins. Supervisor Verno was not present for the meeting.

Minutes from the January 31st Committee meeting were approved as written.

Dr. Wayne introduced Alyssa Rittenhouse, the new Deputy Commissioner of Social Services to the Committee.

The monthly activities report for the Veterans Service Agency was distributed with the agenda. During January the Office was contacted 384 times by Veterans or family members, the majority of contacts were made by phone and mail. During the month there were 10 Veterans transported to the Canandaigua VA Medical Facility and eight to the Syracuse VA Medical Facility. The Office was contacted regarding 28 burial related services, paying for two indigent burials at a cost of \$4,185. Mr. Miller noted Supervisor Groat sent a letter to Rochester Regional Transportation Services (RTS/WATS) regarding the hike in pricing put in place for 2022 for services to the Canandaigua VA Medical facility. He is not aware of a response being received.

Mr. House stated a County Veteran, pleased with the services received from the local Veterans Service Office, sent a letter to the US Department of Veterans Affairs complimenting the Department. The County received back a letter from the United States Under Secretary of Health thanking the Veterans Service Office and Administration for the good job they are doing to serve Veterans.

The Annual Report for the Veterans Service Agency was received and filed. A copy of the report was e-mailed to Supervisors prior to today's meeting. The Veteran population in Wayne County is 6,062; down by nearly 500 persons from the prior year. Of the Veterans' population 1,991 receive VA benefits; annual Federal benefits to Wayne County Veterans totaled over \$51 million in 2020. The majority of these funds are received for compensation, pensions and medical care. During 2021 the Agency provided 5,081 Veterans and/or family members with counseling services; this is a record for the units of service provided by the Department. Transportation services provided to local VA medical facilities were down during the year due to COVID restrictions. The number of Indigent Burials increased 60% from the prior year; the County paid for 15 burials in 2021 at a cost of \$28,821.

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Mrs. Maybee informed Supervisors Veterans Service Officer, Samantha Wilson, and her K-9 were recently Federally Accredited as a Veterans Service Animal/Handler. Mrs. Maybee said the dog is in the Office most days.

The following monthly reports were presented for the Department of Social Services:

- Temporary Assistance Caseload: At the end of January there were 183 County residents receiving Aid for Dependent Children/Family Assistance and 171 receiving Home Relief.
- SNAP Caseload: At the end of January there were 4,354 residents receiving food stamps, 187 residents receiving food stamps with multiple Public Assistance benefits and 79 receiving food stamps with one Public Assistance benefit.
- Medicaid Caseload: There are 3,770 County residents receiving Medicaid and 2,186 receiving Medicaid and SSI; both numbers continue to increase. Dr. Wayne said the State extended their no Medicaid case closing/automatic renewals process through the end of March. She is concerned once COVID emergency status is closed it will be an enormous task for staff to look-back on all individuals who have been claiming public assistance benefits during that time. The State recently said a look-back re-certification process will not be necessary; however after March 31st re-certification of clients will take place on a regular basis. Dr. Wayne is concerned there will be a large influx of individuals who will no longer qualify for public assistance benefits and not know how to financially manage without them. This will also affect those individuals who have been admitted to nursing homes who will have to be certified for Medicaid benefits they receive. Dr. Wayne said this action could have financial implications for the County's Nursing Home. The State is also considering increasing the financial limit to receive Medicaid benefits.
- Child Welfare Services: The Department received 202 reports concerning the welfare of children; of this number 14 were child abuse reports. Dr. Wayne reported there has been a large staff turnover in this Unit. New Caseworkers take about one-year to be trained and up-to-speed with a full caseload. During the extended training period, current Caseworkers will have increased caseloads. Civil Service exams for Caseworker positions are given on a regular basis.
- Financials: Through January the Department spent 7.2% of their \$21 million County budget. Most expenses are trending lower than last year. Dr. Wayne reported the Emergency Aid to Adults budget is running high due to the increased homeless population. She continues to work with the Town of Lyons to obtain approval for the establishment of an emergency housing project. The Department received American Rescue Protection Act (ARPA) funding for this project that includes leasing a newly renovated property in Lyons for this purpose. Currently at question on this project is who should be filing for building permits and zoning permit, the property owner, or DSS.

Supervisor Groat arrived at the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

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This month's Department of Social Services program spotlight is on the Low Income Child Care Program. The main purpose of the program is assisting low-income families with paying the cost of child care so they can work or go to school. The program is dependent on State funding. Last year the program served approximately 60 families (150 children) on a monthly basis. Every family pays a portion of their child care costs. Funding though the program is not available if a parent/legal guardian is available to care for a child.

Dr. Wayne made the Committee aware of the following issues:

- Department of Health Nursing Home Regulator Complaints Regarding Pontiac Nursing Home: The independent audit on this facility regarding a complaint about the care they administer to an incapacitated adult, in the custody of Wayne County, was upheld. Another individual in the custody of Social Services is currently housed at a facility in New Jersey; there are questions about the care being given at that dwelling also. Dr. Wayne said efforts are being made to relocate this person to another facility in that state.
- MSAR (Maximum State Aid Rate) Settlement: Dr. Wayne referred to a resolution approved by the Board earlier in the month to adjust rates paid to Foster Care families. The State settled a lawsuit to increase the subsidies to Foster Care and adoptive parents. The State has yet to make a decision if MSAR would be mandated for social services to pay 100% of the cost. The local Department is in the process of completing a financial projection on the number of children in care and the cost of providing each home with the maximum financial benefit. Dr. Wayne said an additional Board resolution may be needed to increase Foster Care/adoptive parent reimbursement rates to bring them more in line with MSAR.
- Pandemic Emergency Assistance Program: Originally the State provided DSS with free diaper vouchers for individuals receiving public assistance or food stamps if they had children under three-years-old in their care. Now there are funds available for income eligible households to receive additional food stamps if they have a person over 55 or under 17 in the home.

The Annual Report for the Department of Social Services was received and filed. A copy of the report was e-mailed to all Supervisors prior to today's meeting. The Department operated on a \$22.5 million County budget, only expending \$14.2 million of this amount. The number of cases handled in the Office continued to increase as the COVID-19 pandemic continued. During the past year staff received 2,937 applications for Supplemental Nutrition (food stamps), 1,528 for Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), 1,236 for Temporary Assistance and 821 for HEAP emergencies. The Medicaid caseload continued to increase to a total of 5,435; of this number 2,474 were also received SSI benefits. There were 112 fraud cases referred to the Department in 2021, 10 cases were prosecuted. Through 'front end detection' the Department denied or reduced benefits to nine individuals totaling over \$30,000. There were 49 applications to the Department for indigent burials; 30 of this number were paid for. There were 75 youth involved in the Workforce Development Summer Program working at 32 sites. Child Protective Services

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received 1,761 reports in 2021 involving 2,946 children--a total of 149 were abuses reports and 51 required subsequent case reporting. There were 20 children in the Foster Care system and six finalized adoptions. The Department oversaw 24 Persons In Need Of Supervision cases, Adult Protective Services were provided to 100 clients and 270 child support orders were issued resulting in over \$10 million in child support collections recovered. Dr. Wayne reported the Department operated the year with less staff, constantly working for more efficiencies. She realized the Social Service budget is a large part of the County budget and will continue, with the help of her dedicated staff, to seek additional efficiencies to save the taxpayer money.

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

--Authorization for the Commissioner of Social Services to sign an agreement with the Wayne County Sheriff's Office for welfare fraud investigation services for a cost of \$170,779. The funds will pay for the services of Sheriff's Deputies to assist in fraud investigations and arrests. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign an agreement with Finger Lakes Community College for Social Service employee training at a cost of \$68,013. The State pays the expense of training for Social Service workers at community colleges. Dr. Wayne noted additional training for staff is available through other sources. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign a contract amendment with Youth Advocacy Program (YAP) to allow for a wage increase for staff; their salaries have remained locked in since 2019. The amendment will not change the total \$1.3 million cost of this contract. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization to abolish one full-time Data Entry Operator position at the Department of Social Services and one full-time Senior Clerk/Typist position at the Department of Aging and Youth and create and fill the position of full-time Principal Audit Clerk in the Department of Social Services. Dr. Wayne said she and Mrs. Haskins were looking for Department efficiencies and believe the proposed staff changes will reflect this. There are many grants the Department of Social Services receives to provide emergency services; the new position would review the financial needs of the Department and positioning for these new funds. Mrs. Haskins said the Senior Clerk/Typist position in her Department is currently vacant and the two Departments work on similar assistance programs; the change would allow for a maximization in revenues. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign an agreement amendment with the Child Care Institution--Cayuga Home for Children. Dr. Wayne noted the agreement needs to be modified to reflect the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act and Part L of Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2021—reflecting changes in the procedural activities pertaining to utilization of

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Qualified Residential Treatment Programs and Qualified Individuals when placing a child into a congregate level of care, as do all of today's requests for agreement amendments. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign an amended agreement with the Child Caring Institution--St. Ann Institution. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign an amended agreement with the Child Caring Institution—Children's Home of Wyoming Conference. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign an amended agreement with the Child Caring Institution—Children's Village. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization for the Chairman of the Board to sign a contract with Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes for the provision of Supplemental Security Income/Interim Assistance Reimbursement Care Management Service for a price of \$77,500. The contract allows for a two-year renewal. Dr. Wayne noted a Request For Proposal was put out for this service; the awarded contractor currently offers this service to three counties and is well aware of what Wayne County is seeking from their contract. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization to accept funding from the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the amount of \$94,699. Dr. Wayne said this non-competitive, one-time grant, was offered to the County last week and will be used to assist survivors of domestic violence. There is a limited amount of time to expend the funds, but there is a need for them. Approved 4-0.

The following out of state travel requests were presented for Social Service employees:

--Authorization for one staff member to attend a Union Training Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, from April 4th – 6th. There is no County cost for attendance. Approved.

--Authorization for one staff member to attend an Article 81 Services to an Incapacitated Adult Hearing in New Jersey on April 11th and 12th and again on November 7th and 8th for a cost of \$581.54. This would allow for staff to physically see this client that is in the custody of the Department of Social Services. Approved.

The 2021 Annual Report for the Department of Aging and Youth was received and filed. A copy of the report was sent to all Supervisors prior to today's meeting. The report gave a short explanation of programs offered and the benefit they have to the community. The report contained a list of vendors utilized during the past year. The Department worked within COVID guidelines again in 2021, which limited community participation in many programs. In 2021 there were 17 clients receiving Caregiver Services, 368 individuals receiving Case Management, 197

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individuals attending Congregate Meal Sites, 328 receiving Home Delivered Meals, 57 Legal Services, 42 Nutrition Counseling Services, 131 Aide Services, 312 on PERS Units, and 122 transportation services.

Mrs. Haskins noted ARC has been the contracted food provider for both congregate meal sites and the County's Home Delivery Meal Program, with Home Delivered Meals providing volunteer organization. Home Delivered Meals informed the Department of Aging and Youth they would no longer be providing volunteer coordination service as they developed their own Home Delivered Meal Service and will be utilizing their list of volunteers to deliver their meals. They will not provide the County with the names and contact information of their current volunteers. Home Delivered Meals will not be free. The meals through the Department of Aging and Youth are provided to qualified senior citizen, both financially and physically. There is no mandated cost for the meals, only a donation recommendation. Mrs. Haskin said the Department has not received any volunteer referrals from Home Delivered Meals in the past three months. She is concerned the two programs may be hard for seniors distinguish between and understand they may go from receiving a 'free' meal to a meal they have to pay for. Supervisors were informed NYSID (NYS Industries for the Disabled) have stated the price of their meals will be increasing in the coming year to reflect the high increases in food, packaging and transportation costs. The Aging and Youth Department will be able to financially handle the additional expense in their 2022 budget because of Stimulus funding; however, will not have the funds to serve the current numbers if the price per meal doubles. Mrs. Haskins will keep the Committee updated on this issue.

Mrs. Haskins is working with the Human Resource Department on a new and appropriate title for clerical staff in the Department. This would allow for clerical workers in the Area Agency on Aging to provide additional services, as needed, to Caseworkers in the Department. The number of contacts the Department receives from seniors has continued to increase and there are many times when Caseworkers need help. The title under consideration is Aging Services Worker. She will keep the Committee updated on this issue.

Mrs. Haskins informed the Committee she has available staff this year to provide lifeguard coverage at Sodus Point Beach Park beginning on Memorial Day Weekend and every weekend in June, at which time the Park will be staffed every day through the summer with lifeguards. This action would not increase the current budget.

The following transmittals were presented for the Department of Aging and Youth:

--Authorization to rollover unspent Stimulus funds and amend the County budget. Mrs. Haskins stated \$72,639 remains in the 2021 budget from unspent Federal COVID Relief Funds. These funds will be placed into her 2022 budget and used for other direct expenses in the Department. Approved 4-0.

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--Authorization to rollover unspent Unment Needs Funds and amend the County budget. The request is to rollover \$64,088 to use for the purchase of a motor vehicle and contracted services. Approved 4-0.

--Authorization to hire Lifeguards and set salary rates for the 2022 season. A list of positions and hourly rates was included in the request. Committee members agreed the request would be amended to include the cost for staffing at the Park beginning Memorial Day Weekend and every weekend in June. Approved 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m. The next meeting of the Human Services Committee is scheduled for Monday, April 4th at 9:00 a.m.