

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 16, 2007 – 3:00 P.M.
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM**

Present: N. Shinagawa, Chair, M. Robertson, M. Sigler, Vice Chair
Excused: M. Koplinka-Loehr, F. Proto
Staff: B. Crosby, Sylvia Allinger, Health Department; N. Zahler, N. Zook, Youth Services, L. Holmes, Office for the Aging; K. Schlather, L. Horn, Human Services Coalition; P. Carey, Social Services Commissioner; R. DeLuca, Mental Health Commissioner; S. Whicher, County Administrator; M. Lynch, Public Information Officer; K. Fuller, Deputy Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Shinagawa called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Chair's Report

Mr. Shinagawa said previously the Committee had discussed the need to have more information on Home Health Aides; his intent was with regard to the Berger Commission and the Governor Spitzer's Patients-First initiative. He explained he would like to see what other challenges will be facing Tompkins County when the Berger Commission and/or Patients-First directives were to become a reality. Mr. Shinagawa said he would be bringing forth a resolution for consideration that looks at another angle of the Berger Commission directives; namely that if it goes through it appears it would not be possible to provide for residents unless things are changed. Draft copies of the resolution will be provided to Committee members and appropriate staff as soon as completed.

Health Department

Children's Preschool Special Education Billing Update

Ms. Allinger informed the Committee that the Federal Government auditors have completed their audit of the Children's Preschool Special Education program as it relates to New York State Medicaid within the Department of Education and found what they believe to be "Fraudulent Billing Practices" within the New York State Education Billing Practices section. As a result of their determination, the Federal government indicated they would like to take-back ten years of Medicaid funding from New York counties and school districts. Following discussions with State-level personnel, a compromise was reached to put a hold on some Medicaid revenues as it relates to speech pathology, counseling, and transportation for special need children. What that means for the County is that the anticipated revenue from these funds was \$600,000; approximately \$450,000 of this amount is for the specified service areas. The County only learned about the withholding of funds at the time the reimbursement funds were not received and did not include funds for these areas. In addition, the school districts are not receiving reimbursement. Various timeframes for the hold on funds have been provided, with the last indicating the hold was to be for between three to six months. At this time there is no indication of when the hold is lifted.

Ms. Allinger specified the auditors findings were a result of such things as Federal requirement of a Master's degree for speech pathology, yet the majority of school districts providing the services have Bachelor's degree teachers; some special counseling services require a PhD, yet most school systems do not require this. Ms. Allinger indicated the County and school districts had not been informed of these regulatory requirements in advance and were not aware of any problem. She stated when there is an audit of the County she does not expect any problems with either the speech services or transportation services (which was an attendance record problem) as the County already meets the Federal requirements; counseling services may be difficult as there are very few PhD counselors working with the younger children. At this time the State is working with the Federal government to obtain some form of agreement in this area.

RESOLUTION NO. – APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND – REPLACEMENT PAY – HEALTH DEPARTMENT

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Sigler, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to present the following resolution to the full Legislature for approval. RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

WHEREAS, the Health Department has an employee out on medical leave for greater than two months in the Community Health Services Division, and

WHEREAS, the Fiscal Policy of Tompkins County allows for replacement pay from the Contingent Fund, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Health and Human Services and Budget and Capital Committees, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized and directed to make the following budget appropriation:

FROM: A1990.54440	Contingent Fund	\$1,495
TO: A4016.51000513	Account Clerk Typist	\$1,075
A4016.58800	Fringes	\$ 420

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Explanation: The employee has been out of work since September, 2006. Since the period of September 2006 to December 31, 2006, has been previously appropriated, the resolution reflects replacement pay for only January 1, 2007 – January 12, 2007.

Human Services Coalition

Ms. Schlather, Director, introduced Ms. Horn and noted Ms. Horn's position is funded ½ by the County and the other half by five local funding sources. She explained Ms. Horn provides support to agencies through training and identification of outside funding resources. Last year a survey was undertaken of twenty-six of the small to mid-range agencies to determine where to focus energies and resources. In-person interviews with specific questions were asked to assist in narrowing the focus.

Ms. Horn reviewed the Asset and Needs Assessment survey Executive Summary provided to the Committee and noted the needs within the following areas:

- *Mission, Program, and Strategic Planning* – Agencies are struggling to address increased community need and decreased funding.
- *Infrastructure* – Agencies have seen significant increases in areas such as insurance, utilities, fuel, and building repairs. In addition, information technology poses a significant challenge; although they are able to utilize donated and used equipment, maintenance is difficult and often done by staff when possible to save the cost of a technician.
- *Funding, Grant Writing, and Reporting* – Funding has been flat or decreased in recent years. Several agencies indicated a plan to increase fundraising from donors and to increase grant-writing efforts. Some agencies are exploring innovative entrepreneurial efforts to establish a source of revenue. A number of agencies are unsure how to meet the growing gap between resources and community need. With regard to grant writing, various agencies have many fluctuations; some are successful, but overall it is difficult to obtain national or state foundation grants. Additionally, a lack of time to research and submit grants, obtaining only one-time funding, lack of operational costs associated with grants, local match funding requirements, and the competition for grants locally, are elements restricting agencies when seeking grants. Outcome data that is often required is an obstacle in the reporting process; State and Federal contract requirements are very specific and often difficult to provide one method of tracking and reporting information.
- *Board, Volunteers, and Staff* – Overall all have a high regard for their Boards, however recruitment and retention is often difficult, particularly when attempting to find a diverse group and assign functions of its members. Volunteers are used in varying degrees within the majority of agencies and

although a valuable asset, do require staff time for training, coordinating, and supervising the volunteers. Although client loads are increasing only one-third of the organizations have increased staff size in the past 3-5 years. As a result, increased hours and cross-training has occurred to allow versatility in service delivery. Unfortunately, staff turnover is a continuing challenge due to low-wages, burn-out and stress. In addition, creating a diverse staff is also challenging. An item of importance was that due to upcoming retirements over the next several years, of many of the agency executive directors and managers will require succession training.

- *Assistance and Information* – Agency directors provided thirteen areas they would like to receive information or assistance on. These included: identifying appropriate grant opportunities, staff training for information technology, board development, supervisory/management training, PR/Public information; overall human resources, benefits management, succession planning, overall grant management, collaboration with partners, measuring outcomes, planning for future space needs, and building/space maintenance.

Ms. Horn and Ms. Schlather spoke of plans for the Human Services Coalition and Cornell Cooperative Extension staff working with agencies to respond to issues raised in the assessment. Various efforts, including training, workshops and individualized support, will be developed and implemented.

Ms. Robertson spoke of the possibility of multi-county or multi-agency grant writing options. She noted that often agencies are competing against each other for the same grants and it would be helpful to know what funding each is seeking. Ms. Schlather reported Ms. Horn is in the process of developing a database that would provide an overview of how each agency is funded. Ms. Carey spoke of her recent attendance at a Commissioners meeting and how the Office of Children and Families Services easily provided a detailed summary of funding received from their offices. Mr. Whicher noted that many agencies have various sources that are specific to particular programs or portions of them, and thus it could be difficult to determine precisely what the funding streams are.

During the discussion of grant writing, Ms. Schlather indicated a desire to see community planning in the human services area. She spoke of an increase in assistance requests by immigrants that is often accompanied by legal issues as well. Ms. Carey shared that although the individuals are not normally illegal aliens, in order to assist them it can require numerous, lengthy calls to the Buffalo immigration office to obtain proper documentation. In addition, many agencies will provide services but do not receive any form of reimbursement due to their immigration status. It was noted that previously there was a program for immigrants, however the service was discontinued. Ms. Schlather said that Catholic Charities is in the process of developing an immigration service program. Mr. Whicher believes it would be beneficial to have a center for immigrants to be directed to available services. Ms. Carey spoke of having been informed that Tompkins County has the tenth largest per capita population in the State for foreign-born individuals; the nine counties that are higher surround New York City. Ms. Schlather also noted that many times it takes several rounds of grant applications before one is received.

With regard to succession planning and the ability to find appropriate candidates, Ms. Schlather said Cornell University's new President, David Skorton, has indicated a strong desire to assist the community in many areas and could be beneficial in this area.

A brief discussion on the topic of overlapping services took place. It was noted that the agencies do collaborate to avoid overlap of services. With regard to the possibility of merging agencies to combine services. Ms. Schlather said it is difficult due to funding stream requirements. Ms. Robertson spoke of having undertaken a merge of services between Task Force for Battered Women and Ithaca Rape Crisis, and the end result was the State reducing funding due to the merge. Ms. Schlather said several agencies have looked at perhaps sharing a common building, however, analysis indicated it would be more expensive than their present costs.

Youth Services

Health and Human Services Committee Minutes
May 16, 2007

Ms. Zahler spoke of previously provided reports and said the report presented is for the Youth Employment Services (YES) component of her department. She said Ms. Zook is responsible for the agency side of this component as well as coordinating youth employment opportunities.

2007 Teen Guide to Summer Jobs

Ms. Zook said while not directly providing services to youth in this field they are active in the coordination of services. She reviewed the various types of programs that are available to youth and noted that the department does fund several programs directly, Learning Web, Youth Outreach, and the career exploration, and apprenticeship program. The department was involved in the design of the Job Link program as well as providing outreach and intake for it. The summer guide prepared by Youth Services is a result of meetings with various municipalities and youth program directors. This time of year the groups meet to determine what opportunities exist and what youth are known to need a position. Ms. Zahler said the meetings have assisted tremendously to enable the youth to be matched up to positions. Previously, if a program was filled a youth did not always get to work, or due to multiple applications, several programs were offering the same individual a position. Now, as a result of the collaboration, there is more successful placement, without difficulty.

Ms. Zook reported the summer guide is available on the website, and through schools, service providers, etc. In response to Ms. Robertson's question about older youth (21) it was noted that youth with disabilities or cognitive difficulty are interested in these programs. As a rule, younger children are the participants in the summer programs. Ms. Zahler noted the Town of Lansing has a year-round program which is why they are not included within the Summer Job Guide.

Ms. Zahler spoke of the recent increase in the minimum wage to \$7.15 and how it could be a stumbling block for youth to gain employment. She said years ago when an increase occurred a system of a "training wage" was put in place, which paid less than minimum wage for a 90-day period.

With regard to request for proposals for the separate agencies, Ms. Zahler said Youth Services called agencies to ask if they were interested and how a collaborative effort could assist. Ms. Zook reported as a result of additional TANF funding an additional 75 youth will be able to obtain work.

Ms. Zahler said today is the deadline for agencies to apply to the Tompkins County Youth Board for funding. With regard to the multi-year funding cycle, Ms. Zahler said that it provides assurance to agencies of a three-year commitment contingent on County and State funding; however, it does require that outcomes and performance are satisfactory. In addition, no new programming will be considered mid-cycle.

Department of Social Services

American Red Cross Update

Ms. Carey informed the Committee that Mr. Nocera was relieved of his duties at the American Red Cross (ARC), leaving them without a Director at the moment. At a meeting of funders with the ARC Board assurance was provided that the Board is committed to continue to operate as it has in the past. The Board will soon hire an Interim Director and shelter operations are not in jeopardy. Ms. Carey stated each component of the ARC has its own supervisor that will assist in the transitional process. Ms. Schlather said the Red Cross Director Search Guidelines are very stringent. It was noted that contract negotiations have just begun and emphasis was made for outcome-based contracting. Mr. DeLuca noted that the County is possibly the only ARC homeless shelter in the nation.

Potential Investigation

Ms. Carey informed the Committee that a child had been seriously injured this week. In the event the child should die, which is anticipated, a special investigative team will be required to do a full investigation into the matter.

Health and Human Services Committee Minutes
May 16, 2007

Mental Health

Mr. DeLuca announced there would be a Mental Health Rally held from 1 – 3 PM on Saturday, May 19th at Cass Park.

Approval of Minutes

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Sigler, and unanimously approved by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of May 2, 2007, as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Adjournment

On motion the meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Fuller, Deputy Clerk