

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
AUGUST 6, 2008 – 3:00 P.M.  
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM**

Approved 9/3/08
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Present: F. Proto, Chairman, M. Robertson, N. Shinagawa, M. Koplinka-Loehr (temporary member)  
Excused: C. Chock, T. Randall  
Staff: L. Holmes, Office for the Aging; R. DeLuca, B. Doling, Mental Health; K. Schlather, L. Horn, E. Holmes, Human Services Coalition; Patricia Carey, Commissioner of Social Services; K. Schlather, Cornell Cooperative Extension; A. Cole, S. Connors, Health Department; S. Whicher, County Administrator; J. Johnson, K. Bennett, Youth Services; K. Fuller, Deputy Clerk  
Guest: Bill Hawley, Executive Director, Lifelong

**Call to Order**

Chairman Proto called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**Additions/Changes to the Agenda**

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

**Withdrawal from Agenda**

There were no withdrawals from the agenda

**Approval of the Minutes of July 2 and 17, 2008**

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Shinagawa, to accept the minutes of July 2 and 17, 2008. A voice vote on the minutes resulted as follows: Ayes – 3; Noes – 0; Excused – 2 (Legislators Chock and Randall), MINUTES APPROVED.

**Chair's Report**

Mr. Proto did not have a report.

**Health Department**

**2009 Budget Memo**

It was noted the estimate for the over-target requests is approximately \$114,000 total for the four requests. Ms. Robertson acknowledged the timing of budget preparation is due in part to the Board of Health schedule and asked if it could be modified to a later date when more detailed information would be possible. Ms. Cole said that although attempts have been made to do so, however quorum is not always reached if the timeline occurs in the summer months. Ms. Robertson inquired whether the Ithaca Car Share could be utilized rather than purchasing vehicles. Ms. Cole and Ms. Connors explained the need to have department vehicles to enable 24-hour coverage as well as maintaining medical supply access. Mr. Proto noted that many departments are replacing the Jeep vehicles with others and asked if the decision was due to vehicle handling difficulties. Ms. Cole indicated the change is due to gas pricing as well as high maintenance expenses. The replacement vehicles would depend on what State contract offers, which appears to be Ford Focus. Ms. Connors said often snow tires are purchased for vehicles that would be required to travel to rural areas.

**STD Grant Submission**

Ms. Cole said the State came and reviewed the STD Program and submitted a report based on the review. The review occurred during a time of increased cases of syphilis; the State was complimentary of the program but recommended increased education. As a result, staff has applied for a grant that would allow expansion of the program. Mr. Proto spoke of the report provided to the Board of Health that indicates the number of communicable disease cases within the County, broken out by type and age. He noted the ability to see increases of some diseases from time to time. The funds would be used to enhance the web site and general enough to provide educational information on other sexually transmitted diseases as well. The staff of the local schools would be able to send e-messages to students, staff, etc. directing them to the information.

### **Office for the Aging**

Ms. Holmes reported on a meeting that took place with Mr. Potter, Information Technology Services Director, representatives of the Emergency Dispatch Services, and representatives of TechS2, a software developer, regarding the Personal Emergency Response (PERs) program. TechS2 felt they could possibly offer options to allow a more rapid reporting of pertinent information at the time of installation of the PERs unit at clients home and the Emergency Services personnel. Presently, Office for the Aging staff report the information to Emergency Services by either personal delivery to their building or returning to the Office for the Aging and faxing information to Emergency Services. TechS2 has voice recognition software and believed that perhaps it would assist in a more rapid reporting of the information.

Ms. Holmes indicated that the outcome of discussions was that the technology TechS2 has to offer may prove beneficial to other departments, however, it does not appear that it would be beneficial with regard to the PERs program. The concept of a direct reporting is worthwhile, however it would require taking steps suggested by our ITS department. Mr. Whicher noted that the mobile data portion of the Communications Capital project would enable direct reporting, however, it is not available at this time.

Upon noting it is simply general information, and not medical information, required to be submitted to properly activate the PERs unit, Ms. Robertson expressed disappointment and concern that input of the information could only be done by one individual; if that person was unavailable, client information was not in the system, leaving responders no way to locate them if the unit is activated. Mr. DeLuca and Mr. Proto shared discussions and information regarding other departments' procedures for information input, which included laptop computers. Ms. Holmes indicated that connectivity would be a concern as it is not possible to connect with the internet in all areas of the county. She noted there are many individuals reviewing the situation to determine the best course of action to improve the present procedure.

### **Discussion Regarding Lifelong/Office for the Aging Co-location**

Mr. Proto indicated the discussion is a follow-up to the joint committee presentation that occurred July 17<sup>th</sup>. He asked if any further developments have occurred since that time. Mr. Hawley said nothing further has occurred and he believes the next step is to have the presentation provided to the full Legislature. Ms. Holmes said a resolution regarding the matter should come forward from the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr arrived at 3:30 p.m.

A discussion occurred regarding the study and the following items were noted:

- A placeholder could be put within the County Capital Program; if it went forward the financial impact would occur in 2010.

- A determination of whether to proceed beyond the feasibility study should occur in the near future in order to consider alternative options for the Office for the Aging relocation to accommodate the State Court System's request for additional space.
- Mr. Whicher indicated the County could fit the project into the capital budget in the event Lifelong is able to proceed, with a cost of approximately \$240,000 per year. The Office for the Aging would have a form of lease agreement on their portion of the funding, with Lifelong responsible for the balance. He indicated there would be three steps determining whether to proceed: (1) completion of plan design, (2) determination by Lifelong's Board that it is financially feasible to do so, and (3) development of a financial package that is acceptable to all parties. He further said a resolution indicating an assurance of proceeding with the co-location would be required.
- Mr. Whicher reported that the State Court System requested a design review of the courthouse to determine occupancy requirements. At this time he believes the contract is issued. Upon receipt of a completed report he anticipates the State Court System to ask that the County provide additional space within the courthouse as soon as possible.
- Lifelong is working with a consultant familiar with capital campaigns to determine whether enough funding could be raised in the timeframe necessary for the project to proceed. In addition, State and Federal funding is being sought and conversations with potential donors are taking place. Mr. Hawley anticipates his Board to have a final determination in October.
- Mr. Koplinka-Loehr suggested a resolution of intent that would indicate the desire to continue with the project if Lifelong determines it is financially able to do so.
- The concern regarding the building size expressed by Mr. Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Public Works, was due to the multiplier used by Holt to go from net assignable space to gross space. If the gross modifier were reduced it is possible that the total cost of the project could be reduced from the original \$4.2 million.
- It was noted that the timeline indicated a six-month process for design approval by the City of Ithaca.

Following discussion, it was determined that Ms. Holmes and Mr. Hawley would work to develop a draft resolution to bring forward to the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee on August 21<sup>st</sup>. In addition, Holt Architects would be asked to provide the same presentation to the full Legislature on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Shinagawa, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to provide a sense of the Health and Human Services Committee, that we approve the Resolution of Intent, having seen the preliminary design for both organizations and desire to have the project move forward, pending review of funding availability in the Capital budget by the County Administrator and Director of Finance. MOTION ADOPTED.

### **Mental Health**

#### **RESOLUTION NO. - INCREASE OF HOURS – SENIOR ACCOUNT CLERK/TYPIST AND FORENSIC COUNSELORS – TOMPKINS COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Shinagawa, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to recommend adoption of the following resolution to the full Legislature. RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Mental Health Department has reorganized the Billing and Records Units within its Administration as well as the Forensic Unit of the Mental Health Clinic, and

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WHEREAS, this reorganization requires the increase of hours in one (1) Senior Account Clerk/Typist, position number (568) Labor Grade I (9), and two (2) Forensic Counselors, position numbers (617 and 604) Labor grade P (16) from 35 hours per week to 40 hours per week, and

WHEREAS, due to departmental reorganization, no new monies are needed to fund these position changes, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Health and Human Services and the Budget and Capital Committees, That the positions of Senior Account Clerk/Typist, position number (568) Labor Grade I (9), and Forensic Counselor, position numbers (617 and 604) Labor grade P (16), be increased to 40 hours per week effective immediately.

**SEQR ACTION:** TYPE II-20

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**EXPLANATION:**

As noted in the Resolution to increase hours for three positions within the Mental Health Department, there are no new monies being requested to realize this change.

There is significant reorganization occurring within the Mental Health Department with the intent to consolidate and enhance the activities of the Adult Clinic. One of the Clinic Supervisors is retiring and her position will be filled with a full time Psychiatric Social Worker whose primary responsibilities will be in Adult Assessment and Intake along with direct clinical services. This will provide more direct service, consolidate supervision of adult services and flatten the organization further. The difference in salary between the two positions this will cover the majority of the costs associated with the increase in hours of the Forensic Counselors. This increase in hours will provide greater front door access to services while maintaining Emergency Outreach and Forensic Services.

We are also recommending to permanently increase the Senior Account Clerk Typist position in the billing unit from 35 to 40 hours a week. This is to accommodate and absorb the posting of Continuing Day Treatment client attendance as well as maintaining the group rosters for persons affected by serious mental illness. This task was transferred from a front desk/reception area to the billing unit to be better managed and rolled into the automated billing system. This will be one small piece in enabling our systemic integration of billing and records processes under one supervisor. The integration of these functions is absolutely crucial.

In addition, the extended hours for this position will assist the department in meeting its Medicaid Compliance objectives (as mandated by the Office of Medicaid Inspector General) by shifting some of the billing unit functions from a data entry process to an audit/review process.

The associated spreadsheets indicate the increases and decreases in salary that are occurring in the department. The lower section of the spreadsheet indicates current notification of changes in State Aid revenue for 2009. Any additional changes in salary in 2009 not accounted for by staff realignment will be covered by State Aid.

**Youth Services**

**Community Coalition for Health Youth Grant Renewal, Assessment and Expansion**

Ms. Bennett said the annual \$100,000 Federal grant has been awarded for the fifth year of funding. She will be working to apply for another five-year grant in March of 2009. The grant funds would be utilized by Youth Services and TST-BOCES to conduct a survey of students in October in grades 6 through 12. At this time five of the six school districts have indicated they would participate in the survey (Newfield has not responded). The model survey is a risk and protective model that would provide information of student attitude and behavior, family, school, and community life. It will provide a great deal of information to assist not only youth services but the school districts as well. Upon

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completion, approximately 6,800 students will have participated in the survey. The coalition who has previously focused on the Ithaca City School District is now expanding the survey to a more countywide base. Ms. Bennett explained they are looking to utilize a national survey; either the State OASIS or the Communities that Care survey. Both are similar in design and will be replacing the survey previously developed locally. At the end of the survey the results are sent to BOCES who would provide scanning test results within six to eight weeks.

#### Recreation Partnership Board

Ms. Johnson reported the Recreation Partnership Board has developed the 2009 proposed budget; a request for maintenance of effort funding in the amount of \$1,896 (3.4% increase) from each partner (County, City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca, and municipal members) is anticipated. Without the increase twenty-two smaller programs, providing for 991 youth, or the Cass Park day camp would have to be cancelled, effecting 365 youth. At this time Ms. Johnson has not heard any objections from the other partners to the increase.

#### Budget Adjustment and Transfer

The Committee was provided copies of a budget adjustment and budget transfer for informational purposes. No action was required.

#### Department of Social Services

##### Budgetary Update

Ms. Carey reported that until last Thursday it was not certain what the 2009 allocations would be. She said the budget submitted is as accurate as they are able to project; due to two rate increases in foster care. In addition, there is the across the board two percent cut in program revenue and previously split 65/35 funding will also be reduced by the two percent. She reported there has been a significant increase in children in foster care (presently 113) with approximately two to three in institution and require pay for 24-hour aides. It does not appear these youth are primarily Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) or juvenile delinquent cases but a result of neglect or abuse by parents. Ms. Carey said it is unknown whether the significant increase is the result of amended mandate reporting regulations or a trend. She is hoping that some of the preventative service funds could be shifted from the PINS and juvenile delinquent programs to the foster care programs.

*Ms. Carey reported that due to the complicated formulas to determine funding she would be asking Mr. Herden to address the Committee and provide information on other areas of concerns.*

Ms. Carey anticipates not spending as much in the economic security area of their budget, as well as reduced budget amounts in other areas. Attempts are underway to modify regulations for the Heating and Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to accommodate the anticipated need in the 2008-2009 heating season; until this occurs it is difficult to project what this amount would be. The Committee was informed that some larger counties are setting aside large amounts of funds in anticipation of the increased need for heating assistance.

Ms. Carey is planning to attend a New York Public Assistance Commissioner's meeting and hopes that it would provide more information of what is coming out of the State Legislature and what to anticipate regarding budgets.

In response to Ms. Robertson, it was noted that temporary assistance and Medicaid cases have leveled off at this time; food stamps and HEAP cases are rising.

*Mr. Proto requested the Committee be provided a report that provides case statistics.*

New Online Initiative

Ms. Carey reported on the mybenefits.ny.gov that allows individuals to go to an online site to determine eligibility for a variety of programs. The department would be putting up posters in grocery stores, libraries, etc. In addition, the Department is undergoing outreach to rural areas to provide the necessary means to apply online. Mr. Proto recommended she contact Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit's marketing individual to assist in bringing about public awareness. Ms. Carey spoke of the ability to have access via computer and shared information on a New York City survey as well as in remote regions of the state that indicated most individuals at some point have the ability to use computers. For those individuals not able to do so she is hopeful that providing remote access by staff with laptops will provide assistance. She said it may increase the caseloads but may help individuals in some manner, particularly with the anticipated heating expenses for the 2008-2009 season.

Ms. Carey also reported that due to the recent pilot initiative, clients are able to apply via telephone interviews.

Additional Budget Information

Ms. Carey reported the \$2 million in unspent funds previously reported was from the Medicaid budget line, food stamps, and contracts being renegotiated.

Human Services Coalition

Ms. Schlather introduced Elizabeth Holmes and Lisa Horn.

Healthy New York Information to Consumers

Ms. Holmes, Health Planning Council Program Coordinator, spoke of her work to assist clients to locate affordable health insurance. Over the past 2.5 years she has assisted approximately 1,500 individuals/families who do not have any coverage. She provided a handout that indicated what programs the Health Planning Council has available to assist individuals. Ms. Holmes shared a letter written to Assemblywoman Lifton regarding difficulties she has experienced when assisting clients in the *Healthy New York* insurance plan. The letter spoke of the inconsistency in information provided regarding the plan coverage and requested assistance in amending the program to provide clearly defined information for participants. The Committee was informed that when attempting to determine an appropriate percentage of income for health insurance cost has proven difficult. Although the Alternatives Federal Credit Union indicated seven percent is an appropriate percentage for health coverage, for an individual at the lowest eligible income the monthly premium could be as high as 20 to 28 percent of their income. For the *Healthy New York* plan, many out-of-pocket expenses such as co-pays, various deductibles, and uncovered services increase the percentage an individual pays for health coverage which increases the percentage of income further. Direct pay insurance companies could be in excess of \$900 per month for individual coverage.

As a follow-up to the letter, the Committee was informed that the daughter was dropped from the insurance coverage, which could have been avoided if the correct information had been provided. Assemblywoman Lifton's office forwarded the letter to the appropriate division of the State Insurance Department and was requested to keep them apprised of any progress made. The daughter had been covered previously by Medicaid and was to be terminated May 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Robertson had suggested that the letter also be sent to the appropriate Senate members as well, particularly Senator Seward. Mr. Proto agreed it was important to contact the appropriate State legislators and recommended a personal meeting to discuss the situation. Ms. Holmes stated frustration, noting that she is more familiar with how the various programs work and has difficulty; she understands how an individual not knowing where to call finds it even more difficult. Mr. Shinagawa said the existing State programs reflect the separate views of the State and Assembly as they are not able to come to agreement to have one program to assist low-

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income individuals. He shared his experience at Assemblywoman Lifton's office of receiving many calls with concerns regarding health insurance programs.

Mr. Proto suggested she also contact TCAT to see if there is the possibility of providing information on various health insurance programs through the marketing department.

Ms. Robertson asked if the clients are Tompkins County residents. She was informed that approximately 80-81 percent are residents for the Tompkins Rx program. Although she did not have all the statistics readily available she believes the majority of clientele are residents.

Mr. Shinagawa suggested having all local State Legislators provide a cooperative effort to seek assistance for the very difficult cases of individuals finding appropriate information regarding coverages.

#### Update on Projects from Support Specialist

Ms. Horn provided a lengthy written report for members of the Committee for their review. She noted her three-year pilot position is jointly funded by a variety of organizations in order to establish a position to provide organizational and grant support to the area non-profit agencies. She reported that 1<sup>st</sup> year's Board Development training was very successful and plans to offer senior management leadership training during 2009. Ms. Horn also provides grant support and is developing a database to assist agencies to locate grant funds. She hopes through the development of the database it will enable agencies to be aware of potential grants much quicker than at the present time. The Committee heard from Ms. Horn that Tompkins County is not as needy as other areas of the state, which makes it necessary to develop collaborations and other means to bring the funding into our area.

Ms. Schlather said this is the last year for Ms. Horn's position based on previous funding. She would be asking that the position continue to be funded as it has proved to be extremely beneficial.

#### Adjournment

On motion the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Karen Fuller, Deputy Clerk*