

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 11, 2009 – 3:30 P.M.
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM**

Approved September 8, 2009

Present: F. Proto, Chairman; M. Robertson; T. Randall (arrived 3:47 p.m.); W. Burbank
Excused: G. Stevenson
Staff: P. Carey, Department of Social Services; N. Zahler, Youth Services; L. Holmes, Office for the Aging; A. Cole, Health Department; R. DeLuca, B. Doling, Mental Health; J. Mareane, P. Younger, K. Sutherland, County Administration; K. Schlather, N. Burston, Human Services Coalition; M. Lynch, Public Information Officer; K. Schlather, Cooperative Extension, K. Fuller, Deputy Clerk
Guests: Stacey Shackford, *The Ithaca Journal*

Call to Order

Chairman Proto called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes of June 9, and July 14, 2009

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Burbank, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of June 9, and July 14, 2009, as amended. MINUTES APPROVED.

Changes to the Agenda

The following item was withdrawn from the agenda:

- Report on Temporary Assistance and Food Stamps

Report from the Committee Chair

Update on Rural Feeder Program

Mr. Proto, Chair, provided members of the Committee with a revised memorandum from Ms. Bodnar regarding the Rural Feeder resolution that will be coming before the Legislature on August 18th that more clearly portrayed Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit's (TCAT) service to the County's population. He reported the Budget, Capital, and Finance Committee approved the resolution at its last meeting. Concerns were expressed regarding individual disability client's usage of the service, the need to identify who would be responsible for providing and maintaining bus shelters, and the siting method. It was suggested that the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council be responsible to do so. It was suggested the program include the use of the shuttle bus operated by TCAT from Watkins Glen, which has almost maximum ridership. Because of the high volume of riders, a determination of how to accommodate those intending to use the service should be completed. Ms. Carey, Ms. Bodnar, and Mr. Turcotte will meet to discuss these aspects.

Ms. Robertson asked why shelters would be necessary for the program. Mr. Proto said since the Rural Feeder system is to be on-demand, it may be more feasible to have a shelter to provide one pick-up point for the feeder transport. Mr. Proto said it is expected that individuals outside of JARC-eligible funding would also utilize the service.

Upcoming Budget Deliberation

Mr. Proto said the last Committee Chair's meeting included discussions regarding holding special committee meetings to review departmental budgets. A date will be set for the special meeting.

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Health Department Building - Request

Mr. Proto requested a status report on the new Health Department building at an upcoming Legislature meeting.

Report from the County Administrator

Budget Update

Mr. Mareane reported the 2009 budget is out of balance as a result of the decrease in sales tax revenue, decreased state aid, and other factors.

Mr. Randall arrived at this time.

As a result of the decrease in revenue, Mr. Mareane and Mr. Squires submitted a resolution that would allow a temporary amendment to the County's rollover policy for 2009 and provide budget adjustments to assist in aligning the budget for fiscal year 2009. Mr. Mareane stated through the use of the \$1,759,000 Federal Stimulus/Medicaid funds, \$875,000 Department of Social Services settled State claim, \$500,000 Contingency Fund request, \$800,000 Personnel-Related Savings, and \$90,000 Tobacco revenue, it is expected the deficit would be alleviated. The process includes a flexible hiring freeze and a flexible freeze on equipment purchases in excess of \$2,000. Each flexible freeze provides the ability for review and an appeal process. The one-year suspension of the rollover policy would allocate personnel-related savings generated in 2009 to the General Fund as a means of offsetting projected deficits. Mr. Mareane said departments have responded in a favorable manner regarding filling vacancies and are only submitting requests to fill essential positions.

Mr. Proto asked if hiring of essential staff would be funded from departmental budgets or from rollover? Mr. Mareane said it would come from the departmental budget.

The 2010 budget requests have been received and the review process of Administration has begun. He said the submissions provided have been serious, thoughtful, and careful.

Ms. Robertson expressed gratitude that Mr. Mareane toward finding solutions to be able to stabilize funding for 2009.

Mr. Mareane spoke of human services agency funding and said the replacement of State aid for local dollars to maintain programming in 2009 ultimately benefited agencies that have contractual agreements with various departments. There are some agencies in the County that do not contract with the County and the reduction in State aid had more of an impact.

Introduction of Program Analyst

Mr. Mareane introduced recently hired Program Analyst Kevin Sutherland. Mr. Sutherland is a graduate of SUNY Oswego, having just completed his Masters at the Maxwell School in Syracuse, has worked in the City of Oswego for the New York State Attorney, provided service for Cornell University, Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit for four months, and was President of the student body in Oswego.

Health Department

Update on Flu Immunizations

Ms. Cole reported the Commissioners of Public Health were called to Albany on August 7th to receive information on how to proceed with H1N1 vaccinations. The targeted groups are: 6 months of age through 24 years of age, people living with or caring for children under 6 months of age (predominately day-care centers and home day care services), pregnant women, health care and emergency services personnel, and people age 25 through age 64 who have health conditions making them higher risk of complications if contracting the flu. The seasonal flu campaign has been moved up to mid-September and will conclude in mid-October. The State has

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said they hope to have the H1N1 vaccine distributed by the end of October to beginning of November. It is not known what the allotment will be and, if necessary, will select which target group to vaccinate if supplies are limited. The State is also distributing the vaccine to local medical providers, hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics; if they accept the conditions of participation it will assist the Health Department in completing inoculations. The vaccine will be free of charge to the Health Department and medical service providers.

Ms. Cole noted the H1N1 vaccine is a two-dose vaccine, with three weeks between each. Although the primary focus for targeted groups is under the age of 65, production will continue and the vaccine would then become available for all age groups. A State Law that will be effective this next week requires health care workers and those with extensive contact with patients will be mandated to have the seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccinations or they cannot interact with patients; those who are not found to be in compliance will incur financial penalties.

Ms. Robertson asked if there would be administrative fees for the vaccine. Ms. Cole said although the vaccine is free, the health care provider could determine a fee based on the cost of personnel; the Health Department has not determined if it will do so. In response to Mr. Sutherland's question regarding anticipated attrition rate for the second dose of H1N1, Ms. Cole said it is possible that many individuals would not return for the second dose. If they do not return for the second shot they would be more susceptible. She also stressed that having the vaccine does not guarantee a person would not get the flu.

Ms. Cole reported the guidelines for school closings have been modified; students are to remain home for 24 hours after their fever is resolved.

Healthy Neighborhood Program Grant Application

Ms. Cole provided a written summary of the Healthy Neighborhood Program Grant Application the Health Department is submitting. The grant, with a budget of \$185,000, would provide preventive environmental health services to targeted geographic areas, general low-income families and often minorities, who are living in homes and neighborhoods with a disproportionate number of residential hazards. Notification of grant awards is expected in September. Mr. Proto noted it covers the Village of Groton, Town of Dryden, and some areas of the City of Ithaca.

Youth Services

Prescription Drug Abuse Grant

Ms. Zahler referred to a survey completed by five of the six public school districts indicating a concern about young people using prescription drugs. On behalf of the Community Coalition for Youth, her department submitted a proposal to the Appalachian Regional Commission addressing this issue. If awarded it would provide \$27,085 for a one-year period to allow research and sharing with Broome, Cortland, Allegany, and Tioga, Pennsylvania counties best practices for prevention of prescription drug use.

Summer Jobs Update

Ms. Zahler said 377 young people have been hired for summer employment programs funded through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Stimulus Funding under the umbrella of Jump Start Jobs. The youth range in age from 14-17 (300), 18-21 (65), and 22-24 (12). There are 33 out of school, showing success in reaching non-traditional audiences.

Runaway and Homeless Update

The Learning Web's Housing Scholarship Program is fully operational and has 20 young people in 16 transitional apartments. Some youth have moved out of the program, allowing others to participate. There is a waiting list for vacancies.

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At least 92 homeless/transient students were able to stay in school during the 2007-08 school year. The Youth Services Department, as the Runaway and Homeless Coordinator, help to link families, caseworkers, and school staff, with the Bridges for Youth program.

Municipal Youth Services Updates

Youth commissions are working on their 2010 budgets and planning for youth development programs. Youth Services will assist them with the challenge of reductions in funding through the use of volunteers to gather data, evaluate programs, analyze budgets, and develop programs to address local needs.

Planning and Coordination

The OJ Guide, the department's youth information guide, is in production and will be on the web in a more accessible form. With the assistance of Information Technology Services and the Office for the Aging Title 5 individual with computer background, a database is being developed to allow easy access of information.

Budget Information

With regard to the budget, of the \$145,000 budget cut there will be \$44,000 requested as an over-target request.

Mental Health

Mr. DeLuca said the 6.25% reduction in his target budget is \$75,000 and combined with the fringe increase of \$168,000, is a total of \$244,000 to be absorbed within his 2010 budget. In addition, the Child Psychiatrist position and the Emergency Outreach Psychiatric Social Worker, which were been funded as over-target multi-year requests are expiring this year. He has removed from the budget one psychiatric social worker, a half-time Case Manager, a .7 Community Mental Health Nurse, and a Psychiatrist contractor position. He is hoping to meet the Target and avoid layoffs by not filling these positions.

With regard to over-target requests Mr. DeLuca hopes the County would continue to fund the child Psychiatrist and the Emergency Outreach Psychiatric Social Worker positions.

Mr. DeLuca told the Committee reduced County funds and reallocated State Office of Mental Health funds will effect Suicide Prevention, Challenge Industries, American Red Cross, Family and Children's Services, Mental Health Association, Lakeview Mental Health Services, and the Ithaca Youth Bureau; total contract reductions will be \$80,280. Mr. Burbank asked what agency services would be lost. Mr. DeLuca said the cuts were done in a manner to avoid one agency having a larger cut than another; it is not fully known what the exact reduction of services will be. He will continue conversations with the agencies as the budget process continues.

Department of Social Services

Approval to Pay Invoices

Ms. Carey provided a written memorandum to Committee members explaining the need to repair the automatic security gates at the Human Services Building, which is critical to ensure the safety of employees and clients at this location. As the repair progressed and various necessary parts ordered, the expense exceeded the normal procurement process. Following discussions with Mr. Squires, Finance Director, she was informed the appropriate process was to bring the information to the attention of the program committee for their approval.

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Burbank, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to authorize the Director of Finance to facilitate payment to Ber-National, Inc., in the amount of \$5,788.95, for the repairs completed to the automatic security gate/system at the Human Services Building. PAYMENT APPROVED.

Monthly Statistics

The Committee received the monthly statistic report. Ms. Carey said at this time the Department is receiving ten new food stamp applications daily. She is organizing staff to provide expedited food stamps if necessary. It was noted the reduction of Family Health Plus cases could be due to individuals shifting to the Medicaid program.

Funds from Claims

Ms. Carey expressed appreciation for Mr. Herden's ability to prepare claims that bring funding into the County. She noted the funds are from a reconciliation of accounts from 2006 that would be completed in April; it is anticipated it would be approximately \$800,000. The funds are maintained in a deferred account. Last year's reconciliation the County had \$875,000 and was in the 2009 budget; it would not be for 2010.

Office for the Aging

Appointment

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Burbank, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the following appointment and submit to the full Legislature:

Personal Emergency Response Services Board

Joan E. Murphy, At Large representative, term expires December 31, 2010

2010 Budget Overview

Ms. Holmes provided a written summary of the 2010 budget, showing cuts in funding from New York State in the amount of \$72,738, and the County in the amount of \$43,933. In an effort to balance the 2010 budget the following are the strategies and planning assumptions to meet the fiscal target:

- Reduction of one full-time Aging Services Specialist to .6 FTE and a contract with Lifelong was eliminated to cover \$50,000 New York State cut (implemented June 2009).
- Adjust the sliding fee scale for the Personal Emergency Response Service equipment.
- A \$75,000 RESTORE program grant for home-repairs for low-income seniors (5% would cover staff salaries).
- Community Living Partnership Grant of \$25,000 per year for two years; this would assist with consumer-directed services for frail elders through NYConnects. Funding would cover existing staff salaries.
- Aging and Disability Resource Center Grant from Federal Administration on Aging in the amount of \$50,000 per year for 3 years. Funding would cover existing staff salaries for Office for the Aging and Department of Social Services.

The Committee was informed there are three Over-Target Requests to be made. They would be one-time and covered by departmental rollover:

- Part-Time Temporary Outreach Worker: \$13,078 – for process Heating Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) applications.
- Replacement of Kitchen Equipment at Foodnet Nutrition Program: \$9,200.
- Expenses associated with anticipated move to new offices: \$6,000.

Health Care Reform

The Committee briefly spoke of the proposed Federal health care reform, noting due to pre-recorded telephone calls to individuals stating Medicare Advantage would be eliminated, there is concern and misconceptions regarding coverage for senior citizens. Ms. Holmes said she had similar telephone calls from clients asking for clarification of what the proposed legislation would mean. As a result of the confusion, Ms. Holmes has received two memorandums from the State regarding the issue as well as the misconception the program would require mandatory counseling regarding hastening of death. She said a press release is being developed to address this misconception and to clarify what the Federal health care reform would mean.

Ms. Robertson was excused at this time (5:00 p.m.).

Update on Upcoming Move of Office for the Aging Offices

Ms. Holmes reported the County continues to explore downtown site options and noted the rental expense for the department would be absorbed within the Facilities budget line.

Update on Lakeside Nursing and Rehabilitation

Ms. Holmes spoke of recent concerns relating to the potential closure of Lakeside. She said Pat Deptula, Executive Director, stressed there is no imminent threat of closure as indicated on the material presented by the union. They have been appearing before the bankruptcy judge as well as the Town of Ithaca Zoning and Planning Boards. Peregrine, Inc., is required to reconcile regulations for the reconfiguration with the Town Zoning and Planning Boards. At the present time the matter is on Board agendas and Mr. Deptula will be appearing in the bankruptcy court again in September. Mr. Proto said the bankruptcy court is satisfied with how it is proceeding and that Peregrine, Inc., is on target with the requirements outlined within the court.

Human Services Coalition

Agency Budget Recommendations

Ms. Schlather provided written overview of the 2010 budget recommendations for agencies that are reviewed by the Human Services Coalition. There are two new agencies (Alternatives Venture Fund and Ithaca Health Alliance) applying for funding this year and the Board felt their services were beneficial to the public. Agencies that could better absorb the impact did so, and information regarding what the impacts would be compiled. The Human Services Coalition Board made slight adjustments to the review board recommendations, noting most cuts were staffing. The County pays for approximately two-thirds of the budget, and the City of Ithaca pays one-third. If the City sales tax decreases from year-to-year, the overall budget is reduced.

The Human Services Coalition budget has the 6.25% decrease in target with an over-target request for a 2.25% increase for cost-of-living increase. The 4% net decrease comes directly out of staff. She explained the Coalition is funded 50% by the County and 50% by the Town of Ithaca, City of Ithaca, State Grants, and the United Way. Although there had been \$100,000 lost for the 211 program funding, funding for the program is not included in the budget requests.

Mr. Proto asked if any agencies have discussed any possible mergers. Ms. Schlather said Ithaca Health Alliance is applying for a 501c3 status that would assist in costs such as malpractice insurance; but most agencies are unique. Ms. Burston said Better Housing for Tompkins County and Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services communicate with each other regularly.

It was noted by Ms. Schlather the Women's Opportunity Center did not receive funding for a \$15,000 multi-year, one-time funding for their retail center.

Offender Aid and Restoration's budget will be reviewed by the Public Safety Committee. Their budget recommendation was determined in the same manner as other agencies, taking the reduction of 6.25% from the County's portion.

Adjournment

On motion the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Fuller, Deputy Clerk