

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **BUDGET- SOCIAL SERVICES**

DATE: AUGUST 12, 2008

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY  
BELDEN  
O'CONNOR  
CHAMPAGNE  
KENNY  
SHEEHAN  
MERLINO

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

FREDERICK H. MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &  
FISCAL SERVICES  
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF  
ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
BRENDA HAYES, DIRECTOR, COUNTRYSIDE ADULT  
HOME  
REPRESENTING SOCIAL SERVICES:  
SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER  
KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER  
DOUGLAS HERSCHLEB, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES  
MIKE JABAUT, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE  
SERVICES  
SUPERVISOR STRAINER  
SUPERVISOR THOMAS  
ALYSON MARTIN, *THE POST STAR*  
SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE  
SPECIALIST

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Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Budget Committee to order at 3:06 p.m.

Brenda Hayes, Director of Countryside Adult Home distributed copies of the proposed 2009 Budget to the Committee; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Geraghty questioned the increase in Contractual Expenses (A.6030 470) from \$19,000 in 2008 to \$20,000 in 2009 and Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager, replied that this increase was due to the reimbursement to Westmount for laundry expenses and the replacement of the linens which had not been included in prior budgets.

Mr. Geraghty queried whether the telephone charges were issued from the Information Technology (IT) Department and Ms. Baker replied in the negative and added that all telephone charges were paid directly to New York Telephone. She stated that the phone calls to residents family members were not necessarily local calls. Mr. Geraghty questioned whether the residents reimburse the facility for phone calls made and Ms. Baker replied that in some cases the residents would reimburse Countryside; however, she added in the case of a staff member having to place an emergency call to a residents family member, there was no charge incurred by the resident.

Mr. Champagne questioned whether it would be necessary to budget \$2,000 for the Legal/Transcript Fees (A.6030 440) when in previous years no funds had been allocated and Ms. Hayes responded that in calculating the proposed amount for the Legal/Transcript Fees (A.6030 440) she had referenced previous years amounts expended and averaged them.

Mr. Kenny questioned the reason for the increase in the Furniture/Furnishings expense (A.6030 210) and Ms. Hayes responded that they tried to upgrade five rooms a year with new dressers, closets and mattresses due to their poor condition. Mr. Geraghty questioned if this could be reduced to \$6,000 and Ms. Hayes responded that she would be able to purchase the necessary supplies for the 'worst case' rooms. It was the consensus of the Committee to reduce the 2009 Budget request for Furniture/Furnishings (A.6030 210) from \$12,400 to \$6,000.

Mr. Geraghty questioned what Other Equipment (A.6030 260) consisted of and Ms. Hayes replied that this referred to the purchase of an ice machine as the current one was in disrepair. Mr. Geraghty asked whether the \$4,000 requested was a realistic figure and Ms. Hayes replied that she referenced a price for an ice machine in a catalogue and that a machine may be acquired for less. Mr. Payne exited the meeting to request that Julie Pacyna, Purchasing Agent research the price of an ice machine and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Kenny inquired as to the cost to the County to maintain the Countryside Adult Home and Ms. Baker replied that the estimated appropriations requested was \$1,770,952 with an estimated revenue of \$1,210,476, leaving an estimated balance of \$560,470 necessary to operate the facility.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of Social Services, who distributed copies of a Power Point presentation and a copy of the 2009 Social Services proposed budget to the members of Committee; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Starting with Administration (A.6010), Ms. Weaver informed the Committee that estimated expenditures were increased due to the increase in the cost of employee benefits. She added that estimated revenue had also increased.

Chairman Monroe entered the meeting at 3:17 p.m.

Ms. Weaver suggested reimbursing employees for use of their personal cell phones in lieu of County owned cell phones, as well as charging employees for their personal long distance phone calls as a cost cutting measure. Due to the fact that there were 129 employees working in the Social Services Department, Ms. Weaver stated that more employee hours and the possible addition of one staff member in the Accounting Department would be needed to review the phone bills and determine where personal phone calls were being made. Ms. Weaver apprised that in the County where she had been previously employed, employees would report the number of phone calls they made to the Accounting Department on a monthly basis, and they would be billed for reimbursement. Mr. Geraghty suggested Ms. Weaver inform the employees of the County policy on phone usage and randomly check phone records. Ms. Baker asserted that the Social Services Department was not charged for the telephone based on a monthly fee but rather a usage charge.

Discussion ensued.

Subsequent to the discussion it was the consensus of the Committee that employees known to be in violation of the phone usage policy should be disciplined accordingly.

Mr. Geraghty asked about the Public Facility for Children (A.6050) portion of the budget and whether the Department of Social Services would be generating more revenue through the placement of out-of-County children at Berkshire Farms Detention Home and Ms. Weaver replied

in the affirmative. She added that Berkshire Farms was a six bed facility and Warren County was guaranteed two of these. Doug Herschleb, Director of Services, added that the Department of Social Services had been successful in reducing the amount of Warren County youths placed in the detention home. Mr. Kenny questioned whether youth detention was an area where the Governor had proposed a reduction in the amount of funding and Ms. Weaver replied that youth detention was not included in the 6% funding reductions proposed by the Governor.

Moving along to Day Care (A.6055), Ms. Weaver stated that the day care funding had been reduced from the State and no roll over funds were available. She said that letters had been sent to families eliminating them from the day care assistance effective September 1, 2008. She added that the maximum amount of annual household income allowed to be eligible to receive day care assistance had been reduced in order to prevent overspending on the day care allocation.

Ms. Weaver said that Services for Recipients (A.6070) was for preventive services for families, such as adult daycare, housekeeping and chores that Social Services was mandated to provide. She noted that the funding for these services had received a \$55,000 reduction from last year's appropriation.

For the Medical Management Information System (MMIS) (A.6100) portion of the budget, Ms. Weaver noted that there would be a State mandated 3% increase in expenditures of which the County had no control. She added that it was her belief that 2009 would be the last year for the MMIS. Ms. Baker stated that Warren County was locked in at \$11,292,531 and this figure could not be reduced. Ms. Weaver said that A.6101 was included in the MMIS portion of the budget and this referred to medical assistance, transportation and insurance for recipients.

The Special Needs Program for Adults (A.6106), Ms. Weaver apprised, dealt with paying expenditures for adult boarding homes and the estimated reimbursement was 50%. She added that few expenditures existed in this area.

Mr. Geraghty questioned what budget code A.6109 was in reference to and Ms. Weaver replied that it was the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and that the number of applications had increased but in many cases they had been diverted. Mike Jabaut, Director of Administrative Services, added that the caseloads for Safety Net and TANF had increased by 35% from the prior year to the current year and applications had increased 18%. Mr. Geraghty questioned what would happen if the amount of funds available were limited to the amount of funds reimbursed by the State and Ms. Weaver replied that this was not an option as it was necessary to be able to assist people with things such as paying rent, food purchases and paying utility bills. She added that the recipients were encouraged to find employment. Mr. Monroe questioned where the applicants were being diverted to and Ms. Weaver replied to employment. Mr. Monroe then questioned how the reimbursement was calculated and Ms. Baker replied that the County was reimbursed for 74% of their expenditures in this area, leaving the 26% balance for the them to fund.

Mr. Geraghty questioned whether there was less of a need for Foster Care (A.6119) and Ms. Weaver replied that the number of children in foster care had been reduced. She added that diversion was being used in contracts through Probation and other resources that were available to reduce placements.

Mr. Geraghty questioned whether Juvenile Delinquents Private Facility (A.6123) was the same as Berkshire Farms and Ms. Weaver replied in the negative. She added that this program was for

teenagers in foster care to receive independent living training so that they could obtain the skills necessary for living independently when they were no longer eligible to be in foster care.

Ms. Weaver stated that the Juvenile Delinquents State Training School (A.6129) was in reference to children under the care of the Office for Children and Family Services. Mr. Herschleb added that the program pertained to juvenile delinquents from Warren County that were placed in State facilities. Mr. Geraghty questioned why the State charged the County for the incarceration of the youths and Mr. Herschleb responded that the County was fiscally responsible for the youths from Warren County.

Regarding Safety Net (A.6140), Ms. Weaver advised that a slight increase had been requested for the proposed 2009 Budget due to the preparation necessary for the increased heating bills and the possibility of the lack of Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) funding. Mr. Geraghty questioned whether the State would increase funding for the HEAP program and Ms. Weaver replied that was a possibility; however, she added, at this time it had not been agreed upon. Mr. Geraghty questioned if more funds were received for HEAP would this reduce the amount of funding necessary for Safety Net and Ms. Weaver responded that this should decrease the amount of funds needed, but the additional funds would be needed when the heating season had ended and HEAP was no longer available. She stated that shut off notices were sent at this time by utility companies and applications for emergency assistance would increase. Ms. Baker added that Safety Net also included funds for burial.

Mr. Geraghty questioned what HEAP (A.6141) was in reference to and Ms. Baker replied that the State would now be reimbursing the utility companies for the HEAP recipients rather than the County and she included this in the budget in case of an emergency and funds were needed to reimburse the utility companies. She added that the prior year she had included this in her budget and the funds were not utilized. Mr. Monroe added that if HEAP funding remained the same it would cover a half a tank of fuel oil per recipient and this would not be adequate.

Emergency Aid to Adults (A.6142), Mr. Jabaut noted, was in reference to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibles that had spent their checks in some sort of emergency and were in need of aid.

Mr. Geraghty asked Ms. Weaver for clarification on the positions which were requested and Ms. Weaver replied the positions being requested were as follows:

- Typist/Keyboard Specialist, base salary of \$23,390, to complete imaging and scanning work in the TANF Unit;
- Typist/Keyboard Specialist, base salary of \$23,390, to complete imaging and scanning in the Medicaid Unit;
- Typist/Keyboard Specialist, base salary of \$23,390, to complete imaging and scanning in the Food Stamp Unit; and
- Community Services Aide, Base salary of \$26,558, to assist the Caseworker staff by providing supervised visitation and assistance in the home.

Ms. Weaver explained that imaging and scanning was necessary in the TANF Unit, due to the fact that many of the clients returned to the Unit for repeat services. She stated that it would be more cost effective for the Department to employ a Typist/Keyboard Specialist than to have a Social Welfare Examiner complete the work. Referring to the positions that were requested for the

Medicaid Unit and the Food Stamp Unit, she advised, the work was currently the responsibility of two Temporary Clerks positions, which she was requesting to eliminate. She added that it would be more cost effective for the Department to complete the imaging and scanning process in house than it would to contract for the services. She noted that the Community Services Aide position which had been requested would be cost effective to the County, as the position would decrease the amount of overtime usage and mileage expenses claimed by the Caseworkers.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Geraghty queried whether the Deputy Commissioner position could be eliminated from the budget and Ms. Weaver replied in the affirmative. It was the consensus of the Committee that the Deputy Commissioner position be removed from the budget and deleted from the Table of Organization.

Mr. Geraghty inquired whether the Senior Welfare Examiner position had been filled and Ms. Weaver responded that this position had been abolished and a lower level position was created. Mr. Geraghty questioned whether the Typist #5 position had been filled and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively.

Mr. Geraghty asked whether it was necessary to employ part-time help in Dept. 40.06 and Ms. Baker replied that this was the code out of which the HEAP staff was paid. Ms. Weaver added that she was looking into various options to eliminate the unemployment expense associated with these employees.

In reference to the Supervising Investigator position, Ms. Weaver added that this position had been abolished and a Senior Support Investigator position was created and filled.

Mr. Geraghty requested an explanation regarding funding for new chairs which had been included in the proposed 2009 budget, when \$700,000 had been appropriated for furnishings for the new building and Ms. Weaver responded that there were not sufficient chairs available in the Conference Room and group re-certification room to be able to conduct staff meetings with the 35 Administrative staff.

It was the consensus of the Committee to reduce the \$15,000 request for new furniture to \$750 for the purchase of new chairs to replace the ones that were in disrepair. Mr. Payne suggested that Ms. Weaver consult the company they had contracted with for the design of the furniture in the new building in order to ensure that the design would match the decor of the Human Services Building.

Mr. Geraghty asked whether \$200 could be budgeted for calculators rather than the original request of \$400 to which Ms. Baker replied affirmatively.

Mr. Geraghty questioned if it was possible to eliminate the new vehicles from the 2009 proposed budget and Ms. Weaver replied that she requested the new vehicles due to the amount of mileage being expended every month to employees, which was in excess of \$8,000. She advised that the purchase of vehicles would alleviate a portion of this expense, as well as reduce the liability to the County as it would no longer be necessary for the staff to transport clients in their own vehicles. Mr. Geraghty suggested Ms. Weaver contact Undersheriff Swan regarding the purchase of new vehicles as he had been able to obtain new vehicles at local dealerships with significant savings, compared to the State Contract cost.

Mr. Geraghty questioned whether any of the Technical Equipment requested would be purchased for the new building. Ms. Baker asserted that the Information Technology Department informed her that there were some computer systems needing replacement as the warranties had expired. It was the consensus of the Committee to allot \$20,000 in the 2009 Social Services budget for the purchase of technical equipment.

Ms. Hayes commented that Julie Pacyna, Purchasing Agent, had obtained a price for the ice machine for Countryside Adult Home in the amount of \$2,000. It was the consensus of the Committee to reduce the original request in Countryside Adult Home's 2009 proposed budget for Other Equipment (A.6030 260) from \$4,000 to \$2,000 to cover the cost of a new ice machine.

Mr. Payne questioned the 2009 Budget Proposal and asked how many programs were mandated by the State and Ms. Baker replied that Countryside Adult Home was the only program included in the budget that was not mandated.

On motion made by Mr. Champagne and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the Budget Committee meeting at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McLenithan  
Legislative Office Specialist