

**WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: HUMAN SERVICES**

**DATE: MARCH 6, 2009**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS SIMMES  
BENTLEY  
GIRARD  
STEC  
VANNESS  
TAYLOR

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

CANDACE KELLY, DIRECTOR, OFFICE FOR THE AGING  
WILLIAM RESSE, DIRECTOR, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING  
SHARON SANO, SENIOR COUNSELOR OF EMPLOYMENT &  
TRAINING  
BILL MCGARR, DIRECTOR OF VETERANS SERVICES  
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL  
SERVICES

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:**

SUPERVISOR SOKOL

JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISOR PITKIN  
SUPERVISOR STRAINER  
SUPERVISOR THOMAS  
SUPERVISOR STEC  
SUPERVISOR SHEEHAN  
COL. (RET.) JAMES McDONOUGH, NEW YORK STATE DIVISION  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mrs. Simmes called the meeting of the Human Services Committee to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Mrs. VanNess and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 29, 2009 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Candace Kelly, Director, Office for the Aging, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Kelly presented a request to extend the lease agreement with the First Presbyterian Church of Glens Falls, from January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2010, and to include an annual rent amount of \$3,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Girard, seconded by Mr. VanNess and carried unanimously to approve the request to extend the lease agreement as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 20, 2009 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mrs. Kelly stated that the funding for the second and third requests were included in the budget. She requested to enter into a contract with North Country Home Services, under the Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP), to provide level one and two home care in Warren County, from April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010, for a total amount not to exceed \$7,500.

The third item, Mrs. Kelly stated, was a request to enter into a contract with ENS Health Care Management, LLC (DBA Interim Health Care), under the EISEP program, to provide level one and level two home care in Warren County, from April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010, for a total amount not

to exceed \$7,500.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried unanimously to approve the requests to enter into contracts under the EISEP program as outlined above, and the necessary resolutions were authorized for the March 20, 2009 Board meeting. *Copies of the resolution request forms are on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was extended to Bill Resse, Director of Employment and Training, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Bentley entered the meeting at 9:32 a.m.

Mr. Resse presented a request to appoint Jeff Farley of the Warren County Economic Development Corporation, to the Saratoga-Warren-Washington (SWW) Workforce Investment Board (WIB), from March 20, 2009 through June 30, 2010, to replace Leonard Fosbrook.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to approve the request to appoint Jeff Farley to the SWW WIB as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 20, 2009 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Resse presented a request to amend the County Budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$42,959, as a result of the receipt of Federal funds, to be used for salaries, training and gas cards. Pertaining to the gas cards, he explained that the State gave forty Counties the option to accept a special grant to obtain funds for gas cards. He stated that the Department had met with WIB to develop internal policies and following Board approval of same, distribution of the gas cards had commenced. He noted that the selection of a vendor for the cards was influenced by the fact that the cards were limited to the purchase of fuel, unlike many vendors who allowed for the purchase of tobacco and other like items.

Mr. Resse stated that the amount of the gas cards distributed would vary and the eligibility criteria was enrollment in the program. He said the cards were issued to those whose employment and training efforts included travel, and to those using services within the Employment and Training Center. The amounts of the cards were based on the distance traveled, and program attendance accordingly. Further, Mr. Resse stated, the cards would range from \$10 and upwards with the average amount received by one recipient to be between \$30 and \$50, and a maximum amount of \$100 per recipient. Mr. Resse apprised that the State had awarded Warren County funding in the amount of \$6,250 for the gas card program, and that the policies had been made consistent with those of Washington County.

Mr. Taylor asked if each line item in the Budget amendment required a separate resolution and Mr. Resse replied that only one resolution was necessary for the Budget amendment. Mr. Taylor stated his opposition to the gas card program. Mr. Resse noted that funds for transportation had been received and distributed in the past for gas mileage reimbursement and bus tokens.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried by majority vote to approve the request to amend the County Budget in the amount of \$42,959 as outlined above, with Mr. Taylor voting in opposition, and the request was referred to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request*

*form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Resse presented a request for permission to host the Annual Workforce Investment Board (WIB) meeting to be held on May 20, 2009 at the Ramada Inn, Queensbury, NY, for a total estimated cost of \$495.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried unanimously to approve the request to host the Annual WIB meeting as outlined above. *A copy of the Request to Host Meeting or Conference is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Stec entered the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Sharon Sano, Senior Counselor of Employment & Training, distributed copies of the Youth Employment Program Newsletter and the Warren County One-Stop Center March Calendar of Events, copies of which are on file with the minutes. Mrs. Sano pointed out the overview which had been added to the front page, and a chart on the back page which reflected a declining trend in summer employment placements as a result of the State funding reductions. She noted that the summer enrollment numbers were expected to increase. She asserted the importance of the Operation Food Chain summer meal program for school aged children and she praised the successful collaborative effort with several area agency's whose mission was to improve quality of life.

Mr. Resse addressed the next agenda item, Federal stimulus funds and apprised that the Workforce Investment Act Program consisted of the One-Stop programs across the country. Mr. Resse noted that they were the recipients of the funding to extend an amount equivalent to a full year of funding that had been received by the tri-County area, to be expended in a two year period; however, he stated, the County was encouraged to expend said funds within the first year. Further, he stated, Warren County could expect to receive approximately \$440,000 of additional funds which would be allocated for both Adult and Youth programs, and dislocated workers. Additionally, Mr. Resse said, educational offerings, such as office skills training, computer skills training and on-line Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) courses were the Departments goals. He noted that career exploration and education was an area of opportunity. Regarding Youth programming, he stated that he had hoped to reactivate the former summer youth employment program for which the age range had been expanded to age 24.

According to Mr. Resse, a joint effort was made among local agencies to review strategies and course offerings to best serve the current and changing needs of the community. In terms of staffing, he stated that a temporary employee would be hired for a 2 to 3 month period, versus a permanent employee. He stated that planning was underway for the Annual Job Discovery/Job Fair for which Mr. Resse stated he was heavily involved in the logistics and public relations aspects of the planning efforts. He announced the fair would be held on March 19<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In closing, Mr. Resse stated that the pending item, Policy for staff supervision/oversite of the One-Stop Centers, would remain pending at this time. He apprised that all workshops were full with 15 to 30 people attending each. Pertaining to the upcoming Job Fair, Mr. Resse announced that the Department offered a job preparation session to be held March 12<sup>th</sup> in the Employment & Training Center which would focus on participant preparation and recommendations to enhance Job Fair results.

This concluded the Employment and Training portion of the Human Services Committee meeting and

privilege of the floor was extended to Col. James McDonough, Director of the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (DVA), who stated he had been in the position for approximately one year, following a 26 year active duty career with the United States Army. He stated that he had been invited by Hal Payne, Commissioner for Administrative & Fiscal Services, to discuss County Veterans Service Agency operations in light of the nearing retirement of Bill McGarr, Director of Veterans Services, who had served Warren County for 20 years.

He stated that the majority of the 62 Counties in New York State operated with a Veterans Service Coordinator in place. To inform the Committee of the requirements outlined by New York State Executive Law as they pertained to Veterans Service Agencies, Mr. McDonough read Article 17 of New York State Executive Law, Section 357: *There shall be established a County Veterans Service Agency in each County not only included within a city; and there shall be a County director of each County Veterans Service Agency. Any County director hired after the effective date of this statute shall be a veteran as defined in New York State Statute.*

Mr. McDonough stated that the definition of a veteran for the purpose of County Veterans Service Agencies, was an individual who served during a period of war. He proceeded to read the following as defined by New York State Law: *Served in the active military naval or air services during a period of war, or was a recipient of the armed forces expeditionary medal, navy expeditionary medal, marine corps expeditionary medal, or global war on terrorism expeditionary medal and who was discharged or released therefrom under honorable conditions.*

He noted that the statute had been modified slightly as a result of the two most recent wars. From a State perspective, Mr. McDonough explained that there were approximately 50 State counselors, operating as a network and serving alongside County Veterans Services Agencies and he said the State Veterans counselor worked in the Warren County Office two days per week. Further, he stated, the Governor's budget reflected a 40% increase in the current annual funding of \$5,000.

Mr. McDonough stated that New York was the only State in the country that electronically archived the disability compensation claims submitted to the Federal Government. He asserted that all data was maintained on a secure server located in Albany and the network of State counselors committed the server and the electronic records to permanent storage. The electronic system software was available to Warren County free of charge, he said, and all that was required was a request for same. He said the State encouraged the use of such a system which would increase operating efficiency, as the processing integrity was clearly superior to the paper system and would eventually replace it. Another advantage for the County, he stated, was the location of two Federally mandated regional State offices located in New York City and Buffalo.

Continuing, Mr. McDonough apprised that in New York State there were over \$141,000 in total disability compensation claims, with an overall veteran population of 1.1 million, the fourth most populous state in the country. He stated that a veteran who filed independently would see an annual return on the investment of approximately \$4,780, as compared to \$11,200 if filed through the Veterans Services Office, and he noted that said funds covered veterans living expenses. Furthermore, he asserted that the veterans of Warren County would benefit significantly with the presence of an accredited Director of Veterans Services.

Pertaining to changes and developments, Mr. McDonough noted that two mobile counseling vans would

be scheduled within the next twelve months to serve individuals in rural areas. He apprised that the Community Veterans Administration (VA) Clinic in Elizabethtown, which served approximately 2,000 individuals annually, may close its doors and he noted his proposal to keep it open or maintain a satellite clinic there. He stated that a new clinic may be opened in Saranac Lake, which was positive; however, he said, it should not be done at the expense of the availability of healthcare services in the southern portion of the Adirondacks.

Responding to a question from Mr. Payne, Mr. McGarr stated his office had produced \$14 million for Warren County in 2007, which served 7,500 veterans. He stated that the 2008 figures had not been released, and he anticipated the figure to be between \$15 to \$16 million. He noted that there were many veterans who had returned and had not yet filed claims.

Mr. McDonough conveyed the increasingly complex nature of the VA benefit structure as it related to the filing of combat related special compensation, a benefit that resulted from war times. In order to process same, the Veterans Services office must have an accredited, trained, experienced and service connected agency, to navigate the system and procedures, as many veterans were severely disabled due to combat participation. The bottom line, he said, was the dollar amount distributed to the veterans.

Mr. Payne raised the issue of the position qualifications and stated that Mr. McDonough recommended that all applications be forwarded to the State VA legal department to determine each individuals qualifying status based on specific criteria. Once reviewed, he stated, the application(s) would be sent back to the Warren County Attorney. Mr. McDonough offered his support with regard to the process.

Mr. VanNess inquired about the timeline for the replacement, as Mr. McGarr would retire on June 30, 2009. Mr. McGarr apprised that the individual in the position of Director would require more than one accreditation and noted that he relied heavily on the knowledge gained from obtaining both the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and American Legion accreditations. He recommended that the new person also acquire the New York State accreditation. Mr. McGarr asserted the critical need for the position and the accreditations, as the return of many more veterans was anticipated in the coming months.

Mr. McDonough informed the Committee of the semi-annual State training for new counselors to be held in Albany in May, for which attendance by the new Director would prove valuable. Mr. McGarr informed the Committee that he would not be in the office during the last two weeks in May. Mr. McDonough noted that monthly webinars were available to the counselors and were recommended in order to stay apprised of changes and modifications. He added that between 10,000 and 12,000 veterans return to New York State from the Middle East region annually. Mr. Payne stated that the position served at the pleasure of the Board.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to advertise and fill the vacant position of Director of Veterans Services, prior to the May 13<sup>th</sup> State training, and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Stec asked Mr. McGarr if he had prepared for the change, and Mr. McGarr stated that he was in the process of performing data entry, and cleaning out unnecessary items. Mr. McDonough appealed that this was an opportune time to transition to the electronic system of record keeping using the new model in a joint effort with the State. He reiterated that a State Veterans Counselor worked with the Warren

County office two days per week. Mr. McGarr expressed gratitude regarding the exceedingly improved working relations with the New York State Department of Veterans Affairs.

Chairman Monroe requested clarification regarding the requirement that candidates must have participated in the theater of operations during warfare, and Mr. McDonough responded affirmatively and he expounded that having served in Kuwait, Jordan, or the Gulf was considered theater of operations. He stated the candidates must have served overseas and have an expeditionary medal. Regarding the review of the Certificates of Release or Discharge From Active Duty (DD Form 214), Mr. McDonough advised of adherence to the New York State statutes.

There being no further business before the Human Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Girard and seconded by Mr. Stec, Mrs. Simmes adjourned the meeting at 10:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist