

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: OCTOBER 23, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER
O'CONNOR
SHEEHAN
BENTLEY
KENNY
STRAINER

OTHERS PRESENT:

SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS PITKIN

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR MERLINO

TAYLOR
THOMAS
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:09 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the prior Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, who distributed copies of the meeting agenda to the Committee members, a copy of which is also on file with the minutes.

Ms. Weaver advised that Agenda Item 1 pertained to the Overtime Report included in the agenda. She stated that her Department averaged approximately 55 hours of overtime per pay period, which was a decrease from the prior year.

Moving on to Agenda Item 2, Ms. Weaver provided an update on the Budget Status Report. She noted that 75% of the Salary budget had been expended to date, and this was an 8% increase over the prior month, while 53% of the Automotive Gas & Oil budget had been expended to date. Ms. Weaver apprised that the largest increases in expenditures within the budget were for the Temporary Assistance, Home Relief and Emergency Aid for Adults programs which could be attributed to the lagging economy. She reminded the Committee that they had approved transfers of funds to cover these costs at a prior meeting.

Mr. Geraghty questioned the rate of receipt for anticipated revenues and Ms. Weaver replied that they had received 62% of anticipated revenues so far and she felt that they would realize the total amount anticipated by the close of 2009. Mr. Geraghty then asked if the County would be responsible for any difference between the anticipated revenue amount and what was actually received and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively; however, she added, there were some instances where anticipated revenues had been underestimated to ensure that the appropriate amount was received to cover the entire anticipated revenue amount for the Department.

Chairman Monroe inquired as to whether any information had been received regarding the Deficit Reduction Program being implemented by the State which might affect funding to the Department of Social Services. In response, Ms. Weaver apprised that a meeting had been held on the prior day to discuss the matter and it had been determined that a reduction in the Medicaid Cap would not be made as part of the Program. She noted that the State was reviewing the Federal definition of the Safety Net Program to determine if was possible to alter it to benefit the Deficit Reduction Program. Ms. Weaver explained that currently, the State had the ability to waive up to 20% of the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) caseload exceeding the 60 month time limit, but were only

waiving 7%; she added that an increase in the percentage waived would assist the State and all the Counties as it would allow access to more Federal reimbursement monies.

When discussing funding received in connection with Long Term Care programs, Ms. Weaver said the State representative was somewhat evasive in announcing that although they did not intend to reduce FMAP (Family Medical Assistance Percent) funding, they were considering a reformulation. She added that although she was not aware of what the repercussions of the reformulation would be, she did not think they would be favorable to the County. Ms. Weaver said that she had alerted the County Attorney's Office to this issue as a brief previously filed in New York City indicated that changes to the FMAP would put the State in violation of Federal Law; therefore, she added, she felt the Counties of New York State would have grounds for a lawsuit against the State if changes were made. Ms. Weaver apprised that the State was going to be changing the amount of reimbursement to nursing homes beginning in April of 2010 and although this would impact public nursing homes, it was perceived that County nursing homes would not be affected.

Ms. Weaver announced that because of the aggressive efforts implemented to make applicants eligible for Medicaid benefits, it appeared that the State of New York would receive only \$1.8 million in associated Federal Stimulus monies while other States would receive upwards of \$20 million. She said she felt that the State would be reducing some of the services accessed by Medicaid recipients as a result of this decreased funding, in addition, she said that she felt the State would also be reviewing the Home and Personal Care programs to reformat the payment methodology as these were the fastest growing programs funded by the State. Ms. Weaver noted that there were two levels to the Personal Care program and because the State of California had eliminated the first level, it was possible that the State of New York would do the same as they often followed in making the changes implemented by the State of California. She apprised that the State was also considering reducing the number of beds in nursing homes and increasing them in assisted living facilities. Ms. Weaver added that the composition of the County would be reviewed to determine whether there was an adequate number of beds available in the County's nursing homes. She said she did not feel that Warren County would be affected by this review as this area housed the highest aging population in the State.

Chairman Monroe questioned whether any discussion had been held relative to cash flow issues for the State and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively, apprising that for December and the first quarter of 2010 the State would not have any revenue available to fund mandated programs; therefore, she said, she did not anticipate the receipt of any State revenue from December of 2009 until at least April of 2010. Ms. Weaver added that Federal revenues would continue to be received on time, it was only the State revenue that would be delayed. Mr. Sheehan asked if the State revenues would be lost and Ms. Weaver replied that it was her understanding that the revenues for the first quarter of 2010 would be received, but not in a timely manner. Chairman Monroe interjected that this would affect the County's cash flow also. He apprised that discussions had been held amongst the Budget Committee, and also with the County Auditor, subsequent to which it had been determined that all of the mandated programs offered should be reviewed to ensure that the County was not offering any more than the minimum requirements imposed by the State.

Mr. Taylor entered the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

Ms. Weaver apprised that she had been directed to contact both Saratoga and Washington Counties to compare the mandated programs being offered by each. She said that she had yet to receive a response from Saratoga County and would present the information for the Committee's review when she had all of the information available.

Resuming the agenda review, Ms. Weaver announced that Items 3 through 6 pertained to requests to fill vacant

positions, which she outlined as follows:

3. Social Welfare Examiner, base salary \$29,199. Ms. Weaver advised that Employee No. 10804 had resigned from the position upon accepting employment with the State Veterans' Services Department;
4. Caseworker, base salary \$34,178. Employee No. 8272 was currently attending school to become a Forensic Nurse, Ms. Weaver apprised, and she had resigned from the position to devote more time to her schooling.
5. Social Welfare Examiner, base salary \$29,199. Ms. Weaver stated that Employee No. 11578 had been promoted to a Caseworker position, which was good because this person would have otherwise been laid off through the Departmental reorganization process.
6. Van Driver, base salary \$22,897. Employee No. 10644 was an elderly gentleman who had resigned from the position to spend more time with his family, Ms. Weaver said.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Bentley to approve the requests to fill all four positions.

Referring to the explanations listed in the agenda outline, Mr. Geraghty noted that the Social Welfare Examiner position listed as Item 5 received only 59% State and Federal reimbursement and he asked how many of these positions were incorporated in the Department, to which Ms. Weaver replied that there were six. Speaking as the Budget Officer, Mr. Geraghty stated that the Social Services Budget comprised a large portion of the total County Budget and he said he would be remiss in his duties if he did not question whether it was prudent to fill these positions when the Budget Committee was seeking out a 5% reduction in the total budget of the eight largest Departments which might lead to further reductions in staffing. Mr. Tessier stated that several positions had been removed through the Departmental reorganization process and Ms. Weaver added that she had attained over \$350,000 in gross savings to the County through the process.

Mr. Kenny said that while he agreed they needed to make reductions wherever possible in an effort to reduce the budget, the reorganization was very new and needed time to settle before any changes were made to it. Ms. Weaver stated that caseloads were increasing daily and they needed to maintain staffing in order to meet the demands of the public. Mr. Geraghty said that although he was amenable to allowing the reorganization of staff time to settle, members of the Budget Committee had requested more reductions and by continuing to fill vacant positions it put added pressure on the Budget Officer to make alternate reductions. Mr. Strainer countered that positions had already been cut in this Department and the vacancies should be backfilled to continue the operation of the Department; he added that it was unrealistic to assume that the budget could be balanced through employee reductions alone. Ms. Weaver noted that she had devised a plan to reduce her Departmental budget by an additional 5% and she was prepared to present it at a meeting with Mr. Geraghty, scheduled to follow the Committee meeting.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, Mr. Tessier called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to fill the four positions listed above and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *Copies of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position Forms are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver announced that Agenda Item 7 referred to a request to create the position of Caseworker, base salary \$34,178. She explained that this position was supposed to be created as a part of her Departmental reorganization, but due to an oversight on her part she had neglected to include it in the presentation.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request to create

the new Caseworker position, base salary \$34,178, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Agenda Item 8, Ms. Weaver advised, pertained to an informational note regarding an additional \$8,390 allocation in Food Stamp Employment and Training funding; she added that these monies were 100% Federally funded and would be applied as reimbursement for staffing costs.

Ms. Weaver stated that Agenda Item 9 consisted of requests to attend training for staff members as follows:

1. Hot Topics in Elder Law -
December 2, 2009 at the New York State Nurse's Assoc.
Staff to attend: Harold B. McGee;
2. CW/CPS Common Core Training -
December 1 - 4, 2009; December 14 - 18, 2009; January 4 - 8, 2010 & January 20 - 22, 2010
at the Holiday Inn Turf, Albany, NY
Staff to attend: Deanna Park, Christina Lamora and Kyle Depew

Mr. Strainer questioned if the training was necessary and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the requests to attend training as outlined above. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Moving to Item 10, Ms. Weaver apprised that she had received the bids for transportation to Whitney Young Health Center for the methadone treatments. She said that the bid had been awarded to Tri-County Cab at a cost of \$840 per week for six days of transportation. Ms. Weaver noted that there were currently four people being transported for treatment at the County's expense; she added that the number of people being transported had been significantly reduced pursuant to the increased efforts of the Fraud Investigators who had started checking the motor vehicle history of each person being transported at the County's expense to ensure that they did not have personal vehicles available to them. Ms. Weaver explained that they were able to reimburse mileage expenses to the recipients with personal vehicles which was a lesser cost than paying Tri-County Cab to transport them.

Mr. Kenny questioned whether any information had been received from the State as to whether methadone treatments could be administered from the Warren County Jail and Ms. Weaver replied in the negative. Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, interjected that as per the legal counsel for Whitney Young Health Center, the treatments could not be administered from the Jail because it was a controlled area and they could not bring people into the area for treatment. Mr. Kenny countered that it might be possible to administer the treatments from the Public Health Department, similar to the procedures used in holding a flu clinic and Mr. Payne responded that this would not be possible either as methadone was a highly controlled substance and was therefore subject to a number of DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) regulations. When questioned as to the procedure used to administer methadone treatments to inmates at the Warren County Jail, Mr. Payne explained that a guard would transport a nurse to the methadone clinic at Whitney Young Health Center in Albany to retrieve a maximum of three doses which would then be administered to the inmate by the nurse. He noted that if an inmate were transferred to the State prison system, methadone treatments were discontinued as the State was not willing to incur the expense. Mr. Kenny added that the Saratoga County Jail had adopted the same statutes and did not administer methadone treatments to inmates.

Mr. Tessier asked if Tri-County Cab was the company that had provided the majority of the transportation in the

past and Ms. Weaver replied in the negative. She added that Brant Lake Cab Company had been primarily used in the past; however, she said, they had not submitted the low bid for services. Mr. Strainer reminded the Committee that there had been past issues that had led to individual transport for certain methadone treatment recipients and he questioned whether this was still the case, to which Ms. Weaver replied in the negative, noting that group transport was now being mandated.

Ms. Weaver advised that Agenda Item 11 consisted of an informational note regarding the approval received for \$57,160 in funding to the Transitional Jobs Program. She noted that \$5,631 of this total would be retained by the Social Services Department while the rest would go to CWI (Community Works & Independence, Inc.) for subsidized employment programs.

Agenda Item 12 included another informational note, Ms. Weaver said, pertaining to an increase in Title IV-E Foster Care Maintenance and Adoption Subsidy from 50% to 56.2%. She said she assumed that the increase had been approved because the State had passed the Title IV-E Federal Audit.

Proceeding to Agenda Item 13, Ms. Weaver presented a request for a transfer of funds for a total amount of \$154,300 as follows:

<u>From Code:</u>	<u>To Code:</u>	<u>Amount:</u>
A.6010 470 Social Services - Contract	A.6010 860 Social Services - Hospitalization	\$153,000
A.6010 470 Social Services - Contract	A.6010 860 Social Services - Hospitalization	\$ 1,300

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Strainer to approve the request for transfer of funds as outlined above.

Mr. Bentley asked if the transfer was necessary to cover employee health insurance benefits and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. In response to Mr. Bentley's inquiry as to the cause of the increase in health insurance benefits, Ms. Weaver replied that the majority of new employees were young women with families who required expanded family coverage, while many of the retiring employees carried lesser health coverage.

Mr. Tessier called the question and the aforementioned motion to approve the request for transfer of funds was carried by unanimous vote and the same was referred to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request for transfer of funds is on file with the minutes.*

Concluding the agenda review, Ms. Weaver announced that Agenda Item 13 consisted of a request to amend the 2009 County Budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$350,000 as follows:

<u>Appropriation Code:</u>	<u>Amount:</u>
A.6101 470, Social Services Medical Assistance	\$168,000
A.6109 470, Social Services Aid to Dependent Children	\$182,000

<u>Revenue Code:</u>	<u>Amount:</u>
A.6101.3601, Social Services Medical Assistance	\$ 84,000
A.6101.4601, Social Services Medical Assistance	\$ 84,000
A.6109.4609, Social Services Aid for Dependent Children	\$182,000

Ms. Weaver explained that the \$350,000 transfer was necessary to cover a lack of funding and the amount was

100% reimbursable.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the 2009 County Budget in the amount of \$350,000 as outlined above and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver apprised that she had contacted the Clinton County Social Services Commissioner, as per the direction of Messrs. Geraghty and Pitkin, to explore the means by which they had been able to significantly reduce expenditures within their Food Stamp and Medicaid Units. She explained that Clinton County had previously incorporated a joint Food Stamp/Medicaid Unit and by separating these units they were able to reduce Local Share costs by \$240,000. Ms. Weaver stated that by combining the Food Stamp and Medicaid Units in Warren County, they had the opportunity to decrease costs by approximately \$450,000 as the employees working in the Food Stamp Unit would be included under the Medicaid Cap, thereby reducing administration costs by as much as 90%. She added that the two Units could reasonably be combined as the majority of the eligibility requirements for Food Stamp and Medicaid recipients were the same. Ms. Weaver advised that Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager, was researching to determine whether the six Food Stamp employees could be included under the Medicaid Cap without exceeding the maximum number of staff allowed for reimbursement. She concluded that combining the two Units would also assist with supervisory issues as they would be combined to form one consolidated unit upon occupation of the Human Services Building.

Mr. Pitkin noted that the current cost to Warren County for the administration of two separate Units was approximately \$500,000; Ms. Weaver confirmed this figure and noted that she hoped to lower the expenditure by \$450,000 through the combination of the Food Stamp and Medicaid Units in 2010.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist