

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: HEALTH SERVICES

DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2007

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Mason
Sheehan
Haskell
F. Thomas
Tessier
Champagne
Sokol

Others Present:

Representing Health Services Department:

Patricia Auer, Director
Sharon Schaldone, Assistant Director, Home Care
Ginelle Jones, Assistant Director, Public Health
Services
Tawn Driscoll, Provisional Fiscal Manager
Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and
Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk, Board of Supervisors
Hal Payne, Administrator, Westmount Health Facility/
Countryside Adult Home
Supervisor Kenny
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

Mr. Mason called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mrs. Auer; and she distributed copies of her Agenda packet for the meeting. A copy of the packet is on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer commenced with review of the Pending Items as outlined on the agenda. First, she reviewed the Update on the Telemedicine Program in detail with the Committee members. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Kenny entered the meeting at 9:34 a.m.; and, Mrs. Parsons, Mr. Haskell and Mr. Payne entered the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Mrs. Auer noted the next Pending Item concerned the Pandemic Flu Planning Efforts. She stated that relative to the efforts, Ginelle Jones, Assistant Director, Public Health, and Sharon Schaldone, Assistant Director, Home Care Division, had attended a meeting with the community group this morning. Mrs. Auer reminded the Committee members that at the last Committee meeting they had reported that the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce did not want to provide Health Services' educational literature on a Pandemic Flu event to the organization's members. She noted Mr. Mason had been asked to call Mr. Shimkus, the President of the Chamber, to see if the organization would agree to do that.

Mr. Mason reported he had called Mr. Shimkus, and, his response to the request was that the Chamber was not interested in providing the literature because they did not see how a flu event would affect their members.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Jones, and she advised they had found another way to determine which businesses belonged to the Chamber and they would put together their own mailing list of businesses to contact. She explained they felt a Pandemic Flu would affect businesses relative to their being able to continue their daily operations.

Discussion ensued on the issue of a Pandemic Flu. Mr. Haskell expressed his concern of the impact such an event would have on the entire Country. He asked if there was a plan in place for who would be inoculated with a flu vaccine if one existed. Mrs. Auer confirmed at this point there was not a vaccine for a Pandemic Flu. Regarding an inoculation plan, Mrs. Auer said they had done many drills and had attempted to provide (regular flu) vaccinations for EMS (Emergency Medical Services) volunteers. She advised they felt they had a plan for how they would provide inoculations to the public. However, Mrs. Auer stated the issues were whether they would receive enough vaccine and how to prioritize the distribution of it. She confirmed that no one had developed a priority list yet, but there were some guidelines on who should receive the inoculations first. Mrs. Auer noted that would probably be up to the Committee members to discuss.

Mr. Haskell stated a list should be developed before an event occurred. Mr. Mason asked if at one time there had been a tentative list for the inoculations. Mrs. Auer explained they could make a list and then the State would make its list. However, she noted, that would raise the issue of whether to use the local list or to go with the State's recommendation. She noted if a County decided to make its own list it would probably affect whether or not they would receive the vaccine. Mrs. Auer confirmed that the State had not established its list. Mr. Haskell suggested the County should develop a list at some point. Ms. Jones concurred she felt the County should have a plan for austerity purposes. However, she said, if each County did something different, such as one County putting the elderly first and another putting children first, it would confuse the citizens as to what the County's priority might be. Ms. Jones stated that was made very clear during the recent shortages of the flu vaccine. She advised that was why they had usually followed the guidance of the Center for Communicable Diseases to the State. However, Ms. Jones said that guidance came in very slowly.

Discussion continued. Ms. Schaldone noted she thought that through these efforts they were educating the public that they were preparing for a possible Pandemic. She said she felt that was the overall focus of the State Department of Health (DOH). Ms. Jones advised the public needed to be educated that in the event of a Pandemic, there would not be a vaccine for six months and when it was available the supply would only be one-tenth of the amount the County would need; therefore, a priority list would be necessary. She advised the priority list would have to be based on the type of flu, how severe it was and how it was communicated between people. Ms. Jones said she felt from her past experiences with the DOH, they would not act too quickly to set up a

priority list. Mrs. Auer commented the good result of these efforts was that the Department has had the opportunity to partner with other people in the community. She noted it also showed that one group, such as Public Health, could not do it alone. An event such as a Pandemic Flu would also show that all the groups would have to stand together, Mrs. Auer added.

Mr. Mason asked if there was a way to develop a list for Warren County as an alternate list. However, he noted, the County would want to follow the State's recommendations. Mrs. Auer acknowledged that could be done, but everyone would have their own thoughts about who should be on the list. She advised they were doing all they could do, short of having the State's list. Mrs. Auer noted each situation would be different so they would have to spell out exactly what pertained to that particular situation. Mr. Haskell suggested they could say what protocol they would use for each disease. Mrs. Auer responded although there were many diseases they would have to cover, they could try to do that. However, she said, she did not know how meaningful the information would be. She reiterated at this point in her professional opinion they were doing all they could do relative to a Pandemic Flu.

Mr. Mason asked if the Committee should send a letter to the DOH requesting information to help formulate a list. Ms. Jones replied she felt they had all the tools they would need, they just lacked the disease that would have to be fought. She noted if the Committee members were concerned in general that there would not be personnel to deliver health care, perhaps they could make a recommendation that health care workers be a priority group in the County to receive the vaccine. Ms. Jones reiterated that after a Pandemic was identified there would be time to develop the County's list while they were waiting for a vaccine to be developed.

Ms. Jones advised the Committee members that the Department's Bio-terrorism Coordinator would be glad to attend Town Board meetings to provide education about a Pandemic Flu event. The Towns would just have to let them know, she said. Mrs. Auer pointed out a list of the meetings that had been held in February about a Pandemic Flu was included in the agenda packet.

Mr. Kenny left the meeting at 9:49 a.m.

Next, Mrs. Auer spoke on the Guidelines for Free and Reduced Fees for Services pending item. She stated a copy of the Guidelines and the agency's criteria for accepting patients was included in the agenda packet. Mrs. Auer noted at the last Committee meeting, Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, had pointed out that it had been a long time since those policies had been reviewed. She explained as a County agency, they were obligated to provide at least 3.33% of charity care annually. Mrs. Auer noted in that regard, the long-time Committee members were aware that every year they present a bill for the amount of the free and reduced fee care that needed to be written off (by resolution). She recalled they had proposed that beginning this year, they would provide this information to the Committee members each month. Mrs. Auer said they would provide the first report next month as the bills for January were being posted now.

Mr. Haskell outlined a proposal for the Committee members' consideration in connection with the issue of free and reduced care. He recalled at the last Committee meeting they received figures on the costs the Department charged for immunizations. Mr. Haskell stated the various volunteer EMS squads from the Towns in the County were required to be immunized against Hepatitis A and B. He apprised his Town (the Town of Thurman) did cover the costs in the Town budget and the inoculations were given at the Hudson Headwaters Health Network (HHHN) Health Center in Glens Falls. There were also some fees charged for the inoculations, he added. Mr. Haskell stated his proposal would be to have the Health Services Department give the inoculations in its Office, at the Department's cost, which would save the Towns a little money.

Mrs. Auer responded she did not know what HHHN charged for immunizations. She apprised the Department charged for the vaccine plus a \$15 administration fee which the Board of Supervisors could waive if they chose. She noted when the Hepatitis B vaccine was first required for EMS volunteers the Department's staff went to the local sites and the numbers were very large. There were no boosters required for the Hepatitis vaccine, she added. Mrs. Auer stated as new squad members joined the squads the numbers would not be as large and the Department could certainly give the inoculations. She advised the decisions to have the Department do this would have to come from the Towns themselves and she would not want to call HHHN to ask what their costs and fees were. Mr. Haskell stated he did not think the County would want to charge the Towns the administration fees if Health Services gave the inoculations in-house. He noted it could be done by appointment. Mr. Haskell concluded this would save the Towns a few dollars which meant a lot to the small Towns.

Mr. Tessier, Supervisor of the Town of Lake George, stated the costs for the EMS squad to the Town had been reduced since the squad started billing the patients' insurance companies for their services. He explained if a patient did not have insurance they did not pay for the services. Mr. Haskell acknowledged that system was in place in some of the other Towns. Mr. Champagne commented if the current system for obtaining the required immunizations was working, he would ask why it would need to be changed. Mrs. Auer advised they did not bill private insurance companies for the Hepatitis inoculations and they did bill the Towns whenever any EMS volunteers received them. She reiterated the final decision on the issue would be up to the Committee members. Mr. Haskell conceded it was just a suggestion as a way to save the Towns some money. Relative to billing insurance companies, he expressed concern that many of the residents of some of the Towns would feel they still had to pay the bill if they did not have insurance.

Discussion returned to the Guidelines for Free and Reduced Fees for Services issue. Mrs. Auer stated at the last Committee meeting, Mrs. Parsons had mentioned that in 1987 an Ad Hoc Committee was authorized by Resolution No. 142 of 1987 for the purpose of establishing guidelines for free and reduced care. She advised, although she had not reviewed the meeting minutes from 1987, she had not been able to find any other information on the Guidelines. Mrs. Auer stated she did call Joan Grishkot (former Health Services Director) to see if she remembered anything about the Guidelines, but she did not. Mrs. Auer advised Mrs. Grishkot did

say they had to follow the Federal and State Guidelines and they were doing that.

Mrs. Auer asked Mrs. Parsons if it would be necessary to amend the aforementioned Resolution to reflect that the Ad Hoc Committee was never established. Mrs. Parsons advised Mrs. Auer to check with Paul Dusek, the County Attorney, on that question. Mrs. Auer noted she thought the aforementioned Guidelines covered the fees collection issue quite well. If, she said, any of the Committee members had any questions on the matter they were welcome to call her.

Mr. Champagne asked if perhaps a Committee motion should be made to rescind any and all resolutions adopted prior to this date on any policies concerning free and reduced care. He suggested then just the Federal Guidelines would be used. Mrs. Parsons responded in 1987 the Committee had a policy that no one would be refused care because they could not pay for the care. She stated she felt the major question would be was a policy being set where free care would not be provided despite what the circumstances were, or were the circumstances still being reviewed in terms of future care needs for people who might not be able to pay. Perhaps, Mrs. Parsons said, it might be time to address that issue again. Mrs. Auer reiterated they were obligated to provide 3.33% of the Department's care in free care.

Mrs. Parsons noted perhaps a situation might arise where the Department had reached its goals for a patient and the patient could not pay. Ms. Schaldone advised the Home Care Division had never refused care to anyone based on their ability to pay since 1982, when she came to the Department. Mrs. Parsons concurred that she could not recall that ever being done either. Ms. Schaldone explained the key was that the care had to be skilled and it would not be appropriate for non-skilled care cases to go through the Division. Non-skilled cases were referred to either the appropriate agency or program, she added.

Mrs. Parsons stated she was looking for the Committee to say it agreed with this protocol. It was the consensus of the Committee members that they did agree with the protocol for the free and reduced fees for services that was currently in place, and that the Health Services Department should continue to follow it.

Mrs. Auer commenced with review of the New Business items listed on the agenda. First, she requested approval of a resolution to amend the current contract with the New York State Department of Health Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to accept an additional one-time "COLA" in the amount of \$350.00.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Tessier and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented. *(Note: Subsequent to the meeting, a budget amendment was submitted to accept the grant funds and referred to the Finance Committee.)*

Next, Mrs. Auer requested approval of a resolution to authorize contracts with physical therapists Kathleen Ryan and Natalie Barber.

Motion was made by Mr. Sheehan and seconded by Mr. Tessier to approve the aforementioned requests, as presented. The motion was carried, with the exception of Mr. F. Thomas, who abstained, because he stated Natalie Barber was his niece. The necessary resolution was authorized for the next board meeting. Copies of resolution request forms are on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer requested approval of a resolution to establish a fee of \$20 per person for providing CPR certification. She explained they were getting increased requests from public organizations to provide CPR Training. Mrs. Auer apprised the fees would cover the costs for the Department's Health Educators for the Red Cross Cards and class materials.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier and seconded by Mr. Champagne to approve the aforementioned request, as presented. Mr. Champagne asked if there were some local agencies that provided CPR training free. Mrs. Auer replied the Red Cross charged more than Health Services did and the Glens Falls Hospital did not offer any training. She noted they did not receive too many requests, maybe one or two a month.

Mr. Mason called the question and the motion was carried unanimously. The necessary resolution was authorized for the next board meeting. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Parsons left the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

Mrs. Auer requested approval to backfill a full-time nursing position which would occur March 31, 2007, due to a retirement. She stated the position was funded in the 2007 Budget and it was necessary to meet patient demands. Mrs. Auer noted the position also generated revenues. She explained the retiring nurse was a Community Health Nurse, which meant she had more than two years of home care experience, and it was a Grade 20 position with a base salary of \$39,948.

Continuing, Mrs. Auer advised if they were unable to recruit a nurse with home care/public health experience, they would need to hire a Grade 19 Registered Nurse at a base salary of \$38,308, and hope they would stay with the agency long enough to become qualified as a Community Health Nurse. She asked if they could not hire a Community Health Nurse, could they hire a Registered Nurse and amend the Table of Organization to reflect the change accordingly. Mrs. Auer noted Mrs. Parsons would help to explain the request to the Personnel Committee.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell and seconded by Mr. Sokol to approve the request, as presented, and to forward it to the Personnel Committee. Mrs. Auer confirmed that Mrs. Parsons had approved the request. The motion was carried unanimously. A copy of a Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.

Next, Mrs. Auer requested approval to reclassify two Registered Nurse Positions to Community Health Nurse Positions. She explained that pursuant to the CSEA Contract 2006 salary

reallocations, Registered Nurses who had completed at least two years of full-time home care/public health experience were eligible to be classified as a Community Health Nurse. Mrs. Auer explained in this case, the two nurses had not completed the required amount of time when the reallocations occurred; however, now they had.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Tessier and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to refer the requests to the Personnel Committee. Copies of the resolution request forms are on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer spoke on the Expenditures and Revenues Report that was included in the agenda packet. She noted the Report would not provide a lot of information because the January bills were still being posted. Mrs. Auer said Tawn Driscoll, Provisional Fiscal Manager of the Health Services Department, would review the Report.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Driscoll, and she stated the YTD (Year-To-Date) Actual figures showed the actual expenses for the month. She apprised the 2007 estimated revenues were low because they did not reflect any Federal or State funds because they had not been received yet. Ms. Driscoll stated that was because they were still in the middle of the January billing for the Certified Home Health Agency (CHHA) and the Long Term Care (LTC) Program. She explained that usually the revenues would not be seen for the first two months of the year because the billing would be in a catch-up period. Ms. Driscoll apprised additional revenues would be realized for 2006 after the books were closed.

Mr. Champagne asked why the overtime salaries for 2006 seemed quite high (\$181,973) compared to the \$87,488 that was budgeted for 2007. Ms. Driscoll responded when she began doing the fiscal work, the overtime information was given in the salary information and the amount was approximately \$74,000. She stated after the fact, she had realized that was just a number that was given to the Department with the instructions that for payroll purposes the figure could not be changed. Then, Ms. Driscoll advised, when she had realized that their actual overtime figures were more than what had been budgeted for, she brought it to Mrs. Parsons' attention. She stated that generated considerable discussion and the directive was that no more funds would be appropriated for overtime. Ms. Driscoll explained in 2006 they were able to keep the overtime costs under budget because they were able to use the salaries of some unfilled nursing positions towards the overtime costs. However, she stated, at this point there were no unfilled positions, and she felt the Department would most likely have an issue with overtime at the end of the year. Ms. Driscoll concurred with Mr. Haskell that, realistically, the total 2007 overtime costs would more likely be around the \$181,000 figure.

Mrs. Auer stated one reason for the high overtime costs was that the Department is a seven-day operation. She said if they were fortunate enough to have per diem nurses to fill in on the weekends that would take up the slack. However, Mrs. Auer noted, even though they did have a couple of per diem nurses that was not enough, so about eight or nine nurses worked full-time on the weekends. Ms. Schaldone advised in order to cover the seven days the full-time staff had

to work about every 5th to 6th weekend at the overtime rate. In addition, she said, two people were needed to cover evening hours to do IV therapy which was also overtime. Mrs. Auer added that pursuant to the employees' contract the nurses could work a 40-hour week with two weekdays off or they could work 12 days in a row. Ms. Schaldone stated two nurses worked the 40-hour/two weekdays off schedule and the other 30 received the overtime. Mr. Haskell noted his calculations showed there would be some money left in regular salaries at the end of the year. Ms. Driscoll cautioned there were salary increases at the beginning of 2007 which made the total 2007 salaries \$300,000 more than the total 2006 salaries.

Next, Ms. Driscoll presented a Request for Transfer of Funds in the amount of \$3,500. She stated the funds were being moved from the Bio-Terrorism budget for part-time salaries object code into the Bio-Terrorism budget full-time salaries object code. Ms. Driscoll explained the Bio-Terrorism budget covered only one part-time position and the salary for the on-call staff person for that program was also in that budget. However, she stated, the payroll staff had advised her that if the staff person who took the calls was a full-time employee, the salary should be shown under the regular full-time salaries code. Ms. Driscoll stated the transfer was necessary because Ms. Jones, who was a full-time employee, and another full-time staff member, took the calls for the Program. However, she explained, they now had an on-call part-time person for the program, and according to payroll that salary should be shown in the part-time code. Ms. Driscoll said she would double check that aspect of the situation. She stated she would budget the salaries that way until August when next year's budget would be prepared.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned Request for Transfer of Funds, as presented, and to refer it to the Finance Committee. A copy of the Request for Transfer of Funds is on file with the minutes.

Concluding the agenda, under Attachments, Mrs. Auer stated copies of the Division of Public Health's Utilization Review Committee 2006 Annual Report was included in the agenda packet. She advised the State required that they provide this Report to the Committee members each year.

Mr. Mason asked what the status of the Point of Care Program (for electronic medical records) was. Mrs. Auer responded a grant request had been submitted to Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand, who she believed was very interested in that type of program. She stated she hoped to have the opportunity to speak with the Congresswoman in the near future and to show her how much the program would benefit the Department. Mrs. Auer noted the benefits of the program had also been discussed previously with the Committee members. She advised they would also be in contact with State Senator Elizabeth Little, and Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward had visited the County late last year. Mrs. Auer noted she had not seen any grant opportunities from the State, but they would continue tracking what might be available.

Brief discussion ensued; and Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, stated Congresswoman Gillibrand would be holding a Town Hall Meeting in Glens Falls on Saturday,

March 10th, on health care reform. The meeting would follow a meeting with the County Supervisors, Mrs. Sady added. Mrs. Auer advised she would be out of town that day. It was suggested that Mr. Mason should speak with the Congresswoman on the Point of Care Program. Mrs. Auer commented it would be good to actually show the benefits of the program to the Department; and Mr. Mason said if he had the opportunity at the meeting, he would invite the Congresswoman to visit the Department some time.

Mrs. Sady left the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

Mr. Tessier stated Mrs. Auer and he had recently discussed some issues concerning foreign students coming to work in the Town of Lake George. He explained because the Town provided some funding for one of those programs, he had told the sponsoring organization that he needed to have something in writing to show that the students had hospitalization coverage and physicals before they came here. Mr. Tessier said that particular organization claimed they did require that. However, he stated, that was only one of the organizations that sponsored students and there were other ones that brought hundreds of students in. Mrs. Auer advised that was the issue that concerned the Department. Mr. Tessier commented the business people who were bringing in students directly should also be notified they would be responsible for such costs, but it was not possible to control that aspect of it. He reiterated he wanted something in writing that showed the students had the proper paperwork.

Mrs. Auer stated they did not have a way to know whether that was the case or not, unless some of the students sought care from them. She reported that did occur last year and the County did end up paying for some substantial treatment for some students who had a STD (sexually transmitted disease). Mrs. Auer stated as a result of that incident, they had discussed the issue and she did not have any easy answers about it.

Mr. Haskell advised from working with some of the students he was aware that although they did have some insurance they had to obtain authorization to go to a doctor, but that was very difficult for them to secure. Mrs. Auer noted they were concerned that a communicable disease, such as measles, might break out. Mr. Mason asked if they should try to go through the State to find out what the answer was to the situation. Mrs. Auer replied she would need to have something specific to bring up and she did not know what the protocols were for the situation. She agreed the situation was complicated because, as Mr. Tessier had said, the students were being brought in by a variety of organizations. Mr. Mason said he thought the State controlled that part of the situation. Mrs. Auer confirmed when the students came into the Country they were supposed to show that they were free from TB, etc. Although, she acknowledged that was questionable.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion by Mr. Haskell and seconded by Mr. Sokol, Mr. Mason adjourned the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

