

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Tessier  
O'Connor  
Sheehan  
Bentley  
Kenny  
F. Thomas  
Mason

Others Present:

Representing Department of Social Services:

Robert Phelps, Commissioner  
Douglas Herschleb, Director of Services  
Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager  
Hal Payne, Commissioner, Administrative & Fiscal Services  
Joan Sady, Clerk, Board of Supervisors  
Supervisors Sokol  
Geraghty  
Merlino  
Todd Lunt, Director, Human Resources  
Sheriff-elect, Bud York  
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

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Mr. Tessier called the Social Services Committee meeting to order at 10:36 a.m.

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

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, who distributed copies of his Agenda packet for the meeting. A copy of the packet is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Phelps stated he had a request for an item that was not on the Agenda, which he said was to close a Capital Project because the funds had been expended from it. He pointed out a copy of Resolution Request Form No. 9 which outlined the request was included in the Agenda packet.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request to close Capital Project No. H 234.9550 280 Purchase Social Services Vehicle and to refer it to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Phelps commenced with review of the Agenda, and he stated that under Item No. 1 he would be requesting approval of a Transfer of Funds, an amendment to the 2007 County budget, and to authorize a supplemental appropriation due to shortfalls.

Mr. Phelps outlined the Transfer of Funds was to move \$22,000 from code A.6010 130 - Salaries Part Time to code A.6010 120 - Salaries Overtime; as well as and \$20,000 from code A.6010 860 - Hospitalization to code A.6010 440 - Legal.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the Transfer of Funds, as presented, and to refer it to the Finance Committee. A copy of the Transfer of Funds was included in the Agenda packet and is on file with the minutes.

The next request Mr. Phelps stated was to amend the 2007 County budget to increase and decrease estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$193,450 due to a lack of funds in certain codes as outlined on Resolution Request Form No. 7 which was included in the Agenda packet. He reviewed the items in detail with the Committee members. Mr. Phelps apprised there were offsetting revenues for the appropriation increases which were outlined under Item (c) on the Request form. Mr. Phelps stated the funds were a wash.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the request, as presented, and to refer it to the Finance Committee. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Next, Mr. Phelps requested approval to amend the 2007 County budget and to authorize a supplemental appropriation due to shortfalls. He referred the Committee members to Resolution Request Form No. 7 in the Agenda packet and he reviewed the decreases and increases listed under Item (b) in detail with the Committee members. Mr. Phelps apprised the offsetting revenues were listed in Item (d) and they reflected a decrease in both Federal and State Revenues for the Social Services Admin codes and an increase in both Federal and State revenues in the Aid for Family Assistance and Aid for Dependent Children codes, as well as an increase in the State revenues for the Services for Recipients code.

Mr. Geraghty and Sheriff-elect York entered the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

Mr. Phelps apprised there would still be a shortfall in the codes in the amount of \$148,585. Mr. Kenny questioned the reason for the shortfall. He stated the Supervisors were trying to get a handle on whether or not they were under budgeting or if funds had been budgeted and then cut during the budget process. Mr. Phelps replied the 2007 appropriation request for the Services for Recipients budget code was \$412,000 and it was cut \$100,000 to \$312,000. He explained the cut was made in hopes that the shortfall would be made up during the year from any funds that would have remained in the budget. However, he said, that did not occur.

Mr. Phelps continued. In addition, he advised, they had not budgeted for two contracts the Department had with the Probation Department for \$75,841 and with the Youth Bureau for \$37,665 which totaled \$113,506. Mr. Phelps explained that Social Services was paying the two Departments the full amounts for the contracts from its budget and then submitting the claims and receiving the revenues. Then, he said, the Departments were expending the funds and Social Services was reimbursing them 100%. Mr. Kenny queried if the 2008 Social Services' budget had been adjusted to cover the costs of the contracts so there would not be a shortfall next year. Mr. Phelps replied the situation would be the same next year because they did not anticipate having to pay the full amounts of the contracts. He explained they had budgeted for the contracts in

anticipation that they would submit the claims and then redirect the revenues they would receive to the appropriate budget codes and that did not occur.

Mr. Kenny commented he felt the sentiment was to have a true budget. He asked Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, if funds for the contracts could still be included in the proposed 2008 budget. Mr. Payne replied the funds could be added because the budget was not yet completed and he asked Mr. Phelps to provide the information for the amendment to him. Mr. Phelps acknowledged the request.

General discussion ensued.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Bentley to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to forward it to the Finance Committee to determine a source of funding for the shortfall of \$148,585. The motion was carried by majority vote with Mr. F. Thomas voting in opposition.

Pursuant to Agenda Item No. 2, Mr. Phelps requested approval to fill a vacant Social Welfare Examiner position in the Day Care Unit which was created by a resignation. He explained the Unit was responsible for authorizing all payments to Daycare providers, foster parents and adoptive parents. Mr. Phelps apprised that \$1.6 - \$1.7 million was paid annually to low income working families in an effort to keep them from going back on public assistance. He apprised the payments were 100% federally funded and the reimbursement for the administrative costs was 83%. Mr. Phelps advised that copies of his memo to Mr. Payne relative to the vacancy, and statistical charts on only the Childcare cases were included in the Agenda packet and he elaborated on the charts for the information of the Committee members.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Kenny to approve the aforementioned request.

Sheriff-elect York left the meeting at 10:53 a.m.

Mr. Payne discussed the request. He stated that Mr. Phelps and he had met prior to the Committee meeting to discuss the Department's 2008 budget request and the vacant position was also discussed. Mr. Payne advised he had questioned if they could do the work with a lower position such as a Clerk who could assist the other two Examiners to move the paperwork along. He noted other departments were looking at cutting positions. Mr. Payne advised he had not signed the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position Request pending the Committee's decision.

Mr. Phelps responded he felt it would be more efficient to have each case handled by one person and that to centralize one piece of the work and to have two people handle it would create more opportunities for errors. He emphasized the payments had to be made in the most timely way possible. Mr. Phelps apprised that on the expenditure of \$1.6 - \$1.7 million, the local share for the three positions was approximately \$18,000. Mr. Kenny concurred with the importance of

timely payments to the providers as they were the sole income of many of the providers. Mr. Phelps stated the issue of timely payments also affected the foster care parents. He explained the Daycare Program was under the (State) Office of Children and Family Services which was in the Services Division of the Department instead of in the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance area. However, Mr. Phelps stated, as the majority of the Unit's workload was only the Daycare and services payments, it was in the appropriate division of the Department.

Mr. Tessier called the question and the motion to approve the request, as presented, was carried unanimously. The item was referred to the Personnel/Human Resources Committee. A copy of a Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position was included in the Agenda packet and is on file with the minutes.

Pursuant to Agenda Item No. 3, Mr. Phelps referred the Committee members to the copy of the Overtime Report that was included in the Agenda packet. He noted the Report covered four payroll periods which spanned eight weeks. Mr. Phelps stated they averaged approximately 88.6 hours of overtime every two weeks. However, he apprised, the average number of hours in this Report was 113.5. Mr. Phelps explained the increase in the hours was primarily due to the backlog of work that resulted from the Department's building being closed for three days. In addition, he stated, they carried out the annual purging and moving of the records from the main file room to the Records Storage Center in the Municipal Center.

Mr. Kenny questioned if the records could not be purged during regular workdays and if it was done annually why it was not delayed until after the Building closure situation had been resolved. Mr. Phelps replied in the past they had looked at purging the records on a regular basis and it could not be done very easily because they had to be pulled and boxed, etc. In addition, he said, the Records Center preferred to receive them all at once rather than one box at a time. Mr. Phelps advised as time went on in the future there would be a decline in the number of hard copy records they would have to file and store.

Discussion ensued between Mr. Payne and Mr. Phelps on the records issue. Mr. Payne queried if the purging was related to the condition of the third floor of the Department's building. Mr. Phelps replied that was not the case. Although, he noted a small amount of overtime was approved for clearing out the Child Protective Services (CPS) records from the third floor. Mr. Phelps confirmed for Mr. Payne that the third floor was almost empty because the first of the two stages to clean out the area had been completed. He stated most of the records purged were from the main file room. Mr. Phelps acknowledged that temporary help would be used to do the records work downstairs when they were able to get to it. He stated oversight would be needed for the project because of the confidentiality issues with the particular records that would be handled.

Concluding the Agenda, Mr. Phelps discussed a Deputy Commissioner position for the Department (Item No. 4). He advised the position was in the 2007 budget and since it was vacant it had been proposed that it be removed from the 2008 budget. Mr. Phelps noted he thought the

Committee members would want to discuss whether or not the position was needed.

Mr. Herschleb left the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Mr. Tessier asked for the Committee members' input on the matter. Mr. Phelps advised, relative to planning for his successor, that he was seriously considering retiring next year. In reply to Mr. F. Thomas' query on what the salary for the position was, Mr. Phelps said it was \$60,000. Mr. Phelps apprised they had used those funds this year to help balance the budget.

Mrs. Sady, Mr. Payne and Mr. Geraghty left the meeting; and Mr. Merlino entered the meeting at 10:56 a.m.

Mr. Tessier stated if the position was left in the budget and remained vacant next year and the funds were used at the end of the year that would not be a savings. He noted in the past, positions had been left in budgets but not filled. Following further discussion, Mr. Tessier recommended that the Deputy Commissioner position should remain in the 2008 budget and that it should be funded in case it would need to be filled during the year. It was the consensus of the Committee members to approve the recommendation. Mr. Phelps expressed his concern that Mr. Payne should be made aware of the recommendation. Mr. Tessier stated the Budget Officer would be advised of the Committee members' recommendation.

Mr. Phelps advised the contract with Berkshire Farms for the operation of the Detention Home would expire at the end of the year. He stated that periodically they sent out RFPs (Request for Proposals) to see if there might be another provider for the services at a more reasonable rate. Mr. Phelps advised the RFP's had just been sent out and he expected to bring a request to approve a contract for the services at the next Committee meeting. He noted the contract would be for 2008 and it was usually automatically extended for three years.

There being no further business, on motion by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Mason, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk