

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: HUMAN SERVICES

DATE: MARCH 3, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS FRASIER
GIRARD
SOKOL
WOOD
VANSELOW
BROCK
SEEBER

CHRIS HUNSINGER, DIRECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
SHARON SANO, SENOR COUNSELOR, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING
ADMINISTRATION
HARRIET BUNKER, COORDINATOR OF SERVICES, OFFICE FOR THE AGING
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS SIMPSON
TAYLOR
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mrs. Frasier called the meeting of the Human Services Committee to order at 10:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mr. Vanselow and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Harriet Bunker, Coordinator of Services for the Office for the Aging (OFA), who distributed copies of a resolution request form to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Bunker requested to amend the payment schedule for the five year lease agreement between Warren County, acting for and on behalf of the Warren-Hamilton Counties' Office for the Aging, and the Church of St. Sacrement for operation of a meal site for the elderly in the Town of Bolton, to increase the payment for electricity and include the reimbursement for fuel oil. Mrs. Frasier explained there had been an oversight which was caught during a review of the lease. She noted the County had not been charged for the reimbursement of fuel oil for two and a half years and when the contract was extended the fuel oil had been eliminated from the payment schedule.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Ms. Seeber and carried unanimously to amend the payment schedule for the lease agreement as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 21, 2014 Board Meeting.*

This concluded the OFA portion of the Committee meeting and the Employment & Training Administration (ETA) portion commenced at 10:32 a.m.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Chris Hunsinger, Director of the ETA, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Commencing the agenda review, Mr. Hunsinger requested to amend the 2014 County Budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$32,365 to reflect the receipt of Trade Adjustment Act funds for seven displaced workers. He advised the ETA had to date handled 33 students who had received almost \$200,000 from Trade Adjustment Act funding. He stated it was unfortunate that the dislocated workers had lost their jobs but at least they had been able to receive training to allow them to acquire better jobs.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the 2014 County Budget as outlined above and to forward same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Hunsinger requested to amend the 2014 County Budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$11,421 to reflect the receipt of National Emergency Grant funds for on-the-job training for one displaced worker. He noted this was a program through the Workforce Investment Act and he could not recall receiving such funding for the last several years. He advised the program involved both classroom and on-the-job training.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Vanselow and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the 2014 County Budget as outlined above and to forward same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Hunsinger requested to appoint Leza Wood, Workforce and Professional Development Coordinator for SUNY (State University of New York) Adirondack, to the Saratoga-Warren-Washington Counties Workforce Investment Board for a term commencing March 21, 2014 and terminating June 30, 2017. He noted each of the three Counties handled appointments to the Workforce Investment Board and Warren County was the host County for appointments from SUNY Adirondack. He explained the vacated position on the Board would expire in June and rather than replace the previous member and then re-appoint the replacement in June, he was requesting an appointment commencing March 31, 2014 which would expire in three years and two months.

Motion was made by Mr. Girard, seconded by Ms. Wood and carried unanimously to appoint Leza Wood to the Saratoga-Warren-Washington Counties Workforce Investment Board as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 21, 2014 Board Meeting.*

Mr. Hunsinger requested authorization for himself and two youths to attend the 2014 NYATEP (New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals) Youth Academy in Albany on March 26, 2014 using a County vehicle. He commented that he had requested authorization for two staff members to attend the Youth Academy at the previous Committee meeting. He explained NYATEP had requested youth members to attend to be part of a youth panel discussion. Sharon Sano, Senior Counselor for the ETA, stated NYATEP was hoping to have a number of youths attend and write a policy paper regarding youth programming and its impact on their lives. She mentioned a previous graduate of the program who was now working as a Cosmetologist would be attending the Youth Academy of their own volition.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Ms. Seeber and carried unanimously to authorize attendance at the 2014 NYATEP Youth Academy as outlined above. *A copy of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Hunsinger reminded the Committee members of prior discussions pertaining to the new GED (General Equivalency Diploma) exam which was now called the TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion). He reported there was a reduction in the number of adults registering at BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) for preparation classes for the TASC. He advised the ETA helped adults to pay for the preparation classes. He said he had met with representatives from BOCES who had advised they were willing to hold the preparation classes elsewhere in the County if at least eight adults registered. Mr. Vanselow apprised the program in North Creek was operated on a one-on-one tutoring basis. He asked when the TASC exam would officially replace the GED

exam and Mr. Hunsinger replied the change was effective January 1, 2014 although he was unsure if any exams had taken place thus far. Ms. Sano said a TASC exam had been scheduled for March. Mr. Vanselow informed he had received an email from one of the TASC instructors which contained a link to some sample questions. He added the questions seemed harder than those included on the GED exam. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Girard asked if the ETA would eventually be able to ascertain the impact and implications of the switch from the GED exam to the TASC exam. He said he foresaw major issues with the new exam and he wondered how long it would be before someone admitted the switch was a mistake. He stated he saw the impact that the GED had on people and the jobs that they were able to obtain because of it on a daily basis. He opined that "raising the bar" from the GED exam to the TASC exam was significantly impacting those people. Mr. Hunsinger said the ETA would only see the impact to the people they served which was a very small percentage of those who would take the TASC exam. He commented the number of adults that the ETA sponsored for the BOCES preparation class programs was only a handful per year. He reported there were hundreds of people in Warren County who did not possess a high school diploma. Chairman Geraghty suggested it might be advisable to reach out to the school districts for further information as they also taught TASC exam preparation classes and Mr. Hunsinger replied that only a couple of school districts offered the program. Chairman Geraghty opined that placing these higher standards on people would only serve to discourage them.

Mr. Hunsinger apprised that 70% of the people in New York State who took the exam (GED) did not enroll in any type of tutoring or preparation classes. He added that since the TASC exam was more difficult, the ETA wanted to inform the public of the available programs. Mr. Brock opined the standards had been raised as an attempt to keep more children in school as opposed to dropping out and taking the GED exam. He noted there were kids that did not fit into the school system, either because they were lazy or just did not want to be there. He added a lot of children were in situations where their lives were so difficult that school was not an option. He advised the State was committed to raising the standards for all grade levels and raising the bar for the equivalency test would keep more children from dropping out. He agreed the changes would be tough on the kids either way. He noted there were many children for whom school was the least of their concerns.

Mr. Vanselow informed he had taught in the BOCES Alternative Learning Program for several years. He opined a positive effect of the GED Program was when young adults showed the initiative to pursue their GED, perspective employers looked at that favorably. He asked if the intention was to wait for statistics, such as pass/fail rates and the number of drop outs from the programs before anyone would voice their concerns. Ms. Sano informed of a Committee meeting she would attend on Thursday where the Superintendent of BOCES was the Chair and she said she could mention the concerns of the Committee. She said she would email the concerns to Kevin Smith, Deputy Commissioner of State Education, as well. She opined when young people were unable to find employment, it directly impacted Social Services and the Justice System. She noted in many cases the problem was due to the families or the lack thereof.

Mr. Girard pointed out that many times the Board of Supervisors had sent letters voicing their concerns with several issues and he questioned if that would be the best course of action. Mr. Hunsinger apprised the ETA was not involved in policy discussions but had to deal with the results and failures. He opined there were parts of the new Common Core Standards that he felt were positive. Mr. Hunsinger apprised of a meeting with a member of the Board of Regents last year where he had tried to express the importance of discussing careers and not just attending college with high school students. He said the member of the Board of Regents mostly discussed college options and seemed to not understand why other career options should be discussed.

Mrs. Frasier asked the Committee members their feeling on drafting a letter to the State and Ms. Wood suggested the matter be referred to the Legislative & Rules Committee. Mr. Girard suggested the matter be discussed with Assemblyman Stec. A discussion ensued.

Ms. Seeber stated she felt this discussion was important but unfortunately she needed to excuse herself from the meeting because she had two college classes to teach that afternoon. She agreed it would be a good idea to refer the matter to the Legislative & Rules Committee. She suggested talking to area schools to determine if they felt a letter to the State would be helpful.

Ms. Seeber exited the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

Mr. Vanselow informed that BOCES operated programs which used to be referred to as VoTech but were now called Career and Technical Education, incorporated academic integration, including English, Math, etc. in the training. Pertaining to the possibility of drafting a letter to the State, Mr. Vanselow said the only issue he saw with that scenario was that the Committee would be acting based on fear and not fact; however, he continued, he was in favor of writing the letter but he did not expect any results.

Mr. Hunsinger apprised the ETA identified problems and looked for solutions and he noted they were currently funding a Machine Tool Technology Program which appeared to be a success. He advised almost 100 people attended the meeting regarding the initiation of the Machine Tool Technology Program of which 15 were selected for the inaugural class. He noted an additional class would be held in the summer or fall. Ms. Sano opined education drove business and she felt that business should drive education and she advised the Machine Tool Technology Program was business driven. She commented that area schools were sending fewer children to the BOCES Career and Technical Education Programs due to a stigma which was attached. Mr. Vanselow commented that a few years prior, all of the Career and Technical Education Programs were aligned with industry standards resulting in a Certificate of Completion which was above and beyond a high school diploma. Ms. Sano opined that adults were not interested in the new TASC exam because they were afraid they would not pass. Mr. Vanselow asked if there were opportunities for training for positions at Global Foundries and Mr. Hunsinger informed there was a program at Ballston Spa High School which was operated through Hudson Valley Community College.

Mr. Hunsinger reported there would be a Job Discovery held on Thursday, March 13, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the SUNY Adirondack Gymnasium and as of Friday there had been 60 employers signed up to participate. He advised this job fair received a good turn out each year and was very positive.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to refer the Committee's concerns pertaining to the increased standards of the new TASC exam to the Legislative & Rules Committee to determine if a letter should be drafted to the State.

As there was no further business to come before the Human Services Committee, on motion made by Ms. Wood and seconded by Mr. Brock, Mrs. Frasier adjourned the meeting at 11:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist