

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: HEALTH SERVICES

DATE: AUGUST 30, 2006

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Barody
Sheehan
F. Thomas
Tessier
Champagne
Mason

Committee Member Absent:

Supervisor Haskell

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
William Thomas, Chairman
Joan Sady, Clerk, Board of Supervisors
Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and
Fiscal Services
Trish Nenninger, Second Assistant County Attorney
Supervisor Stec
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

Mr. Barody called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier, seconded by Mr. Mason 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 and the Department's proposed 2007 budget package. Copies of the items are on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer commenced with review of the Pending Items on the agenda. Regarding the Telehealth Program, she advised they did not have a report this month in order to maximize the meeting time for the 2007 Budget discussion. She stated the Point of Care (POC) would be discussed during the budget review.

Next, Mrs. Auer spoke on Pandemic Flu Planning Efforts. She reported they had hosted a meeting on August 9th which was attended by 20 people who represented various sectors of the business, school, religious, and health care communities. Mrs. Auer queried if all the Committee members received the minutes of the meeting that she had e-mailed to them. The Committee members acknowledged they had received the minutes and that they did not need to be read now. She advised they would be continuing these strategy planning meetings. In addition, Mrs. Auer reported the first draft of the Pandemic Flu Plan for the County was just about ready to be submitted to the New York State Department of Health per the State's mandate.

Mrs. Auer recalled as a result of discussion on the Fleet Management Program at the last Committee meeting, Mr. Champagne and Mrs. Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, had been asked to look into some concerns about the program. She advised they had participated in a meeting relative to the concerns.

At Mr. Barody's request, Mr. Champagne spoke on the matter. Mr. Barody confirmed that Mrs. Parsons had updated him on the outcome of the meeting, but he wanted the Committee members to know the results. Mr. Champagne stated they had met with William Remington, County DPW Superintendent, and a computer expert on his staff to identify the issues in the program that dealt mostly with its maintenance system software. He recalled some of the concerns they had thought were not being addressed appropriately by DPW were the maintenance reporting on the vehicles and the mileage reported on the Gas Boy equipment. Mr. Champagne advised they had discovered there was some software lacking on some of the Gas Boys that were located in Lake Luzerne and perhaps Johnsburg and that was why the system had not been used on any of the other Gas Boy equipment in the County such as at the Municipal Center.

Continuing, Mr. Champagne advised he believed the situation had now been resolved. He noted another meeting that had been scheduled on the situation had been cancelled. However, he said they did hope to meet with Mr. Remington and his staff member in about a month or so to see what could be put together to follow up on the situation. Mr. Champagne concluded he felt some improvements had been made and at the least there had been communication among all those who were involved with the program. In addition, he said they had information on the system's problems to take to the State to discuss what the software was supposed to be like. However, Mr. Champagne advised there would be some additional expenses for additions to the software so it would track the vehicle maintenance needs. He stated if there were any other things the Committee members thought should be included in the Gas Boy System that needed to be decided now so the costs could be budgeted for.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mrs. Parsons. She noted she felt the major problem that was resolved was that the nurses no longer had to report their daily mileage because the Gas Boy System could do that when the cars were filled up. The current software for the system was capable of doing that, she added. Mrs. Parsons noted that seemed to have raised the staff's morale; and Mrs. Auer concurred. Mr. Champagne commented he had felt it was too expensive to have the nurses tracking mileage by hand or filling up cars. He stated he would like to see a position that would be in charge of just doing the fill-ups as that would cost less than the nurses doing it. Mrs. Auer said they would keep the Committee members up to date with any other concerns about the Fleet Management Program should they arise as time goes on.

Concluding the Pending Items, Mrs. Auer stated relative to the status of Rabies Program issues, they had sent the Committee members a draft of a proposed letter outlining concerns about the program that was to be sent to all the Towns in the County and the City of Glens Falls. She advised as they had not received any negative feedback from any of the Committee members the

letters had been sent out.

Mrs. Auer commenced with review of New Business agenda Items. First, she requested approval of a resolution to renew the current contract with Health Research Institute (HRI) to allow for receipt of funding in the amount of \$85,000 for emergency preparedness planning efforts. She noted that part of the grant deliverables for this year would focus on Pandemic Planning.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to authorize the necessary resolution for the next board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes. Mrs. Auer stated she had received a message that under this contract a large amount of additional funds for Pandemic Planning would be allocated this year. Thus she said she anticipated they would be receiving more funds for that planning. Although, Mrs. Auer said the information was only in an e-mail now she would let the Committee members know when the funds come in.

Next, Mrs. Auer requested approval of a resolution to authorize a contract with Linda LeBlanc, SLP (Speech Language Pathologist) for the provision of individual or group speech therapy services. She stated a speech therapist in the department had recently resigned and this individual would be able to fill that gap.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to authorize the necessary resolution for the next board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer presented a request for approval to increase a part time Senior Clerk's hours from 20 to 30 per week. She apprised the annual salary would increase from \$12,172.00 to \$18,258.00 and that personal and vacation time would be prorated and there would be no health insurance benefits. Mrs. Auer stated the position was needed to do the Medicaid billing for the Department's preschool programs and private insurance billing for the Maternal Child Health Program, etc.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne and seconded by Mr. F. Thomas to approve the aforementioned request, as presented.

Discussion ensued, and Mrs. Parsons confirmed for Mr. Barody that a full-time position would be 35 hours. Mr. Barody asked if with 30 hours they were heading towards a full-time position. Mrs. Auer responded the proposed 2007 budget included a request for a Senior Clerk position that would be shared between the Public Health and Home Care Divisions. However, she explained the request for the additional hours was because the tasks the person does could not be done in the 20 hours. Mr. Champagne noted the addition of five more hours would probably bring the total annual salary up to \$22,000. However, he said the real question was if the job was getting done in the 30 hours. Mrs. Auer said she could keep the person busy full time but she thought the County favored not having to provide health insurance if possible. In reply to

Mrs. Auer's question, Ms. Driscoll advised the 30 hours would be fine for the position.

Mr. Mason stated they should accept that recommendation from the Department and the hours should not be increased any more than necessary. Mr. Barody agreed.

Mr. Barody called the question and the motion to approve the increase to 30 hours per week was carried unanimously. The request was referred to the Personnel Committee. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer requested approval of a resolution to amend the current contract with MVP Health Care Participating Ancillary Agreement to extend Health Services' participation to include the treatment of Preferred Care members as of January 1, 2007. She explained the amendment was needed so the County would be paid for the care provided to MVP's Preferred Care members.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne and seconded by Mr. F. Thomas to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to authorize the necessary resolution for the next board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

The next request, Mrs. Auer said was to approve a resolution to authorize an extension to the current contract with the New York State Department of Health (DOH) for funding of Early Intervention Administration and for the Children with Special Health Care Needs Program from October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007. She stated she had hoped to have the amount of the grant by today and the DOH Regional Office had assured her that the grant would be coming in and that it would be effective October 1st, so she fully expected to have the amount before the September 15th Board of Supervisors' meeting. In view of this, Mrs. Auer asked if the Committee members would approve the resolution, contingent upon the figures being provided, and she would advise Mr. Barody of the figures for the resolution as soon as she received them.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, contingent upon receipt of the grant figures. *(Note: The figures had not been provided at the completion of the minutes.)*

Next, Mrs. Auer requested approval of a resolution to authorize an extension of the current contract with Outcome Concept Systems for the annual payment of \$5,500 for the OASIS (Outcomes and Assessment Information Set) data collection and submission software program and support services for the term of September 25, 2006 through September 24, 2007. She recalled that last year it was decided the contract should be renewed for one year instead of multi-year terms so they would not be locked in with one vendor if another one should come along.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to authorize the necessary resolution for the next board meeting. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Concluding the resolution requests, Mrs. Auer presented a request for approval of a resolution to amend the salaries of per diem nurses to reflect the position grades and salary reallocations that were to become effective September 1, 2006. She expressed the staff's appreciation for the increases and added this coverage saves a lot of overtime.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to forward it to the Personnel Committee. Copies of a resolution request form and attachment listing the aforementioned salary changes are on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer reviewed the Informational Item on the agenda that concerned 2006 Co-payment Status. She recognized Trish Nenninger, Second Assistant County Attorney, who she said she had discussed this matter with. Mrs. Auer recalled one of their goals for this year was to start to collect co-payments on insurances and the list showed those activities. She advised some payments had been made and some people had said they could not pay so the sliding fee schedule was used.

Mrs. Auer asked what the Committee members would like to do about the people who did not respond to the co-pay bills after they had been sent a second invoice. She stated Ms. Nenninger had spoken with Mr. Dusek, the County Attorney, and she would provide that information.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Nenninger, and she noted Mrs. Auer was concerned that although the uncollected amounts were small at this point they could continue to grow. She advised Mr. Dusek and she had discussed how to handle the situation. Ms. Nenninger advised it was Mr. Dusek's opinion that because most of these payments would be small that if the Department was going to pursue them anything under \$1,000 should be sent to a collection agency for action. She explained he felt it would not make sense to pay for his time and to take the court time needed for him to pursue those cases. Ms. Nenninger stated Mr. Dusek felt his office should legally pursue any amounts over \$1,000 that were owed.

Mr. Barody noted Mrs. Auer was probably aware of those recommendations before today, and he asked if she had discussed it and come up with any ideas based on them. Mrs. Auer replied they had not discussed the situation in depth because previously they had not had a formal way to collect these co-payments. She stated if Medicare goes to managed Medicare there would be co-pays and she felt patients who could not afford to pay them either would do so or they would not provide the information needed for them.

Mr. Barody asked what Medicare's current guidelines were concerning co-pays. Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Schaldone who replied the guidelines were that it was their duty to bill the co-pays and to try to collect them which was why they had pursued this collection process. She explained a majority of their patients qualify for a reduction so they pay \$2.50/visit compared to the \$20 or \$25 co-pay. Ms. Schaldone stated she thought they were collecting the most they could. She said she would not like to send out a message that would appear to the patients they

had referred to a collection agency that they were not going to provide them care anymore for such small dollar amounts. Ms. Schaldone stated the intent of initiating the co-pays was to meet the regulations. She noted she was surprised they had collected more than 50% of the total owed. Mr. Barody responded he was not surprised because he thought most people felt they should pay for services they had received. He stated he felt it was the Committee members' responsibility to the rest of the taxpayers to make some kind of collection effort. Mr. Barody advised he felt they should keep the present collection system in place and it was up to the Committee members and the Board of Supervisors to decide if they wanted to pursue any further those who did not pay for the small amounts of money that would be involved.

Mr. Tessier asked what was done after the second notices were sent out. Ms. Schaldone replied at this time they did not do anything more, and that was the question they would like some direction on. She reiterated that before Medicare's regulations on co-pays began they did not bill for co-pays at all. Ms. Schaldone explained this issue also involved what their percentage of charity care was as the uncollected amounts had to be on a certain percentage of that care. She said she thought the uncollected amounts could be rolled in to the charity care as long as they met their percentage. However, Ms. Schaldone stated if the uncollected amounts increased the percentage then they would have to be looked at. She concurred with Mr. Barody that the uncollected amounts were not at a level that would require the County Attorney to ever be involved in. Mr. Champagne noted the collection rate was over 50%, and he added he also would not want to give the public the idea that care would not be provided because the co-pays were not paid.

Mr. Sheehan recommended the co-pay collection system should remain as it is and if the uncollected amount should become much bigger, then the issue could be readdressed. Mr. Barody concluded that no action would be taken on the matter; and the Committee members offered no objection to the recommendation.

Concluding the agenda, Mrs. Auer spoke on the Department's 2007 proposed budget. She stated this was the first time Ms. Driscoll had prepared the budget, and she commended her for the very good job she had done. Mrs. Auer stated there were also some informational sheets with the budget that provided an overall picture of various components of the budget. The Health Services (A.4010) Budget showed a 2007 request of \$4,518,185 an increase of \$463,360 over the 2006 appropriations of \$4,054,825. She referred the Committee members to the sheet entitled, "Significant Points for Information/Discussion". She commented as usual the revenues had been estimated on the conservative side. Mrs. Auer stated she was aware they were not supposed to make any changes to the salaries shown in the budget, but Mr. Barody had asked about the amount of the increases. She said the full figures had not been received from the Personnel Office, but she had calculated the costs for the reallocation for the per diem nurses based on the resolution that was approved earlier in the meeting would be \$88,700 plus. Mrs. Auer noted those nurses did not work that many hours so the increase was not very significant.

Mrs. Auer apprised they have been told for months that the amount of the State aid to every

County no matter the population, was expected to have its base grant increased by \$100,000. She stated that currently the Department's base grant was \$306,000. However, Mrs. Auer advised since that information had not been received in writing the increase was not included in the proposed budget. It could easily be added when the definite information was received, she said. Mrs. Auer stated Mr. Barody and she also discussed the Point of Care (POC) process. She stated this would be a big expense although it was not a mandated process. Mrs. Auer said they wanted the POC information to be on the record because it is the wave of the future. It is also eligible for 36% State aid, she added. Mrs. Auer referred the Committee members to the information sheet on POC that was included in the budget package which she said Ms. Schaldone would discuss.

Ms. Schaldone highlighted that Point of Care was the electronic process that would be used to document all care, i.e., treatment, medications ordered and teaching of specific disease management at the point the care was rendered. The process would be used to automate all the Department's clinical records and the information would also be fed into the billing system so it would streamline all processes and reduce documentation time of all patient care data, she said. Ms. Schaldone advised that the Federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) was encouraging all health care providers at all levels of the health care system, i.e., doctors' offices, hospitals, etc., to be electronically compatible at the HL7 (health level) with all health care providers. For example, she said physicians would be able to access the information they would have on a patient's home care visits.

Mr. W. Thomas entered the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Ms. Schaldone emphasized the process would reduce the nurses' time spent on documenting information by 50% which would allow more time for direct patient care. Some other benefits, she said would be to reduce the number of support staff needed and to strengthen the agency's position as the only certified agency in the County. Ms. Schaldone noted the number of the agency's patients would only continue to grow in view of the aging of the general population.

Ms. Schaldone spoke on costs of the POC. She stated they would like to be able to have a budget line so they could begin to look at what vendors would be available whose equipment would be compatible with their current software. Ms. Schaldone advised she had started by looking in the County's Information Technology Department and at some vendors. She apprised they had obtained some ballpark figures and in round numbers they would like to keep the costs underneath \$400,000. Ms. Schaldone stated that figure would cover 75 users in the Department which would cover everyone including the various therapists. She confirmed for Mr. Champagne that the 36% aid was on the \$400,000 figure but she had not calculated what the total aid figure would be. In reply to Mr. Mason's question, she concurred the POC would be interfaced with their Telemed equipment. She noted by interfacing the right POC equipment with the Telemed equipment a nurse would be able to do the documentation work without having to return to the office.

Mr. Barody commented he was somewhat torn relative to the proposal as he did support progress in the use of electronics in the medical field. He said he also strongly supported the staff's thoughts and efforts on the concept and he felt they were moving in the right direction. The entire country is looking at implementing this process at this point, he added. Mr. Barody advised he was not involved in the home health care area of electronics but as some people were aware and some might not be, he was a major investor and partner in a company that was developing electronic medical records systems for doctors' offices, hospitals, surgery, anesthesiologists, etc. The first phase of the system would be going nationwide in November with orthopedic surgeons and other phases would follow shortly, he added.

However, Mr. Barody said he felt the problem with the system they would have to look at for home health care was that it would be obsolete in two or three years. He stated he was aware that other companies were already developing new systems that would cost significantly less than the current ones at \$400,000. Although, Mr. Barody noted he was not sure how quickly these systems would get to home health care agencies. He said he was personally aware that the electronic systems the local Irongate medical group and the Glens Falls Hospital had just paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for would be available on the market in the next year to 18 months at 30% less than what they had paid for them. Mr. Barody said that was because of the way the software was written and developed and what the architecture of the system was. He stated he did not know how quickly that would transfer to the home health care industry but that it would be unfolding in hospital and physicians' offices over the next 18 months. Mr. Barody noted more doctors would accept such systems because changes to systems, forms, etc., could be made almost instantaneously compared to the software being sold now that cannot make as many changes.

Ms. Schaldone stated one of the vendors, Delta, has been producing systems for the home care industry for ten years and their software had all those particular options. They could build their own system for high risk hospital assessment at no cost, she said. Mr. Barody suggested that representatives of the company be brought in to make a presentation to the Committee members. He noted a system would have to be written in Microsoft Client Smart Architecture to be able to provide the options he had outlined. However, he expressed concern that the \$400,000 cost was too high.

Discussion continued, and Ms. Schaldone said she had looked at another system that would not be compatible with their current system and that would not interface with the Telemed equipment. She noted Washington County and other health care agencies in the northeast have the Delta system. Ms. Schaldone apprised the cost of the actual program for 75 users would be about \$260,000 but it was the cost of the laptops that would raise the price. She said she had obtained a price range from IT that could run as high as \$100,000 - \$200,000 depending on how much the County would want to spend. She noted she had been looking at an automated records system for many years but they had always done so cautiously in view of concerns about the issue of obsolescence. Mr. Champagne concurred they should have the Delta firm provide a demonstration.

Mr. Stec entered the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

Ms. Schaldone reiterated that Mrs. Auer and she had discussed having a budget line item for such a system so they could look at it in depth. Mrs. Auer noted they had always been told that budget review time was the appropriate time to discuss such proposals instead of in mid-year. However, she said there was no "magic bullet year" to do this and the decision was up to the Committee members. Mr. Sheehan asked if there would be any advantage to having less than 75 users. Ms. Schaldone replied she had thought about just covering the nursing staff of 40 people, but then they would not have the entire communication piece. Mr. Barody stated he agreed that either the entire department should be included in the system or none of them should be.

Ms. Schaldone apprised they did include the costs for the IT piece and the hardware in the proposed budget line item. She said Ms. Driscoll could explain that. Ms. Driscoll apprised \$265,000 was put in for the hardware piece, \$130,000 for software and \$40,000 for monthly maintenance. Ms. Schaldone said they were already paying for a support piece for their billing program and the Delta firm was willing to include their billing software at no cost if they purchased the firm's home care system. She advised they had been having major problems with the current billing system and the vendor was not responding as promptly as she thought they should. Ms. Schaldone noted with a new system they could also eliminate the current aforementioned separate OASIS Program as it was built into Delta's software. They would retain their benchmarking piece which cost \$5,000 annually, she added. Ms. Schaldone said she could list the current costs that would be offset with a new system but she did not want to do so if there was no interest in considering the new system.

Mr. Barody stated that was not the case with the Committee, but in reality the Budget Officer could eliminate the proposal from the budget and he thought the \$400,000 would be rejected automatically. He noted he was not sure how they should proceed.

Regarding the question of the proposed budget line item, Ms. Driscoll referred the Committee members to the Budget Worksheet Report in the A.4010 Health Services Budget. She stated the \$343,000 shown in the 428 line item for Data Processing & Internet Fees included the \$265,000 for software and the \$40,000 for maintenance. The \$130,000 for equipment was shown under the 220 Office Equipment line item, she said. Ms. Schaldone reiterated there would be 36% State reimbursement. In reply to Mr. Mason's query on when that would be received, she said she did not know.

Mr. Barody queried if each of the Department's budgets had to be reviewed separately; and Mrs. Auer continued with review of the budget's Significant Points. She advised as the result of discussion with Bruce Belden, Auto Mechanic Supervisor at DPW, the budget included five new cars with four in the Certified Home Health Agency (CHHA) and one in the Long Term Home Health Care Program (LTHHCP). In addition, she advised the therapists had requested an increase in their contractual rates. A sheet outlining the request was included with the budget, she said. Mrs. Auer stated they had declined this request last year but with current fuel prices and

the fact that the therapists had not had a rate increase in five years they included the request in the budget. Mrs. Auer stated the therapists bring in a lot of revenues through the Preschool Program that would have to be paid out to other agencies if they did not have these contracts. Ms. Schaldone reviewed the rate request information sheet in detail with the Committee members.

General discussion ensued.

Mrs. Auer pointed out the budget included requests for four new positions which were as follows: 1) A Supervising Nurse for the Division of Public Health; 2) An Early Intervention Service Coordinator; 3) A Senior Clerk; and 4) A Community Health Nurse. Copies of the requests which outlined the salaries and justifications for them were included with the budget package. Brief discussion ensued as Mrs. Auer highlighted various aspects of the requests for the information of the Committee members.

Mrs. Auer referred the Committee members to the Summary of Costs to County sheet that was included in the budget package. She apprised they projected conservatively that the Department would make about \$300,000. Mrs. Auer noted in particular the costs of the mandated programs. Brief discussion followed. Mrs. Auer concluded she was proud of the fact that they were able to run the entire Departments, including the mandated programs for less than \$1 million dollars.

Lastly, Mrs. Auer presented the proposed 2007 Employee Health Committee Budget (A.9061). The total 2007 request of \$6,000 was unchanged from the 2006 appropriation. She stated Laura Saffer, the Health Educator, had provided her with a list of the activities the Committee was projecting to provide in the coming year. Mrs. Auer noted among the activities was providing a motivational speaker, holding health fairs, etc. Brief discussion followed.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. Tessier and carried unanimously to approve the Health Services Department's Budgets, as presented, and to authorize the Committee Chairman to sign them and forward them to the Budget Officer.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion by Mr. Mason, and seconded by Mr. Tessier, Mr. Barody adjourned the meeting at 12:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk