

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 2006

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Tessier  
O'Connor  
Sheehan  
Bentley  
Kenny  
F. Thomas

Representing Department of Social Services:  
Robert Phelps, Commissioner  
Douglas Herschleb, Director of Services  
Michael Jabaut, Director, Administrative  
Services

William Thomas, Chairman  
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board

Committee Member Absent:

Supervisor Barody

Joan Parsons, Commissioner, Administrative & Fiscal  
Services

Nicholas Caimano, Budget Officer  
Supervisor John Haskell  
Supervisor Eugene Merlino  
Supervisor Michael O'Connor  
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

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Mr. Tessier called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, 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 Mr. Phelps, who distributed copies of an agenda packet for the meeting and the department's Annual Statistical Report for 2005 (a supplement to the Annual Report). Copies of the items are on file with the minutes.

Mr. Phelps noted the Agenda items concerned the Medicaid Cap and Weekly Shares Report. He said he would be making a brief power point presentation of the department's Annual Statistical Report for 2005. He explained this report is a supplement to the department's Annual Report and it will provide a comparison of this district with other districts of similar size.

Pursuant to Agenda Item No. 1, Mr. Phelps referred the committee members to the Weekly Shares Report that was the first item in the agenda packet. He stated the data was for the first eight weeks of the year. Mr. Phelps pointed out that the local share was now a fixed amount based on the established Medicaid Cap that the State set which is contingent upon a final reconciliation that he would be discussing with the committee members.

Mr. W. Thomas entered the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Mr. Phelps explained the column titled, Local Cap Adjustment, was a new column on this report

and it showed the local dollar savings which have resulted from the Cap. It is also coupled with the cost containment initiatives the department had instituted, he said. Mr. Phelps pointed out per the report that based on the figures for eight weeks they are projecting a Cost Containment and Cap savings for 2006 of \$2,075,708.12. As shown in the second box on the right side of the report, Mr. Phelps stated the projected total annual federal, state and local expenditures will be \$71 million. Mr. Phelps advised the projected local share is the Cap figure the State established for the County.

Continuing, Mr. Phelps referred the committee members to the column of figures in the report that showed the initial Medicaid Cap for 2006. He explained this was the figure which had come from the State and noted it was \$11,371,476. Mr. Phelps pointed out that the adjusted cap, pending reconciliation, was \$10,877,870 and the County's current appropriation for 2006 was \$9,789,422 for a difference, pending reconciliation, of \$1,088,448 between the figures. He apprised the next figure of \$203,977 reflected the weekly fixed costs (local share) for the 13 weeks from January through March and the weekly fixed costs for the next 39 weeks from April through December would be \$210,928. Mr. Phelps apprised the current weekly appropriation was averaging \$188,258.

Mr. Caimano asked what happened with the difference; and Mr. Phelps replied it would have to be made up in the department's budget and they would do what they possibly could in that way. However, he said the initial request for the MMIS appropriation was \$11 million+ which they reduced significantly. Relative to the MMIS budget request, he stated the next agenda item detailed a Chronology of that request for the 2006 budget. Mr. Phelps reviewed the Chronology in detail with the committee members. At the conclusion of the review, he pointed out the State is required to do a final reconciliation of the estimated Cap and final Cap amounts so the department still did not have absolute figures from the State. Thus, Mr. Phelps said they are waiting to see what the bottom line will be. However, he said as outlined in the Chronology he would estimate the local Cap would be approximately \$10,742,407 for a difference of \$952,985 between the MMIS appropriation and the final Medicaid Cap figure. Mr. Phelps advised that by June 30<sup>th</sup> they will know how close their appropriation is to the final Medicaid Cap amount. He reiterated they hope to make up any possible shortfalls in the budget that they can.

Mr. O'Connor entered the meeting at 1:42 p.m.

Mr. Tessier queried what the 2005 Medicaid expenditures were compared to the 2006 figures. Mr. Phelps advised the 2005 figures would be without the cost containment. He said the information would be included in the power point presentation, but it was also in the agenda packet on the next to the last page. Mr. Phelps reviewed the statistics with the committee members in detail. He pointed out the drop in the percentage rate between the 2004 and 2005 costs from 13.8% to 3.2% was the direct result of the department's cost containment initiatives and the savings was significant. However, Mr. Phelps pointed out the data showed if the growth rate had remained at 13.8% and without the initiatives the expenditure would have been \$13,636,846 just in the MARS (Management Administrative Reporting Subsystem) 72 costs

versus the actual figure of \$12,368,801. Based on those figures, he apprised he projected the initiative would result in a savings of about \$1,268,045. Mr. Phelps commented as 2005 was the baseline figure for the base of the Cap into the future he felt they had done extremely well in that regard.

Discussion ensued, and Mr. Kenny commented he understood the Chronology of the appropriation and its current status. However, he said pursuant to the budget discussion in the Fall of 2005 everyone thought once there was a realistic budget for the department they would not have to come up with any extra funds. Mr. Kenny acknowledged he did understand that additional funds would be needed this year but he felt there were seven months to try to make some savings towards the shortfall. He stated they should institute some stringent measures, i.e., perhaps eliminating overtime and not filling vacant positions as they arise. Mr. Caimano asked if there would ever be a time when budget shortfalls would not be the case. Mr. Phelps replied this would be the final reconciliation; and Mr. Caimano responded that was said last year. Mr. Tessier stated last year was an estimate; and Mr. Phelps concurred. He stated it had been said they were going to a Medicaid Cap and that there would be an absolute number every year in the future. Mr. Phelps advised the figures for 2005 still have to be reconciled.

Mr. Kenny stated the County has a \$3 million shortfall from the recent windstorm and the Social Services' shortfall was another million dollar hit, so something had to be done to try to recoup some of this money. Mr. Phelps responded they would not be in this position if he had held fast to the amount he thought would be needed. However, he said when he was asked to find some funds he thought there was an opportunity to make an adjustment from the initial request and he had not wanted to make the request higher. Mr. Kenny said he understood all that but they still had to come up with the funds and they did have seven months to do so. Regarding the aforementioned suggestion concerning overtime, Mr. Phelps explained most of the overtime he has allowed since January was in the Medicaid Program and as of January 1st that was 100% reimbursable so no funds could come from there or from foster care. He apprised the department's Public Assistance case load was the lowest it has been in 30 years. Mr. Phelps said he thought when they saw the Annual Report Supplement they would have a better sense of where the department is.

Mrs. Parsons advised that last year the County hired a consultant to pursue State-aid funds which the State had not paid to the County for eligible clients who were placed here from the Wilton Developmental Center and other places. As a result of that contract, she apprised at the last Board of Supervisors' meeting a resolution was adopted to accept a settlement with the State under which over \$84,000 was returned to the County. Mrs. Parsons advised that revenue had not been budgeted for. She commented they did need to continue to look at maximizing reimbursements wherever possible. Mrs. Parsons noted hopefully these funds could be used to offset some of the shortfall that might occur later in the year. Mr. Phelps added that they had also joined a pharmaceutical lawsuit so some funds might come from that.

Pursuant to Agenda Item No. 2, Mr. Phelps proceeded with a power point page-by-page

presentation of the aforementioned 2005 Annual Report Supplement. He emphasized that the data in the report provided a comparison with data from other districts of similar size to the County in terms of population.

Mr. W. Thomas and Mrs. Parsons left the meeting at 1:54 p.m.

Discussion ensued as Mr. Phelps responded to questions from the committee members on various aspects of the report during the course of the presentation.

During the review of the Child Support and Enforcement Services section of the report, Mr. Phelps referred the committee members to a press release from the State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance that was included in the agenda packet which announced that the Social Services Department had been recognized by the State for its successful child support collection efforts.

Mrs. Parsons returned to the meeting at 2:11 p.m.

General discussion ensued at the conclusion of the presentation.

Mr. Tessier requested an executive session to discuss the work history of a particular employee. Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to declare executive session pursuant to Section 105(f) of the Public Officers Law.

Executive session was declared from 2:19 p.m. to 2:29 p.m.

Committee reconvened.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve a request to increase the base salary of employee #4888, the department's Fiscal Manager, and to refer the item to the Personnel Committee. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

There being no further business, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 2:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk