

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2006

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors O'Connor
Bentley
Kenny
F. Thomas

Others Present:

Representing Department of Social Services:
Robert Phelps, Commissioner
Douglas Herschleb, Director of Services
Michael Jabaut, Director, Administrative Svces.
Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager
Joan Parsons, Commissioner, Administrative &
Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk, Board of Supervisors
Paul Dusek, County Attorney
Supervisor Geraghty
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

Committee Members Absent:

Supervisors Tessier
Sheehan

Vacant

Town of
Queensbury

In the absence of Mr. Tessier, Committee Chairman, Mr. O'Connor, Committee Vice-chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:19 a.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 his agenda packet for the meeting, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Phelps commenced with review of the agenda and he spoke first on the Pending Items.

Mr. Phelps stated relative to a contract with the Sheriff's Office for investigation services for the Social Services Department, Paul Dusek, the County Attorney, had reviewed the contracts of several other Counties for these services. As a result of his review, Mr. Phelps advised that Mr. Dusek had recommended that the two departments should contract for the services. He noted he felt the services would provide both some relief to the CPS (Child Protective Services) Unit and that they would enhance the coordination of services between the Sheriff's Office and the Department.

Continuing, Mr. Phelps apprised they had received a State grant to help fund the contract. They also felt the investigator could assist the Department with Medicaid fraud investigations and those costs would be 100% reimbursable, he said. Mr. Phelps pointed out a copy of the Sheriff's proposal for the contract was included in the agenda packet and it was for a cost not to exceed \$66,000 annually.

Mr. Phelps requested approval of a resolution to authorize a Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU), for the aforementioned services, as outlined. He apprised that funds were included in the 2007 County budget for the services and they believed they might have funds in their 2006 budget to start the services this year.

In reply to Mr. Kenny's query on the source of the funds for this year's services, Mr. Phelps said they had received a CPS grant of \$26,000 that had to be expended by June 2007. They expect that grant would be renewed for next year, he added. Mr. Kenny asked what the funding would be in the following years; and Mr. Phelps replied it would depend on the status of the funding and whether the Committee would want to continue the services. If, he said there had to be a County share they would look at that situation then.

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

Mr. Phelps stated this resolution would take care of Item No. 3 of the forthcoming agenda items.

Next, Mr. Phelps spoke on the issue of a rate increase (by the State Office of Children and Family Services [OCFS]) for State Training Schools' costs. He advised the State had still not officially notified them of the increase. However, he said they had discovered it when the bill was received and from discussion with some other Social Services' Districts. Mr. Phelps apprised the increase in these rates was substantial and was for 2006 and it was retroactive to 2001. He stated the Board of Supervisors had expressed its opposition to the rate increases by adopting Resolution No. 660 of 2006 which a copy of was included in the agenda packet. Mr. Phelps advised he understood that the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) had been very vocal in its opposition to the increase. He said he had also shared the County's resolution with other counties at a Commissioner's Conference yesterday, and he had asked that group to keep the pressure on the State on this issue. Some of the Commissioners were going to bring this resolution to their Counties, he added. Mr. Phelps remarked he thought if they kept the pressure on the State they could get some compromise on the matter.

Mr. Phelps apprised the amount of the rate increase was 43% and he anticipated it could perhaps create a \$120,000 shortfall for this year and that the 2007 budget would also be short.

Mr. O'Connor stated the rate increase was discussed by the Board of Supervisors at the October 13th board meeting and they all opposed it. He noted the Supervisors also agreed that everyone involved should keep the pressure on the State. Mr. O'Connor asked if something could be done to budget for the 2007 costs. Mr. Phelps replied it could not because the 2007 budget had already been presented and the appropriation for the rates was based on the current 2006 appropriation which was now short by \$120,000. He advised he did not intend to pay the bill pending further action perhaps by NYSAC and the Social Services Districts and a response from the State. Mr. Phelps reiterated the State had not officially notified anyone of the rate increase and he would not take any action on the bills until that happened.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kathy Baker, the Department's Fiscal Manager. She advised if the bills were not paid the State would just take the funds from any other claim settlements the Department would receive from the State.

Concluding the Pending Items, Mr. Phelps discussed the issue of the frequent turnover in the Department's CPS Caseworker staff. He apprised in the past two years the turnover rate has been 43% and it was 30% for this year. Two positions were being filled now due to resignations, he added. Mr. Phelps stated one of the Caseworkers took a private sector job and the second did not want the job after she completed the training and worked a very short time. He noted CPS positions were not like the other caseworker positions that could work across the different categories of services the Department provides because the person has to be able to investigate child abuse cases and take appropriate action on them.

Mr. Phelps advised he had been looking at how other Districts staffed their CPS Units. For example, he said Tompkins County used only Senior Caseworkers in the Unit and other Districts just used the title of Caseworker because they wanted the flexibility to move them from one program to another. Mr. Phelps advised they were reviewing job specifications to see if there might be something in existence that might be more appropriate.

Mr. O'Connor asked if overtime was being used to cover the two vacant positions. Mr. Phelps replied they had delegated those job duties over all their other programs which was a burden to those Caseworkers. However, he said he was concerned that those staff members had not had the full core CPS training that was necessary to know how to carry those cases to conclusion.

At the conclusion of further discussion on the issue, Mr. Phelps advised they would continue to keep an eye on the situation.

Mr. Phelps proceeded with review of the (new) agenda items. Pursuant to Item No. 1, he reviewed the Medicaid Weekly Shares Report with the Committee members. A copy of the Report was included in the agenda packet. Mr. Phelps pointed out the total local share through October 12th was \$8,731,888. However, he said the Committee members would recall that the total appropriation for this year was \$9.7 million. Thus, Mr. Phelps apprised at the current weekly rate of expenditures (which was the fixed amount of \$201,382) they would be out of funds in the MMIS (Medicaid Management Information System) code by mid-November. Thus, he stated the Committee members could not wait until December to act on an appropriation to cover the shortfall.

Continuing, Mr. Phelps apprised this year's true shortfall would be \$10.7 million and with the appropriation of \$9.7 million, the difference would be \$956,000. However, he explained part of the expenditure was in the IGT (Inter-Governmental Transfer) of \$116,000 which was money that comes back to the County as revenue so it was a wash. Mr. Phelps advised in addition the State was overcharging them on the weekly shares and it had identified that and sent them a

reconciliation check for \$244,092. Thus, he said that was additional unanticipated revenue they could put in the budget. Mr. Phelps apprised the actual amount needed to increase the appropriation was \$956,277, but with the \$116,011 offset of IGT funds and the MMIS refund, the County's final net shortfall would be \$596,174. He requested approval of a resolution to amend the County budget to cover the shortfall by increasing appropriations in the amount of \$956,277, and by increasing revenues in the amount of \$116,011 and \$244,092.

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

Mr. Phelps explained because the MMIS account was now a fixed figure, in the future he would not have to come back to request additional funds to reconcile the account.

Pursuant to Agenda Item No. 2, Mr. Phelps requested approval of a resolution to fill a vacant Social Welfare Examiner position in the Medicaid Unit due to an anticipated promotion. He explained he had not yet made the promotion but he knew the field of candidates and he anticipated the promotion would be made from the Unit. Mr. Phelps stated the position was 100% reimbursable.

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

Concluding the agenda (Item No. 4), Mr. Phelps said was an informational item that provided a chart which showed the total monthly average for incoming calls received by the agency from December 2005 through September 2006. He pointed out the number was 42,309. Mr. Phelps stated the chart also showed the total monthly average for incoming calls to the Reception area for the same time period was 5,777. He commented the data gave some idea of the volume of work the Department did and it only reflected the incoming calls. A copy of the chart was included in the agenda packet.

Mr. Geraghty left the meeting at 10:33 a.m.

Mr. Phelps stated the County Departments had been asked to report to their Committees on their overtime usage, so from now on he would be doing that on a regular basis. He advised he would share the statistics with the Committee members and if anyone wanted to look at the information in more detail they could do so. Copies of the Overtime Reports are on file with the minutes.

Mr. Phelps apprised for the pay period which ended October 1st the number of hours used were as follows: 1) 49.4 for CPS After-hours services; 2) One for the Foster Parent Picnic; and 3) 17.6 for MAPPS Training. He explained that was training for foster parents and it was provided in the evenings. Mr. Phelps stated in addition four hours were used in the Support Unit due to a staff

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shortage and under the category of Other (overtime) 12 hours were needed to transfer a child from St. Lawrence County to Albany which was done in conjunction with the Sheriff's Department.

Continuing, Mr. Phelps reported for the pay period that ended October 15th the total number of overtime hours were as follows: 1) 57.5 related to CPS calls that were handled after hours and on weekends; 2) 10.5 for MAPPS Training; 3) 1.5 for a family consultation that ran from late afternoon until early evening; and 4) Three for the Support Unit due again to the staff shortage.

Mr. Phelps stated he could provide details on the types of investigations that were the basis for the overtime if the Committee members would like him to. He noted the activities all concerned the removals of children from unsafe living conditions and the various actions that had to be done to carry out that process.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. F. Thomas, Mr. O'Connor adjourned the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk