

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: MARCH 23, 2007

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER
SHEEHAN
BENTLEY
KENNY
F. THOMAS
MASON

OTHERS PRESENT:

ROBERT PHELPS, COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SERVICES
MICHAEL JABAUT, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER
LILLIAN HAYES, FRAUD INVESTIGATOR
KATHY WAITE, SUPPORT UNIT
SUPERVISOR GABRIELS
HAL PAYNE, ADMINISTRATOR OF WESTMOUNT HEALTH
FACILITY

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR O'Connor

JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
KATY GOODMAN, SECRETARY TO THE CLERK

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 10:05 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 20, March 1 and March 16, 2007 Committee meetings, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner of Social Services, who distributed copies of his agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps stated that the turnover rate was high among the Account Clerk positions and that he felt it was a serious problem. He introduced Kathy Baker, Kathy Waite and Lillian Hayes, from his department, adding that Michael Jabaut would be joining them shortly. Mr. Phelps acknowledged that these four people were the supervisors of the departments that were experiencing a high turnover in the Account Clerk position. He recalled that the Committee had been supportive of the concept of reclassifying the Account Clerk position to Senior Account Clerk when the 2007 budget proposal was discussed. He commented that this had been a longtime issue for the Social Services Department and that the high turnover rate was disruptive to the organization.

Mr. Phelps informed the Committee that an Account Clerk in the Support Unit had just taken a promotion to Senior Account Clerk with the Sheriff's Office. She would not have left if the Account Clerk position had been reclassified, he added. He noted that he had made ten appointments to four positions in the Accounting Office within the last six years.

Mr. Kenny questioned if the discussion was about reclassifications requested in the 2007 budget, which were not approved. Mr. Phelps affirmed. Mr. Bentley stated that the positions should be reclassified and asked if the employees were being paid out of title in the Senior Account Clerk position. Mr. Phelps stated that he could not pay employees out of title pay for a title that did not exist within that departments Table of Organization. Mr. Kenny suggested that the Committee target

the Senior Account Clerk positions for the 2008 budget proposal and then demand that they be left in the budget.

Mr. Phelps invited Ms. Hayes, Ms. Baker and Ms. Waite to the table for discussion. Ms. Baker stated that when the Accounting Department is going through a personnel turnover, they receive many phone calls from day-care workers and foster parents who are not receiving their checks on time due to staffing issues within the department. Ms. Baker stated that her work day began at 7:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., often working through lunch, as well as bringing work home with her, in an attempt to keep up with the workload.

Mr. Jabaut entered the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

Ms. Baker stated that IT had just created a program for the department that types checks, handles T-54, types abstracts, and tracks any money paid or received. She stated that the program will advise the department if they are running in to a deficit.

Mr. Mason asked why there was such a high turnover within the Accounting Department and Ms. Baker stated that it was because it was a stressful position that required extensive accounting knowledge. Ms. Baker stated that from the first of the month until the tenth of the month the Accounting Department cuts checks for day-care; from the fifteenth of the month until the twentieth of the month they cut checks for foster care; both of these, she stated, were just the first runs. Second runs, she informed the committee would have to be done for those who did not get bills in to the department on time. The departments' claims have to be submitted to the State by the twentieth of the month.

Mr. Phelps noted that the candidates that were coming into these positions did not have any real accounting experience. He added that the department had four appointments to the position that had to be terminated before the probationary period was over because the duties were too much for the employees to handle. The job specifications are not in line with the job duties and responsibilities, he continued. The employees who are able to handle the responsibilities eventually leave to take higher paying appointments within the County.

Mr. Payne stated that a Senior Account Clerk position within the Sheriff's Office pays \$2,000 more per year than other departments. He noted that they took the same exam and had the same educational requirements.

Ms. Waite acknowledged that a candidate with an Associate's Degree in Accounting would not be willing to take a position offering only \$23,000 per year. She stated that the position would be a little more attractive to them at \$27,000 per year. Ms. Waite noted that it was her department that had lost the employee to the Sheriff's Office. The employee, she said was asked by the Commissioner to take the exam, with the expectation that the position would be reclassified. The employee scored so high on the exam that she was offered the position within the Sheriff's Office, Ms. Waite explained.

Ms. Baker was asked if a student coming out of a two-year accounting program at ACC would be

capable of working in the Accounting Department. Ms. Baker answered that although ACC does not teach municipality accounting, they do give the student knowledge that helps them to learn the job more efficiently than a candidate without the degree. She stated that she has two employees in her office that are enrolled in Accounting at ACC.

Mr. Payne asked if job reclassification questionnaires had been filled out by any of the employees, if they were graded and to what level were they graded. Mr. Phelps stated that the questionnaires were reviewed and it was determined that Senior Account Clerk was an appropriate classification.

Mr. Tessier asked what positions were considered entry level. Mr. Phelps stated that Clerks were Grade 2, Typists were Grade 3, and Account Clerks were Grade 4.

General discussion ensued.

Ms. Waite informed the Committee that the cost of training new employees due to the turnover was high because it took three weeks to a month to train properly. Ms. Baker stated that in her department the training period was significantly longer.

Mr. Kenny stated that the Committee was often unaware when things were cut from the budget by the Budget Officer. He stated that there was a rule in place that stated there were to be no reclassifications during the year.

Mr. Gabriels entered the meeting at 11:26 a.m.

Mr. Phelps stated that his purpose today was to inform the Committee and to ask for guidance.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. F. Thomas made a motion to refer the request to the Personnel Committee.

Ms. Sady said that Resolutions no. 497 of 2006 and 641 of 2006 stated that new positions and salary increases would be considered at budget time only. She stated that a reclassification of a position did not fall under either category.

Mr. Tessier asked Mr. F. Thomas to clarify his motion. Mr. F. Thomas responded that he would like to pass it on to the Personnel Committee for discussion.

Motion was made by Mr. F. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Mason to refer the question of reclassifying the Account Clerk position to that of Senior Account Clerk within the Social Services Department, to the Personnel Committee for consideration. Motion was carried with Mr. Kenny voting in opposition.

Mr. Phelps made the following requests for travel:

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- Requests for Shawn Mileski and Betsey Johnson to attend mandatory “Child Protective Services Response Training” at CDHS Albany Regional Office in Albany on April 9 - April 13, 2007, at a cost of \$14 each per day, using a county vehicle.
 - Requests for Shawn Mileski and Betsey Johnson to attend mandatory “Child Protective Services Response Training” at CDHS Albany Regional Office in Albany on April 23 - April 27, 2007, at a cost of \$14 each per day, using a county vehicle.
 - Request for Heather Raymond to attend mandatory “Domestic Violence Training for CPS Workers” at Washington County DSS in Fort Edward on April 10 and April 11, 2007, at a cost of \$14 each per day, using a county vehicle.
 - Request for Tina Murray to attend “Annual Foster/Adoptive Parent Training” at the Holiday Inn Turf in Albany on April 14, 2007, at a cost of \$14 per day, using a county vehicle.
 - Requests for Emily Kladis and Douglas Herschleb to attend “CPS Supervisory Core Training, Module Two” at CDHS Albany Regional Office in Albany on April 17 - April 19, 2007 and May 1 - May 2, 2007, at a cost of \$14 each per day, using a county vehicle.
 - Request for Deborah Lawless to attend “Sex Abuse Training for Child Welfare Staff” at Best Western Airport in Albany on April 18 - April 20, 2007, at a cost of \$14 per day, using a county vehicle.
 - Request for Tina Murray to attend “Deciding Together Leader Certification” at CDHS Albany Regional Office in Albany on May 1 - May 3, 2007, at a cost of \$14 per day, using a county vehicle.
 - Request for Robert Phelps to attend “Executive Leadership Institute” at White Eagle Conference Center in Hamilton, NY on May 1 - May 3, 2007, at a cost of \$14 per day, using his personal vehicle with mileage reimbursement.
 - Requests for Lisa Zulauf and Patti Martin to attend “HEAP Oil Buying Component Meeting” at The Fort William Henry Resort in Lake George on April 3, 2007, using a county vehicle.
 - Request for Tammy Breen to attend “Third Annual Troubled Youth Mental Health Conference” at Roaring Brook Ranch in Lake George on April 25, 2007, at a cost of \$25, using a county vehicle.
 - Requests for Cindy Mulcahy, Kristina Neel and Maureen Taylor to attend “Best Practices in Achieving Permanency - Regional Forum” at Washington County DSS in Fort Edward on May 2, 2007, using a county vehicle.

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- Request for Lynn Leland to attend “Adoption 2007 Conference” at the Marriott Hotel in Albany on May 11 - May 12, 2007, at a cost of \$160, using a county vehicle.
 - Requests for Nicole Pustolka and Harold McGee to attend “Symposium on Child Welfare Legal Issues” at Best Western Sovereign Hotel in Albany on April 18, 2007, at a cost of \$30 each, using a county vehicle.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to approve all of the aforementioned requests for travel. *Copies of all Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention are on file with the minutes, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the next Board Meeting.*

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Mason, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 10:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk
Typed by Charlene DiResta, Legislative Office Specialist