



over last year. He noted there was money appropriated to cover this and added that there was no cost to the County, as this was a federally funded program. Mr. Phelps introduced Ann Kokosa, Family & Consumer Science Issues Leader with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Warren County.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Kokosa who stated that The Eat Smart New York Program was a supplement to the Food Stamp recipient population and the DSS provided benefits to clients, including the educational component in order to help consumers become self-sufficient and improve their dietary quality of life. Ms. Kokosa sited an example of a 28 year old, unemployed single father of three, who received food stamps and reduced or free lunches and did not know how to cook or read. This individual had food items at home that he had obtained from the food pantry; however; she noted, he lacked the knowledge and skills to prepare the food. Ms. Kokosa added that the educational component included instruction regarding how to store food and reduce food waste. She stated that for 2007 and 2008, \$92,632 was originally requested, although as a result of several mandated expenses from the State, the current request was for \$108,000 for the next contract period commencing October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2010.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to extend the contract for the Eat Smart New York Program for the period October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2010 for a total amount not to exceed \$108,000 per contract year. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the next board meeting.*

Mr. Phelps apprised with regard to records imaging, that two temporary project oriented clerk positions had been filled. These individuals, he said, were experienced and eager to assist the County with this project involving records imaging.

Addressing the next item on the agenda, Mr. Phelps requested approval to fill two vacant positions which he listed.

- Caseworker, base salary \$ 33,590, due to resignation; and
- Support Investigator, base salary of \$28,697, due to promotion.

Hal Payne, Commissioner, Administrative & Fiscal Services, conveyed his approval to fill the two vacant positions as presented and noted that the positions were 85 percent and 100 percent funded by the State respectively.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill vacant positions as presented; and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *Copies of the Notices of Intent to Fill Vacant Positions are on file with the minutes.*

Mr. O'Connor queried Doug Herschleb, Director of Services, regarding the resignation in the Child Protective Unit, as well as the difficulties and challenges that employees

faced in that area. Mr. Herschleb apprised that the Department had requested help and they were moving in the right direction with a goal of 18 total staff. Mr. Phelps interjected that the new hires in the Child Protective Unit were still in training.

Mr. Phelps presented one personnel related item not listed on the agenda. He requested approval to reassign a Welfare Examiner following an unsuccessful probationary promotion.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request to reassign the Welfare Examiner position without further action as the candidate had not completed the probationary period.

Mr. Phelps informed the Committee of three pending vacant positions for Committee discussion as follows:

- Head Welfare Examiner, Medicaid, due to retirement (5/30/08);
- Confidential Secretary to the Commissioner, due to retirement (5/30/08);and
- Senior Examiner (Temporary Assistance), due to resignation (4/6/08).

He stated he was requesting the Committees approval to fill these positions prior to his own retirement. He confirmed the high level of turnover in the Department and asserted the present staff was working hard to try to offset the void. Mr. Phelps referred the Committee to the list of appointments since January 2007 and also to the DSS organizational chart reflecting positions, vacancies and medical leaves within the Department.

A discussion ensued with regard to approval for the position of Confidential Secretary to the Commissioner, and it was determined that the position could not be filled until the new Commissioner was in place. Both Mr. Phelps and Richard Kelly, Personnel Officer, praised the current Confidential Secretary who would be retiring on May 30, 2008, for her professionalism, dedication and effectiveness in the position.

Mr. Kelly gave a brief review of the exempt Secretarial position and stated that most large departments were allowed one position exempt from Civil Service. Exempt positions, he said, were exempt from both civil service rules and protection and the position served at the pleasure of the Commissioner and/or the Board of Supervisors. He noted that the retiring Secretary had civil service status in a prior position and therefore could have been reinstated as a civil service employee should it have become necessary.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the DSS organizational chart that was provided by Mr. Phelps.

Mr. Payne raised the issue of the employee who had been with the County for 14 years and upon returning after a two-week vacation, walked off the job. Mr. Payne inquired as to the reason for the sudden departure.

Mr. Kenny asked if the County conducted exit interviews. Mr. Phelps said he had hoped the employee would reconsider; however, he noted, due to the significant level of stress in dealing with the homeless, the position required more than the employee was able to tolerate.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the requests to fill the pending vacant positions of Head Welfare Examiner (5/30/08) and Senior Examiner (effective 4/6/08), which included the two resulting positions to be backfilled.

A discussion ensued.

Addressing the last agenda item, Mr. Phelps referred to the Overtime Report. According to Mr. Phelps, there was an increase in overtime which was expected to be temporary.

Mr. Payne asked if the Medicaid backlog of 100 hours was reimbursable and Mr. Phelps replied in the positive.

Mr. Tessier apprised the Committee of a letter addressed to Chairman Monroe from the Glens Falls Hospital, as Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, distributed copies of the letter.

With reference to the letter from the Glens Falls Hospital, Mr. O'Connor questioned if the 6-8 week time frame to process a Medicaid application was a typical and reasonable time frame for this process.

Mr. Payne referred to a meeting held approximately one year ago regarding applications for nursing home placement which were pending determination of Medicaid eligibility results; however, he said, the patients were already admitted and occupying a bed when some were found ineligible for Medicaid.

Mr. Phelps apprised that the Glens Falls Hospital had patients ready for discharge, whereas the County was processing the eligibility decision prior to admission. He stated the Department was doing their best to accelerate the process; however, he said, staffing challenges often inhibited their ability to proceed. In response to Mr. O'Connor's question, Mr. Phelps informed the Committee that most applications required 30-45 days, and nursing home level application eligibility decisions were significantly more complex and when coupled with the increase in turnover, the applications required additional time for processing. Mr. Phelps also noted the ongoing nature of this issue.

Mr. Payne clarified the County had a Medicaid cap of \$300,000 per year and the State funded Medicaid up to the cap amount.

Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager, stated that often the problem was the delay or absence

of information requested from the patients' families and the timely receipt of that information was critical to the DSS staff to determine eligibility.

Mr. Tessier invited suggestions from the Committee with regard to responding to the letter from the Glens Falls Hospital.

Mr. Phelps suggested the Committee Chairman prepare a written acknowledgment of receipt of the letter and inform the Hospital that this Committee would assemble and review additional information and respond accordingly.

Chairman Monroe inquired if the Department was adequately staffed, would DSS be able to expedite processing, and Mr. Phelps replied in the positive.

Mr. Phelps apprised that currently the Department was not conducting supervisory review, as supervisors had focused on intake interviews in order to increase case processing and unfortunately, he said, the number of errors increased in the absence of supervisor review.

Mr. O'Connor pointed out that an increase in staff would not solve the issue regarding the collection of financial data requested of the families of the infirmed. Mr. Phelps stated that information collection was not the priority and once a patient was admitted, the incentive to provide information decreased. He added there was additional space available to accommodate more staff at the facility.

Mr. Phelps extended privilege of the floor to Michael Jabaut, Director of Administrative Services, who was currently stationed was the Medicaid Office in the CNA Building on a part-time basis. Mr. Jabaut maintained that as the population continued to age, the problem would continue to grow. He said receipt of a denial notice created a sense of urgency; however, he added, if correspondences from the County were not timely and the patient was admitted, there was no incentive for the families to provide the necessary information.

Mr. Payne suggested contacting Christine Freire, Director of Case Management at the Glens Falls Hospital, to ascertain the total number in question and to determine if Washington County was facing the same issue.

Mr. Kenny pointed out that the letter indicated the problem was temporary and therefore hiring permanent staff would be illogical. Mr. Tessier, in disagreement, deemed the issue intermittent and recalled the same issue several years ago.

Chairman Monroe asked if any studies had been conducted in this regard and Mr. Phelps replied in the positive, apprising that according to the data, the Medicaid Unit was understaffed. Mr. Tessier asked that the statistics be reported at the next Committee meeting.

Mr. O'Connor contended that the temporary nature of the problem was evident as it

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was exacerbated by the high number of respiratory illnesses at this time.

Referring to the hiring freeze announced at the last Department Head meeting, Mr. Kenny questioned the action of hiring in light of this directive.

Chairman Monroe stated the purpose of the hiring freeze was to keep the County budget under control.

A discussion ensued.

Mr. Payne reiterated that he required more actual figures in order to proceed and would like to know how many people the letter was referring to.

Mr. Phelps said that, according to Christine Freire, there were 350 individuals ready for discharge; however, he stated, the number of those that were Medicaid eligible was unknown.

Mr. Tessier suggested the Committee respond with a letter from the Chairman of the Board informing the Hospital that the issue had been tabled until April, and following the collection and review of additional data, the County would respond. Mr. Tessier also suggested that Chairman Monroe recommend that David Kruczynski, President/CEO of the Glens Falls Hospital, attend the next Social Services Committee meeting in April.

Mr. Payne noted that today was the deadline for applications for the position of the DSS Commissioner and he would proceed to schedule interviews and notify the Board members of the interview schedule. He said he expected to conduct four to five interviews.

With no further business to come before the Committee, on motion made by Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist