

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: MAY 22, 2008

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<b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	<b>OTHERS PRESENT:</b>
SUPERVISORS O'CONNOR	REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:
SHEEHAN	ROBERT PHELPS, COMMISSIONER
BENTLEY	DOUGLAS HERSCHLEB, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
KENNY	KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER
THOMAS	FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
STRAINER	JOAN SADY, CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF
<b>COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:</b>	ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
SUPERVISOR TESSIER	TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
	SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST
	AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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In the absence of Committee Chairman Tessier, Vice Chairman O'Connor called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:15 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the April 24, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members. *A copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. O'Connor pointed out that the agenda included one pending item from prior Committee meetings, that being a notation that Chairman Monroe was to prepare a written acknowledgment of receipt of the letter from Glens Falls Hospital President/CEO David Kruczynski. He then asked if there was any update on this item and Chairman Monroe replied that Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, was working on the issue.

Prior to beginning the agenda review, Mr. Phelps noted that this would be his final Committee meeting, due to his impending retirement, and he recognized Douglas Herschleb, Director of Services, and Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager, for their hard work and dedication to the DSS during his tenure as Commissioner and he thanked them for their services.

Mr. Phelps advised that Agenda Item 1 referred to a request to amend the 2008 County Budget to increase estimated appropriations and revenues to cover the rental fees incurred for space leased at the Monument Center Building (*formerly the CNA Building*) for the DSS offices located therein. He explained that the rental fees had not been included in the 2008 Budget, as the decision to move the

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Medicaid Division to the Monument Center Building had been made subsequent to its adoption. Mr. Phelps added that the rental costs totaled \$125,608 which would be completely reimbursed through Federal and State revenues, leaving no costs to the County; however, he stated, Committee action was necessary to accept State and Federal revenues.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the 2008 County Budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$125,608 to reflect the acceptance of unanticipated revenues and appropriations of State and Federal funds to offset the costs of space leased at the Monument Center, and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request to amend the County Budget is on file with the minutes.*

Agenda Item 2, Mr. Phelps apprised, included three requests to fill vacant positions, the first of which was for a Senior Caseworker position in the Foster Care and Adoption Unit, which was being vacated due to retirement. He explained that he intended to promote an existing staff member to the Senior Caseworker position, creating a vacancy of a Caseworker position which he intended to fill from the listing of Civil Service tested individuals. Mr. Phelps stated that a very high turnover in Caseworker staff had contributed to significant increases in overtime costs incurred and it was essential that both of the positions be filled to appropriately manage the Foster Care and Adoption Unit.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the requests to fill both the Senior Caseworker, base salary of \$34,564, and the Caseworker, base salary of \$33,590, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *Copies of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position forms are on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps advised that the agenda included a third personnel request, which was for permission to fill the vacant position of Typist/Keyboard Specialist, which had been vacated due to promotion. He added that the person chosen to fill this position would be hired on a provisional basis, pending Civil Service testing.

Mr. O'Connor noted that in previous Personnel Committee meetings it had been determined that all Typist positions were to be reclassified and he asked why this position had not. Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, advised that the County Attorney's Office was working on this issue, but in the meantime, the Typist positions were being addressed on a case-by-case basis because, as per the Civil Service and County Attorney's Offices, the titles could not be changed on the Salary Schedule without a resolution. She added that she assumed all of the position titles would be changed prior to the development of the 2009 Salary Schedule.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the Typist/Keyboard Specialist position, base salary of \$22,988, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

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Proceeding to Agenda Item 3, Mr. Phelps presented a request to authorize travel for the Foster Care Supervisor to transport two foster children, ages two and three, as well as their foster parents, for two final visits with an incarcerated parent as part of a surrender agreement. He said that the Foster Care Supervisor had agreed to travel with the children and the foster parents to the Albion Correction Facility in Albion, NY, and assist them in navigating through the correctional system for the visitation. However, he noted, overnight accommodations, including a hotel room for the Foster Care Supervisor and another for the foster parents and children, would be required for both visits which would occur in June and October of 2008, although the exact travel dates were not known.

When asked for clarification, Mr. Phelps apprised that the children's mother was the incarcerated parent and these final visitations were part of the agreement made with her to surrender her children for adoption.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the travel request as outlined above. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps advised that Agenda Item 4 referred to the DSS Overtime Report, a copy of which was included in the agenda packet. He noted that for the two-week payroll period ending April 27, 2008, 137.3 hours of overtime had been incurred, and that figure had decreased to 93.3 hours for the period ending May 11, 2008. Mr. Phelps said that the significantly lower numbers were the results of additional staffing, which reduced the need for overtime. He added that if the DSS was able to maintain its staffing he anticipated that they would continue to see the downward trend in overtime costs. Mr. Phelps apprised that the agenda also included notations as to why overtime had been necessary.

Agenda Item 5, Mr. Phelps stated, pertained to the implementation of software that would allow DSS staff to access County Clerk records from their own offices. He explained that such computerized access would lead to significant savings in staff and travel time, as DSS staff would not have to travel from their offices to the Municipal Center to review such information. Mr. Phelps further explained that at times his staff required access to County Clerk records to review deeds and file property liens, as well as to review potential hidden assets and resources.

Mr. Phelps advised that there was a one-time license fee of \$1,500 and a \$25 per month fee for software support, both payable to the software vendor. In addition, he noted, an amendment to Resolution No. 710 of 2007 would be necessary to allow other Departments to have access to the program and use of the software currently in use by the County Clerk's Office. Mr. Phelps stated that all of the contract costs would be 100% reimbursable through State funding.

Mrs. Sady noted that the request to amend Resolution No. 710 of 2007 would be presented through the County Clerk/Motor Vehicles Committee to allow other Departments to access County Clerk records.

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Subsequent to discussion on the matter, it was the consensus of the Committee that Mr. Phelps should be authorized to expend the funds needed to implement the software necessary to access County Clerk records.

Concluding the agenda review, Mr. Phelps advised that Item 6 referred to staffing issues, as he had recently been notified of a Child Protective Services (CPS) Caseworker who would be temporarily out of work on maternity leave, as well as the resignation of a Social Welfare Examiner, effective June 5, 2008. He noted that this portion of the Temporary Assistance Unit had already been devastated by the previous resignation of a Supervisory position, and this vacancy would further hamper the Unit. Mr. Phelps stated that one of the consequences of being understaffed in the Temporary Assistance Unit was an increase in the caseloads as they were unable to perform the initial diversions that were customarily performed to eliminate ineligible applicants. He said that there had been a 20% increase in the caseloads since the beginning of the year, due to lack of staffing. Mr. Phelps added that it was critically important that appropriate staffing be retained.

Mr. Kenny asked if a request to fill the Social Welfare Examiner position was included in the agenda and Mr. Phelps replied in the negative. Mr. Phelps added that he had only recently been notified of the resignation and had not had time to complete and submit the proper paperwork to Mr. Payne for initial approval to fill the position, prior to the Committee meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant Social Welfare Examiner position, base salary \$28,697, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *(Note: Subsequent to the Committee meeting a Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form was provided, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.)*

Referring to the CPS Caseworker on maternity leave, Mr. Phelps advised that although this employee had been removed from work by her doctor's orders for the remainder of her pregnancy, medical clearance had been given allowing her to work from her home. He said that the technology was available to enable this employee to continue working on the 19 CPS cases she was familiar with, 12 of which he believed could be closed through her efforts prior to her delivery. Mr. Phelps stated that any of the work performed at the employee's home could be tracked through the computer system which would reflect all of the activities performed during the work hours reported. He advised that if this route was not taken it was likely that overtime would have to be authorized to complete the work that this employee had offered to do from home. Mr. Phelps stated that this work would be short term in duration as the employee was due to give birth on June 3, 2008. He advised that this was an excellent employee who was very trustworthy and he recommended that she be allowed to work on the cases from home, as the cases would be performed more efficiently as the employee was more familiar with the cases and because additional overtime costs would be avoided. Mr. Phelps added that he had contacted the County Attorney's Office with regard to the matter and found that this was light duty work which would be permissible in connection with her doctor's orders.

Mr. O'Connor stated that in light of recent efforts to contain costs and in consideration of the

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employees work record, he was in favor of authorizing the work from home situation as recommended by Mr. Phelps.

Motion was made by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to authorize the CPS Caseworker to work from home as referenced above.

Mr. Phelps noted once again that this would be his final Committee meeting and he thanked the Committee for their support during the 11 years he had served as Commissioner. He said that he had been blessed with both tremendous Committee and staff members who were caring and concerned and took the time to understand the needs of his Department. Mr. Phelps added that the Social Services Committee members had continuously acted in support of his Departmental requests, for which he could not adequately express his appreciation.

Mr. O'Connor stated that he had served on the Social Services Committee for many years and had personally known Mr. Phelps, as well as his family. He said that Warren County had been equally blessed to have had Mr. Phelps' expertise as DSS Commissioner and to have benefitted from his efforts. Mr. O'Connor stated that although he was adverse to Mr. Phelps' decision to leave the County's employ, he wished him nothing but the best in his retirement.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. O'Connor adjourned the meeting at 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist