

**WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES**

**DATE: JULY 25, 2008**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS	TESSIER	REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
	O'CONNOR	SERVICES:
	SHEEHAN	SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER
	BENTLEY	MICHAEL JABAUT, DIRECTOR OF
	KENNY	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
	THOMAS	KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER
	STRAINER	FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
		HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &
		FISCAL SERVICES
		JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
		JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:16 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, 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.*

Commencing the agenda review, Ms. Weaver noted that overtime for the pay period ending June 22<sup>nd</sup> was only 45.8 hours, the lowest in almost one year. She said that she hoped to maintain this trend, as the Department was nearly fully staffed which had resulted in reduced overtime.

Ms. Weaver presented authorization requests for employees to attend meetings or conventions as follows:

- 1) for Patrick Hayden to attend the CW/CPS Common Core Training in Albany, New York on August 25 through August 29, 2008; September 8 through September 12, 2008; September 22 through September 26, 2008; October 15 through October 17, 2008 and October 27 through October 30, 2008, at a room rate of \$50 per night and meal costs of \$12 per day.
- 2) for Sharon Figler to attend the Welfare to Work (WTW) Core Training in Albany, New York from November 18 through November 20, 2008, and December 9 through December 11, 2008, at a room rate of \$52.50 per night with meals provided at no cost.

- 3) for Sharon Figler to attend the WTWCMS Training workshop in Rensselaer, New York from December 16 through December 17, 2008, at a room rate of \$42 per night and meal costs of \$13 per day.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the travel requests as outlined above. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver requested authorization to fill the vacant position of Intake Clerk, base salary \$24,059, Employee No. 11210, due to promotion. She noted that the position was 100% reimbursable.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Intake Clerk, as outlined above, and to forward same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

The next item presented by Ms. Weaver was a request to fill the vacant position of Assistant Social Services Attorney, base salary \$56,741, Employee No. 10457, due to resignation. Ms. Weaver said she received approval from the Committee to advertise and had done so with Albany Law School and the New York State Public Welfare Association. She noted that the position was 87.5% reimbursable.

A discussion ensued regarding the salary of the position.

Mr. Tessier inquired as to the requirements for the position and Ms. Weaver responded that the candidate must have the following qualifications: experience with civil litigation, trial experience, ability to work with opposing attorneys, understanding of civil service and social services law, and experience in both surrogate and county court systems.

Mr. Tessier asked if the New York State Bar Association had been notified of the vacancy and Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, stated that he had spoken to Paul Dusek, County Attorney, who said he did not foresee any problems recruiting for the position. Mr. Payne said he would speak with Mr. Dusek to determine if the New York State Bar Association would be notified of the vacancy.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Assistant Social Services Attorney as presented and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver requested to fill the vacant position of Senior Social Welfare Examiner, base salary

\$31,351, Employee No. 6498, due to retirement, and she noted the position was 67.8% reimbursable. The position, she said, was critical to maintaining acceptable participation and engagement rates which were mandated by the State and used as a measure for funding.

Mr. Tessier asked if there was a Civil Service listing of tested individuals for the position at this time and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively, noting that she had received the list of potential candidates from the Civil Service Department.

Ms. Weaver presented the Combined Engagement Report, included with the agenda, which reflected participation and engagement rates. She noted an increase in Participation Rate from 20.8% to 32.5% and an increase in the Engagement Rate from 75% to 82.5% over a six month period.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Senior Social Welfare Examiner as presented and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver presented a request to fill the vacant position of Caseworker, base salary \$33,590, Employee No. 5268, due to resignation.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Caseworker as presented and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant position is on file with the minutes.*

Subsequent to reviewing the funding stream for the Investigator position provided by the Sheriff's Department, Ms. Weaver said she had found that the revenue source had expired on March 30, 2008 and there were no additional revenues to support the position. Mr. Strainer apprised the Committee that Bud York, Sheriff, had said the work would be absorbed by the Department, in the event that funding for the position was no longer available.

Mr. Tessier indicated that no action was required at this time.

Relating to the 2009 budget, Ms. Weaver asked the Committee to consider purchasing new vehicles for the Department of Social Services. She apprised that the average monthly mileage reimbursement amount totaled \$8,000 and individual reimbursement checks often totaled as much as \$450, which, she contended, was equal to the cost of a car payment. She maintained that the purchase of new vehicles would save the County money.

Discussion ensued.

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Mr. Bentley asked the number of Social Services staff members that used County vehicles on a daily basis and Ms. Weaver replied that the Department currently had four vehicles, two of which were assigned to two Fraud Investigators for daily use, one vehicle was used by a part-time driver who transported children, and the fourth vehicle was used for all other purposes. She said the four vehicles were not sufficient to support the needs of the Department and she stated the number of mileage vouchers issued each month was between 15 and 20, which reflected the number of staff that used personal vehicles. She added that she believed approximately five or six staff members were abusing the mileage reimbursement system.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Payne said that Frank Morehouse, Superintendent of Buildings, and William Lamy, Superintendent of Public Works, had completed a study approximately one year ago regarding the profitability of purchasing vehicles versus issuing mileage reimbursement. Ms. Weaver said she had discussed the study with Mr. Morehouse who had advised that he would recalculate the figures based on the increase in mileage cost.

Mr. Kenny suggested that Ms. Weaver incorporate the costs of new vehicles in the 2009 DSS Budget request. Mr. O'Connor noted that due to the increase in fuel costs, small cars would help contain costs overall. Mr. Kenny stated that mileage reimbursement was intended to account for fuel, oil, maintenance and insurance costs incurred while using a personal vehicle for County business.

Mr. Tessier apprised that the County had previously reviewed staff use of fleet vehicles versus mileage reimbursement. Chairman Monroe said there was a clear advantage to purchasing vehicles, as State contract allowed for competitive pricing of vehicles and he added that he also felt the results of the above mentioned study would be useful in determining whether or not additional vehicles should be purchased.

Mr. Payne said that according to Mr. Dusek, any risk or liability incurred in an automobile accident was attached to the owner of the vehicle; therefore, it was in the best interest of County staff to drive a fleet vehicle.

A discussion ensued.

Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager, noted that the County vehicle used by a part-time driver often transported foster children and she questioned what liability issue that may raise. Mr. Payne responded that the liability for the County would be significant should an accident occur while transporting a child, and he said he would discuss this further with the County Attorney.

Ms. Weaver requested permission to obtain two user permits for the Accurint system currently in use by the Sheriff's Office because with access to the system, departmental costs could be

reduced. She stated that the Department of Social Services would use the Accurint system for fraud investigation, child support, child protective services and resource recovery; she added the return on the investment would be 50%, with a maximum cost of \$1,758 per year. She said that the fee was currently \$250 per month for two users and an annual increase of 3% was expected.

Ms. Weaver explained that the Accurint System was a computer system whereby entering a social security number and date of birth would provide critical personal information, such as property owned, current or last known address, criminal offenses, etc. The information noted would benefit the efforts of the DSS staff who visited residences and interfaced with clients on a regular basis, she added.

Mr. Strainer asked how the user assignments were determined and Ms. Baker responded that usage would be closely monitored with all requests routed through one designated user, and a second user assigned as back-up. She asserted that confidentiality would be carefully maintained through the use of this system.

Mr. Payne expressed that Accurint would prefer that the Department of Social Services purchase their own complete system which would be costly to the County. Ms. Baker noted that with access to the Accurint system, the County could eliminate or reduce advertising costs incurred to conduct nationwide searches for parents.

Ms. Weaver noted that she had previously stated a monthly fee of \$250 for two additional users of the Accurint system; however, she said, the contract indicated \$240.

Ms. Weaver stated that she would speak with the Sheriff before she presented the contract to the County Attorney to make certain they would be able to add the users to the existing contract. Otherwise, she advised, the department would obtain their own permit.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. O'Connor and carried unanimously to approve the request to add two user permits for the Accurint system as outlined above. (Please Note: Resolution No. 295 of 1995 authorized the Commissioner of Social Services to execute contracts for the Department of Social Services; therefore, no resolution was required.)

Mr. Tessier, on behalf of the Sheriff, stated that use of the Accurint system in the Sheriff's Office by other Departments could raise accountability issues in light of the highly confidential nature of the information it provided. He reiterated his support for DSS to obtain two user permits for this purpose.

Ms. Weaver presented the next agenda item; the resignation of the Employment Coordinator from the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). She stated the position replacement was the responsibility of the State and it was unknown what impact, if any, this

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would have on participation or employment rates.

Proceeding to the final agenda item, Ms. Weaver stated that a joint meeting was held with Brenda Hayes, Director of the Countryside Adult Home, and Barbara Taggart, Administrator of the Westmount Health Facility, to discuss admissions, processing and other considerations. She said that all residents entering Countryside Adult Home were automatically classified as a Safety Net recipient and a 45-day waiting period was in effect before a resident was deemed eligible for services. This, she said, caused delays in the admission process even in cases where all of the information required from the family had been received. Ms. Weaver apprised that it was agreed upon to submit a request to the State Legislature for approval to waive the 45-day waiting period for County Homes, of which there were six in the State.

Additionally, she noted, a meeting would be held with Glens Falls Hospital, with Ms. Taggart in attendance, to discuss discharge planning and overall improvement of the process. She said it was also decided to accept admissions prior to the completion of eligibility determinations, for a six month trial basis.

Mr. Bentley suggested forwarding a resolution to the State requesting the OTDA position be filled as soon as possible, and Ms. Weaver agreed and noted that the State Civil Service list would be used to fill the position. Mr. Payne suggested that he and Ms. Weaver draft a letter from Chairman Monroe to Senator Little and Assemblywoman Sayward.

It was the consensus of the Committee that Mr. Payne and Ms. Weaver draft a letter from Chairman Monroe to the State Legislature as outlined above.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist