

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: BUDGET - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: AUGUST 25, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:	OTHERS PRESENT:
SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY	HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
BELDEN	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
O'CONNOR	JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
CHAMPAGNE	SUPERVISORS BENTLEY
KENNY	PITKIN
SHEEHAN	SOKOL
MERLINO	STRAINER
TAYLOR	TESSIER
STEC	THOMAS
	VANNESS

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:
SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER
KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER
DOUGLAS HERSCHLEB, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MICHAEL JABAUT, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
DENISE DIRESTA, DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' SERVICES
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Budget Committee to order at 10:38 a.m.

The Committee commenced with a review of the 2010 Department of Social Services (DSS) Budget Request, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Sheila Weaver, DSS Commissioner, began by presenting the Social Services budget, Code A.6010, which included a 2010 Request of \$9,165,035 as compared to the 2009 Appropriation of \$8,686,406, an increase of \$478,629. Ms. Weaver pointed out that \$15,192 was included in the proposed budget under Code A.6010 120, Salaries - Overtime, which was unrealistic and she requested an additional \$44,808 to raise that figure to a total of \$60,000 for 2010. She noted that additional overtime funds were necessary as they were unable to control the number of reports made to the Child Protective Services division which required immediate attention. Ms. Weaver then advised that only \$27,837 had been included in Code A.6010 130, Salaries-Part Time, which was insufficient and she requested that the figure be increased to \$31,837 to support the salaries of the three temporary staff members working in the HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) division. Ms. Weaver added that they would receive 100% Federal reimbursement for these positions which were used for five months of the year. Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, questioned whether the unemployment costs associated with the part-time positions would also be reimbursed and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively.

Moving on, Ms. Weaver apprised that Code A.6010 110, Salaries-Regular, included a slightly higher figure for 2010 due to salary increases for bargaining unit employees which were necessary by virtue of the union contract. She reminded the Committee that she had reduced staffing as per their request by eliminating two positions and a third would be eliminated at the upcoming Social Services Committee meeting. In addition, Ms. Weaver noted that she had also abolished two positions at the start of her tenure as Commissioner.

In response to an inquiry regarding the amount requested under Code A.6010 210, Furniture/Furnishings, Ms. Weaver apprised that they had included \$600 for the purchase of six office chairs at a cost of \$100 each. She explained that although her staff members were bringing their existing chairs with them when they moved to the new Human Services Building, this stipend would allow for replacement of broken chairs as necessary. Mr. Geraghty said he recalled that \$600,000 had been included in the bond for the Human Services Building to fund the purchase of office furniture and chairs and he asked if this stipend was necessary. Ms. Weaver responded that the amount included in the bond had been intended to purchase all of the office furniture necessary to fill the new spaces that had been added to the building, such as the two conference rooms, one of which would be furnished to accommodate 100 people and the other for 40 people. She added that when the figure was developed, it had been dependent upon her staff bringing their furniture with them and would have been much higher otherwise.

Mr. Geraghty pointed out that the 2010 Request for the .400 Codes, Contractual Expenses, had increased by approximately \$267,000 over the 2009 Appropriation and he questioned the reason for this. Ms. Weaver replied that the increase was partially attributed to the fact that the maintenance in lieu of rent charges would triple upon moving into the new Human Services Building due to the increase in square footage occupied. She added that they would receive State and Federal reimbursement for these costs; however, she noted, the rate of reimbursement would vary depending on the percentage received by each division. Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager, interjected that although this seemed to be a very large increase, it was important to remember that they would no longer be paying rent for the staff occupying space at the CNA Building as they would be moved to the Human Services Building. Ms. Weaver apprised that if other Departments would be using the DSS conference rooms they would have to charge them some type of rent in order to maintain State and Federal reimbursements.

Mr. O'Connor questioned whether it was actually necessary to include a conference room large enough for 100 people and Ms. Weaver replied that the room would be constructed such that it could be broken into two rooms that would accommodate 50 people each. However, she added, because she intended to hold monthly staff meetings, it would be used as one large room on a reoccurring basis. Mr. Champagne asked how many DSS staff there were and Ms. Weaver replied that there were currently 138 DSS staff members, including the part-time drivers.

Mr. Geraghty noted that a \$1.64 million increase in revenues was indicated in the A.6010, Social Services, 2010 Request and he inquired as to what the increase was attributed to. Ms. Weaver replied that a \$398,894 increase in State funding to Code A.6010 4615, Flexible Fund for Family Service, had been received; however, she noted, this would lead to a loss overall for her Department because they had previously been allotted \$406,000 in State funding for Code A.6010 3616, Local Administration Fund, which allowed for 100% reimbursement of salaries. She said that although the State had rescinded funding to the Local Administration Fund and had increased the Flexible Fund for about the same amount, the Flexible Fund only allowed 15% reimbursement for administrative services, leading to a loss of about \$350,000 overall.

Mr. Payne asked if the anticipated \$1.5 million increase in FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percent) Medicaid savings had been included in the 2010 Request and Ms. Baker replied affirmatively. Ms. Weaver announced that she had been working with her staff to encourage them to open and re-certify cases in a timely manner and with the Fraud Division to increase their efforts which led to increased revenues being received for overpayments. She added that the Resource and Recovery Division had also intensified their efforts to bring increased reimbursements to the Department. Ms. Weaver stated that they had applied for grant funding and in doing so had attempted to do as much of the grant work in-house as possible instead of contracting out to save costs. She concluded that they were hopeful that through all of the efforts being provided they would realize the \$1.64 million increase in revenues included in the 2010 Request. Ms. Baker stated that she was confident that they would receive at least 99% of the

revenues anticipated and she felt they would receive 87% reimbursement for the Department overall.

In response to Mr. Pitkin's inquiry, Ms. Baker advised that the reduction in rental costs for the space at the CNA Building was included in the cumulative total reflected under Code A.6010 411, Rent-Building/Property, along with the cleaning, electric and heat costs.

When Mr. Geraghty questioned the increase of \$293,254 under Code A.6010 860, Hospitalization, Ms. Baker apprised that the figure had been developed for the 2010 Request based upon the actual 2009 expenditures. She added that she was currently facing a \$160,000 shortage in this Code and hoped that she would be able to find the funds to cover the shortfall elsewhere in the budget, rather than having to return to the Social Services Committee with a request for additional funding. Ms. Baker stated that the figure was very high because coverage was being provided for more retirees than active employees and she noted that the recent change in insurance coverage offered to retirees had incurred only a slight savings in hospitalization costs.

Discussion ensued.

JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, noted that in reviewing the revenue and expenditures reported in the 2010 Request for Code A.6010, Social Services, as compared to those reported for 2009, she had determined there would be a 48% reduction in the 2010 Request and she asked Ms. Baker if this was correct. Ms. Baker replied that she had not reviewed the figures to determine the percentage decrease, but would do so and report back to Mrs. McKinstry. Ms. Weaver stated that in light of the increase in revenues and the reductions in expenditures included in the 2010 Request, she felt that a 48% decrease was feasible.

Proceeding with the budget review, Ms. Weaver presented the 2010 Request for Code A.6050, Public Facility for Children, which included a total request of \$125,000 as compared to the 2009 Appropriation of \$200,000, a decrease of \$75,000. She explained that the decrease was attributed to a \$50,000 reduction in the contract with the Berkshire Farm Center for Youth and a \$25,000 reduction in costs for other juvenile placements. Ms. Weaver stated her staff was doing very well in keeping children out of detention services and they were hopeful that the \$75,000 reduction could be maintained based on these statistics.

Ms. Weaver directed the Committee members to the section of the budget containing the expenditures for Code A.6055, Daycare, which included a 2010 Request of \$1,800,000 as opposed to the 2009 Appropriation of \$1,667,673, an increase of \$132,327. She noted that increases in funding, as well as Federal Stimulus grant monies, had been received in connection with this program and because it received 100% reimbursement, the revenues matched the expenditures exactly.

Continuing to Code A.6070, Services for Recipients, Ms. Weaver presented a 2010 Request of \$530,000 as compared to the 2009 Appropriation of \$425,000, an increase of \$105,000. She noted that based on the struggling economy the caseload in this area had increased, leading to the elevated budget request for 2010. Ms. Baker stated that they had underbudgeted in this area for 2009 and had already expended \$247,000 in this Code for the current year, which was 58% of the total 2009 budget. She added that this was an issue because the bills paid from this code typically lagged behind, meaning that although more than half of the budget had been expended, they were not up to date with the payments to be made.

Ms. Weaver apprised that the Code A.6100, Medicaid, consisted of a 2010 Request of \$12,000,000 as opposed to the 2009 Appropriation of \$12,073,243, a decrease of \$73,243. She noted that they anticipated the total expenditure might be somewhat less than the \$12 million requested; however, she added, they had yet to receive

confirmation from the State as to what the actual costs would be. Mr. Belden pointed out that no revenues were indicated for this budget and Ms. Baker advised that revenues were received for Medicaid services but were reported under the A.6101, Medical Assistance. Mr. Payne questioned how much of the 2009 Appropriation for Code A.6100, Medicaid, would be reimbursed through FMAP and Ms. Baker replied that she anticipated \$2,195,000 would be received.

Mr. Stec entered the meeting at 11:03 a.m.

Moving on to Code A.6101, Medical Assistance, Ms. Weaver presented a 2010 Request of \$525,000 as compared to the 2009 Appropriation of \$400,000, an increase of \$125,000. Mr. Geraghty pointed out that although the revenues and expenditures listed in the 2010 Request matched, the 2010 revenue figure was \$425,000 less than the revenues estimated for 2009 and he questioned the decrease. Ms. Weaver replied that the State was in the process of changing the law regarding recovery of Medicaid funds to disallow the County from seeking them. She added that although the State did not agree with the procedures used in requesting income figures from Medicaid recipients, the DSS staff working in the Medicaid Unit continued to seek this information which helped them to close cases and sometimes led to the withdrawal of applications. Ms. Weaver concluded that the Medicaid program was another program which offered free benefits to eligible residents and they were unable to control the number of applications submitted. Ms. Baker apprised that although she had anticipated revenues of \$950,000 for 2009, to date they had received only \$244,000, which was 26% of the total anticipated.

Ms. Weaver advised that Code A.6106, Special Needs, included a 2009 Request of \$1,940 which was identical to the 2009 Appropriation. When asked if this was a new budget item Ms. Baker replied in the negative and noted that two adult homes had been certified to receive funding in the past and although currently there were none receiving funding, public inquiries had been made as to how funding could be attained.

Referring to budget Code A.6109, Aid to Dependent Children, Ms. Weaver presented a 2010 Request of \$3,300,000 as compared to the 2009 Appropriation of \$3,081,250, an increase of \$218,750. She advised that the increase was attributed to a 3% increase in Temporary Assistance grants, as well as an increase in caseloads due to the state of the economy. Ms. Weaver added that a 39% increase in Temporary Assistance cases had been realized since 2007 and 20% since the prior year. Due to these statistics, she stated that she felt it was necessary to increase the amount budgeted in this area for 2010.

Ms. Weaver announced that the 2010 Request for Code A.6119, Child Care, was \$3,000,000 which was the same as the 2009 Appropriation. Similarly, she advised that the 2010 Request and 2009 Appropriation for Code A.6123, Juvenile Delinquent Care, were also the same at \$15,000; however, she noted, the revenues had increased by \$4,950 for 2010.

Continuing, Ms. Weaver directed the Committee members to Code A.6129, State Training School, which reflected a 2010 Request of \$230,600 as compared to the 2009 Appropriation of \$236,965, a decrease of \$6,365. She noted that they would be required to pay retroactive bills for training received in 2003 and there had been a rate increase for training as the State had been operating facilities without children in them. Ms. Weaver added that because there had been fewer juvenile placements, she believed that the budget could be reduced. Mr. Belden pointed out that only \$1,000 in revenue was projected and Ms. Baker replied that this was correct as the costs were 100% Locally funded by the County and the revenues projected consisted of possible funds to be received in connection with a juvenile's social security benefits.

Ms. Weaver stated that Code A.6140, Home Relief, included a 2010 Request of \$1,715,000 as opposed to the 2009

Appropriation of \$1,115,000, an increase of \$600,000. She noted that a 3% increase in the budget had been included due to the state of the economy which led to increased assistance requests. Ms. Weaver apprised that the budget request was also reflective of increased burial costs and she noted that although a typical burial cost \$2,000, the State reimbursement was only up to \$900 per incident. She advised that one way burial costs could be controlled would be to begin a bid process for these services which would limit where a person could be buried, but might reduce the cost to the County. Ms. Baker cautioned the Committee that burial costs were only a portion of the services funded by the Home Relief budget. Ms. Weaver advised that there was the possibility of receiving grant funding through WAIT (Welcoming Adults in Transition) House as they had recently applied for a \$300,000 grant for homeless prevention which would be transferred to Warren County to assist in aiding the homeless population if awarded. She added that the grant would primarily assist the Safety Net program, but would also affect the Home Relief budget. Ms. Baker stated that as of August 1st, 70% of the 2009 Home Relief budget had been expended.

Ms. Weaver advised that Code A.6141, Fuel Crisis Assistance, included a 2010 Request of \$30,000 which was the same as the 2009 Appropriation and she advised that this Code received 100% reimbursement. Proceeding to the final portion of the budget, Code A.6142, Emergency Aid for Adults, Ms. Weaver presented a 2010 Request of \$25,200 as compared to the 2009 Appropriation of \$20,000, which was an increase of \$5,200. She said that they anticipated an increase in expenditures as they were unable to control the number of applications for assistance that would be received and had budgeted accordingly. Ms. Weaver explained that Emergency Aid for Adults allowed benefits for single adults or childless couples requesting assistance in connection with utility shut-offs, heating emergencies or evictions, and these services were currently being sought out more frequently than they had in the past.

In conclusion, Mr. Geraghty announced that it appeared there was a \$1.4 million increase in revenues for 2010 and a \$1.7 million increase in expenses. Ms. Baker stated that it was their hope that the Medicaid and hospitalization costs could be reduced, which would lessen the budget increase proposed. Mr. Geraghty advised that he also felt the hospitalization figures were incorrect and stated that he and Mrs. McKinsty felt that there would actually be an overall decrease in the budget once this figure was revised.

Subsequent to further discussion, motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to approve the DSS 2010 budget request as presented and forward it on to the Budget Officer for further review.

As there was no further business to come before the Budget Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Champagne, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 11:18 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist