

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: APRIL 24, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:	OTHERS PRESENT:
SUPERVISORS TESSIER	REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:
O'CONNOR	SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER
BENTLEY	KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER
KENNY	JOAN SADY, CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MERLINO	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE
STRAINER	& FISCAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:	SUPERVISORS SOKOL
SUPERVISOR SHEEHAN	THOMAS
	TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
	THOM RANDALL, <i>THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL</i>
	SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 10:55 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the previous 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.*

Beginning with Agenda Item 1, Ms. Weaver presented the Overtime Report, which was included in the Agenda. She noted that the overtime incurred during the pay period ending April 12, 2009 had decreased from the pay period ending March 29, 2009 and the majority of the decrease was attributed to the reduction in Medicaid and Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) hours. Mr. Tessier queried how the overtime usage compared to the prior year and Ms. Weaver responded that the overtime usage for the last pay period ending in March of 2008 was 279 hours and it was 255 hours for the first pay period ending in April of 2008. Mr. O'Connor commented that the amount of overtime reported was far lower than it had been previously and commended Ms. Weaver for her efforts in achieving the reductions.

Ms. Weaver apprised that Agenda Item 2 was to apprise the Committee of notification from the Federal Government pertaining to the Federal Medical Assistance Program (FMAP). She stated that the funding to DSS would be \$2,175,443.

Mr. Bentley questioned whether the \$2 million could be used to reduce the \$6 million shortfall in the County Budget. JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, replied that it would reduce the deficit providing the funds were not appropriated.

Ms. Weaver apprised that Agenda Item 3 included a request to fill the vacant position of Social Welfare Examiner, base salary of \$29,199. She noted that the vacancy was due to an impending retirement that would occur on May 29, 2009 and there would be a savings of \$4,509, as longevity and accrued vacation

time would not be paid to the person filling the vacancy. She advised that the Food Stamp caseload had increased by 25% and additional funding was available through the Federal Stimulus Program grant in Food Stamp Administration for the next two years. She pointed out that the position was reimbursed up to 69% through the Federal and State funds.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Kenny to approve the request as presented.

Mr. Kenny apprised that although the position was reimbursable up to 69%, he felt that he would have to vote in opposition, as it was necessary for all Departments to increase productivity while decreasing staff due to budgetary restraints. Ms. Weaver questioned whether the Committee would approve the position if she eliminated a Social Welfare Examiner from another program and Mr. Kenny responded in the negative. He pointed out that due to the deficit, the County may have to eliminate between 50 and 100 positions. He noted he would rather not fill vacant positions than have to lay-off employees.

Ms. Weaver apprised that the State was proposing Legislation that would require Food Stamp applications be processed within one day rather than five days, which would be difficult to do if sufficient staffing did not exist.

Following a brief discussion, Mr. Tessier called the question and the motion was carried by majority vote approving the request to fill the vacant position of Social Welfare Examiner as outlined above, with Messrs. Merlino and Kenny voting in opposition and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

Proceeding to Agenda Item 4, Ms. Weaver requested to extend the contract with the Warren County Youth Bureau for New York State Community Optional Preventative (COPS) funding through September 30, 2009 for an amount not to exceed \$23,939.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request to extend the existing contract with the Warren County Youth Bureau for COPS funding as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 15, 2009 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver apprised that Agenda Item 5 pertained to a request for Lorrie Mosher and Colleen Sullivan to attend the Child Support Enforcement Regional Meeting at the Crowne Plaza in Lake Placid, New York from May 11 through May 13, 2009.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to attend meeting or convention as outlined above. *A copy of the request for Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention is on file with the minutes.*

Continuing to Agenda Item 6, Ms. Weaver advised that the DSS had received notification from the State regarding the Foster Care Block Grant Allocation for the 2009-2010 State Fiscal Year. She apprised that the total amount allocated to the County would be \$1,982,092, which was an \$80,266 reduction from the prior year.

Agenda Item 7, Ms. Weaver announced was a request to reclassify a position. She explained that she would like to change the title of the Director of Administrative Services to the Director of Case Management, which would more appropriately reflect the job duties of the position. Mr. O'Connor questioned if Ms. Weaver had discussed the reclassification with the employee currently filling the position and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively and advised that the employee was in favor of the change.

Motion was made by Bentley, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request to reclassify the position as outlined above and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver stated that Agenda Item 8 pertained to the notification the DSS had received from the New York Public Welfare Association (NYPWA) regarding proposed legislation which would have a negative impact on the County. She advised that there was legislation to decrease the amount of reimbursement the County received from the State for indigent burials. She mentioned that the State currently reimbursed the County for up to \$900 on a burial, which had a total cost of approximately \$2,000 per person.

Ms. Weaver apprised that there was also an Act to Amend the Social Services Law in relationship to exempting real property from certain enforcement. She stated that currently if an individual applied for Temporary Assistance or Medicaid, a lien was issued on their property and when they were no longer in need of services and they passed away, the County could recoup some of the funds. She said that 50% of Resource and Recovery Funds was received through liens. She advised that if the Law was adopted, it would take effect immediately and have a substantial impact on revenues.

Ms. Weaver mentioned that New York State was proposing to create a 10 year Homeless Housing Task Force, which would be an unfunded mandate. In regard to Child Welfare, she advised that the State was reviewing whether to eliminate some of the grounds upon which the DSS could terminate parental rights. She said that currently parental rights could be terminated if parents were mentally ill or mentally retarded and unable to care for their children, which the State was proposing to remove as a grounds for termination of parental rights. She apprised that the State was also looking to eliminate the grounds for parental termination when parents were incarcerated or in drug treatment programs, as well.

She advised that she would supply a packet that outlined the proposed legislation and how it would effect the County at the Committees members request. Mr. Kenny suggested referring to the Legislative Committee a request for a report on how State Legislators were voting on these particular issues. Mr. Tessier advised that he believed that the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) supplied a listing at their meeting of what and how the State Legislators were voting.

Resuming the Agenda review, Ms. Weaver requested permission to obtain three appraisals for the Human Services Building (HSB) so that the DSS could ascertain the amount of maintenance in lieu of rent. She mentioned that the DSS had been informed by the State that the amount would triple from what had been budgeted, which would have a negative impact on the County budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to authorize the DSS to receive three appraisals for the HSB to determine the maintenance in lieu of rent amount. The necessary resolution was authorized for the May 15, 2009 Board meeting.

Ms. Weaver stated that Agenda Item 10 pertained to the listing of items pending from prior Committee meetings, which she detailed as follows:

- 1) Regarding placement of an outreach program facility in the Town of Johnsbury, Ms. Weaver apprised that she wished to withdraw this item, as it was unclear of what would happen with staffing over the next year;
- 2) Update on Methadone treatment, Mrs. Weaver advised that Legislation was changing and the program should begin in September of 2009. Mr. Kenny commented that although the methadone treatment did not affect a large portion of people, the cost savings to the County would be substantial. Mr. Bentley questioned where the methadone treatments would be administered and Ms. Weaver responded that Glens Falls had been proposed as a possible site, as well as the option of using a mobile van that would travel to the area to administer the dosage;
- 3) Committee authorized a part-time Investigator to work with the Sheriff's Office, the DSS and the District Attorney's Office to reduce the occurrence of fraud in connection with DSS Temporary Housing Assistance and Medicaid benefit claims. Mrs. Weaver apprised that the Investigator was hired with a start date of June 1, 2009; and
- 4) Ms. Weaver stated that Paul Dusek, County Attorney, was obtaining information pertaining to caseloads from surrounding Counties. She apprised that the caseload from Washington County had been received and was similar to that of Warren County. She said that when they obtained the caseloads and number of Attorneys for Essex and Saratoga Counties they would determine if they had the appropriate number of Attorneys on staff. Another option that was discussed, Ms. Weaver stated, was having the legal staff supervised by Mr. Dusek so that if an overflow existed, the County Attorneys Office could assist with the caseload.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McLenithan
Legislative Office Specialist