

Warren County Board of Supervisors

Committee: Social Services

Date: February 24, 2012

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Loeb
Kenny
Bentley
Strainer
Wood
Sokol

Others Present:

Representing the Department of Social Services:
Suzanne Wheeler, Acting Commissioner
Julie Montero, Fiscal Manager
Daniel G. Stec, Chairman of the Board
Paul Dusek, County Administrator
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board
Kevin Geraghty, Budget Officer

Committee Member Absent:

Supervisor Westcott

Supervisor Frasier
Supervisor Taylor
Supervisor Thomas
Don Lehman, *The Post Star*
Please see attached sign in sheet for all others present
Nicole Livingston, Deputy Clerk

Mr. Loeb called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 10:47 a.m.

Motion was made by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2012 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Deanna Park, Director of the Countryside Adult Home, who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members; a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.

Commencing the Agenda review, Ms. Park presented a request to fill a full time Cleaner position, annual salary of \$23,706, Grade 2, due to retirement. She noted that the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) required the facility to have one hour of cleaning service per resident each week; therefore, she said, a Cleaner was needed for a minimum of forty-eight hours per week. She opined that due to the size of the facility, the need to have a Cleaner on seven days a week and the plan to relocate the Warrensburg mealsite to Countryside, it was necessary to continue to have two full time Cleaners on staff. She further requested permission to backfill any positions vacated due to promotions from within.

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

Paul Dusek, County Administrator, informed that there was an upcoming layoff of a Cleaner position at the Westmount Health Facility which should be reviewed to determine if there would be an opportunity for that employee to fill this Cleaner position.

Mr. Loeb called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Cleaner as outlined above 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.

Ms. Park directed the Committee members to the Old Business/Pending Items portion of the Agenda. The first item, she said, was for Mr. Dusek to contact Washington County pertaining to the information they received from their consultant and to release an RFP (Request for Proposal) for a consultant to research the possibility of privatizing Warren County's nursing homes, in order to determine the costs. Mr. Dusek advised he had the information and he was in the process of reviewing it.

The next item, Ms. Park stated, was for the County Attorney to determine whether the County had the ability to enter into a legally binding contract for private payment of the County's portion of residency costs for a non-Warren County resident. Mr. Dusek asserted that he needed to work with Martin Auffredou, County Attorney, on this matter and it would most likely take a couple of months before a report would be available.

Ms. Park added the last item concerned the Committees tabling of the discussion on the request to use Northern Mechanical Services for the cleaning of two boilers pending review of the current contract with Technical Building Services to ensure there would be no contract violations. She apprised that Technical Building Services was at the facility the previous day to provide the cleaning services of the two boilers in exchange for the balance that was due to the facility for a bill received in 2010. She requested the item be removed from the Pending Items list.

Ms. Park continued the Agenda review with Topics for Discussion. She advised there was no overtime hours for the past pay cycle and currently the facility was down 30.2 hours from last years figures. She noted the current census at the facility was forty residents, fourteen men and twenty-six women. She reviewed the monthly statistics as follows: long term resident referrals totaled seven, three of the individuals were from other counties, one would be evaluated on Friday and the remaining three were awaiting Temporary Assistance approval. She added there had been two admissions and one discharge for the month. With regard to the Day Care, she said, there had been no new referrals and one person was still in attendance.

Ms. Park provided the Committee with an update on the mealsite relocation. She remarked that she and Christie Sabo, Director of the Office for the Aging, had met with the NYS DOH last week and she had submitted the written application this week and she was now waiting for a reply from the NYS DOH.

Ms. Park advised the last item for discussion concerned laundry services. Currently, she said, the facility utilized Westmount Health Facility's laundry services and last year she had obtained quotes from outside agencies to determine costs for laundry services. She asserted that in 2010, the facility paid for half of a laundry workers salary, half of the fringe benefits, plus a per pound fee and the cost to transport the laundry back and forth, for a total of \$42,876 per year. Ms. Park mentioned that in 2011, after obtaining outside quotes, she had renegotiated the rate for laundry service with Westmount Health Facility, resulting in a decrease in cost of approximately \$15,000. She noted that the facility was still paying for half of a laundry workers salary, half of the fringe benefits, a reduced fee per pound and the cost of transporting it back and forth, for a total of \$27,952 per year. She opined that additional savings could be achieved of between \$8,000 to \$15,000 per year by using an outside vendor or by renegotiating with Westmount Health Facility again to either pay per pound or pay half of the workers salary, as opposed to paying for both. She asked the Committee if they

would like her to obtain new quotes from outside vendors for said services. She recalled the concern last year of the savings that was realized with the co-generation by utilizing the laundry services at Westmount Health Facility; however, she said, following a review it was determined that the savings with the co-generation was minimal.

Mr. Sokol suggested Ms. Park obtain new quotes from outside vendors, although he cautioned that the cost for said services was increasing.

There being no further business to present relative to the Countryside Adult Home, privilege of the floor was extended to Suzanne Wheeler, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Wheeler began by acknowledging this months Team Leader, Diane Coughlin, Acting Supervisor of the Preventive Unit; and the Team Player for the month, Tracy Terry, Caseworker in the Preventive Unit, both who were at the meeting today. She noted that included in the Agenda were praising comments about the two from their coworkers. The Committee responded with applause.

Continuing to the action items on the Agenda, Ms. Wheeler presented eight requests for employee training as follows:

1. Preventive Caseworkers, Kyle Depew and Tracy Terry to attend Sexual Abuse Dynamics & Intervention Training in Albany on March 7-9, 2012;
2. Senior Social Welfare Examiner, Mary Wilcox, and Social Welfare Examiner, Diane Perry to attend Food Stamp Worker Training Institute in Albany on March 12-16, 2012;
3. Patricia Diamond and Lorrie Mosher to attend Account Creation Training Child Support Collection on March 13, 2012 at Schenectady County DSS;
4. Confidential Secretary, Debra Schreiber to attend Basic Training for Staff Development Coordinators in Albany on March 13-15, 2012;
5. Senior Social Welfare Examiner, Janet Trackey to attend Case Processing Review Training for NTA-FS Supervisors in Albany on March 27-30, 2012;
6. Caseworker B Supervisor, Tammy Breen and CPS Caseworkers, Katie Lambert and Betsey Johnson to attend Advanced Medical Issues on March 29-30, 2012 at Washington County DSS;
7. Adult Protective Caseworker, Anne O'Neil to attend Screen Training in Latham on April 4, 2012; and
8. Acting Deputy Commissioner, Maureen Schmidt and Case Supervisors B, Chris Hanchett and Tammy Breen to attend Leadership Training in Albany on April 26, 2012.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve all eight travel requests as presented. Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Wood acknowledged the analysis provided for each travel request which she found very beneficial for the Committees review. Ms. Wheeler contributed the analysis to her Confidential Secretary, Debra Schreiber and Fiscal Manager, Julie Montero.

Ms. Wheeler advised the next item on the Agenda was the Overtime Report and she pointed out that the first pay period for 2012 was more than 2011 because the program utilized to process

applications for Food Stamps and HEAP was unavailable for one week, which led to employees coming into work on a Saturday. She noted that the overtime had decreased in all other areas for 2012 compared to 2011.

The next item, Ms. Wheeler stated, pertained to the Budget Status Report and she mentioned that the analysis for 2011, as well as January of 2012, was provided in the Agenda. She requested Ms. Montero to expound on the report. Ms. Montero apprised that she had included a revenue report reflecting an increase in expenses of \$100,000 for 2011 and an increase in revenue of \$2.7 million, which was anticipated. She added that an additional \$1 million was still expected in revenue. Ms. Montero concluded that the budget expenses should be less than what was budgeted. Mr. Dusek recognized this was an improvement; however, he said, the Department was still below what had been budgeted. Ms. Wheeler also referred to Medicaid costs for January 2012, and highlighted a weekly letter received regarding the County's Medicaid shares, which reflected for this past week a total amount of expenditures of \$2 million, of which the local share was \$230,000.

Ms. Wheeler commented that the next item on the Agenda was DSS Program Information and Education. She stated that she invited Kelly Barker, Principal Social Welfare Examiner for Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps, the Home Energy Program and the Employment Unit; and Mary Wilcox, Senior Social Welfare Examiner for the Home Energy Program and Food Stamps, to discuss their divisions. Ms. Barker distributed handouts to the Committee members that reflected statistical information for the aforementioned programs, copies of which are on file with the minutes. Ms. Wheeler distributed the Department's organizational chart for the Committees benefit, a copy of which is also on file with the minutes.

Ms. Barker said she had been employed by Warren County for approximately twenty-three years and currently she supervised twenty-seven employees within her four program areas. Ms. Barker reviewed current case statistics for Temporary Assistance in detail with the Committee. She noted that Family Assistance was 100% Federally funded. In January, she continued, the Temporary Assistance Unit had 125 unscheduled walk-in emergencies and had accepted 161 applications, of which 110 were denied.

Under the Food Stamps division, Ms. Barker advised they also processed HEAP on all Food Stamp cases. She added that Food Stamps was a Federally funded program and currently consisted of 3,887 cases and 7,391 individuals. In January, she said, 300 applications were received. She reviewed in detail the HEAP Weekly Obligations Report that she distributed and noted that HEAP was 100% Federally funded, 10% of said funds were allocated to administration. Ms. Barker stated there were three components to HEAP, Regular Benefits, Emergency Benefits and Heating Equipment Replacement and Repair, which were determined according to the households energy situation and income level. She listed the requirements and components for the Heating Equipment Replacement and Repair as outlined in the handouts.

Mr. Strainer questioned if checks for the heating equipment replacement were paid to the vendor or to the applicant and Ms. Barker responded the checks were paid directly to the vendor, except in situations known as a Renters Benefit which was limited to either \$20 or \$40. Discussion ensued relative to landlord and renter responsibilities for repair. Mr. Strainer asked if there was a minimal time period that a resident had to stay in a home that received such repair services or new heating systems and Ms. Barker replied in the negative. She further stated that there was a minimal time period that the resident must have lived in the dwelling prior to the replacement and the system

must have been operable for a specific amount of time prior to requesting the replacement.

Mr. Loeb commented that the HEAP program was considered seasonal and he asked if that was accurate. Ms. Wilcox explained there were three temporary HEAP Examiners that were on staff for five months and the Emergency HEAP ended on March 15, 2012. She added that she was responsible for 100% review of each case that the Examiners processed and the Heating Equipment Replacement and Repair program was year round.

Next, Ms. Wheeler introduced Lillian Hayes, Director of Child Support and Fraud, who would discuss her division with the Committee. Ms. Wheeler mentioned that a letter to the editor had been in the local newspaper recently, complaining about communication regarding child support enforcement and she noted Ms. Hayes would expound on that matter. Ms. Hayes distributed handouts to the Committee members that outlined collections made and current caseloads, copies of which are on file with the minutes. Ms. Hayes informed she began employment in the Department of Social Services in 1980 with a background in eligibility and welfare fraud and in 2010 she was named Director of the Child Support Unit. She reviewed the staffing levels within the Unit as listed on the distributed organizational chart. She noted that caseloads had risen so dramatically that the court calendar had increased from three days a week to five days a week. Ms. Hayes apprised that in 2006, due to the high volume of calls received on a daily basis in the Unit, the State established a Child Support Help Line Center, which provided all callers with the basic information they were looking for. She added it was a mandated program that the County paid for. She noted that in January, she became aware that the Child Support Help Line Center was not forwarding electronic referrals for service issues to the Unit. She reported that on January 18, 2012 she contacted the Director of the Child Support Help Line Center to advise of the issue and she was requested to forward specific examples, which she complied with; however, she said, she did not receive a response. The aforementioned letter to the editor, she continued, was published on January 31, 2012 making a complaint that the Warren County Child Support Unit was not doing their job. She asserted that the individuals' problem was resolved immediately. Ms. Hayes remarked that following this incident, she again contacted the Director of the Child Support Help Line Center to inform her of the problem and the State was currently in the process of reviewing the issue. Ms. Hayes pointed out that her Unit had a current caseload of over 3,600 child support cases.

Mr. Loeb thanked Ms. Wheeler for inviting staff to explain their divisions, and he opined it was very informative and beneficial for the Committee to receive such information.

There being no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mrs. Wood, Mr. Loeb adjourned the meeting at 11:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Livingston, Deputy Clerk