

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: JULY 25, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS WESTCOTT	REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:
WOOD	MAUREEN SCHMIDT, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
SOKOL	JULIE MONTERO, FISCAL MANAGER
FRASIER	PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
STROUGH	JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SIMPSON	FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER
	SUPERVISORS CONOVER
	MCDEVITT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: GRETCHEN STEFFAN, COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
SUPERVISOR VANSELOW SAMANTHA HOGAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Westcott called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mrs. Frasier, seconded by Mr. Strough and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Maureen Schmidt, Deputy 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. Schmidt announced that they were behind in announcing the Team Leaders and Players for the Department of Social Services. Ms. Schmidt read a brief description of why each individual was nominated, *a copy of which is included in the agenda packet*, and introduced the following individuals:

May 2014

Team Leader- Tammy Breen, Case Supervisor, Child Protective Services Unit

Team Player- Sarah Raymond, Social Welfare Examiner, Temporary Assistance Unit

June 2014

Team Leader- Rebecca Reynolds, Senior Social Welfare Examiner, Medicaid Chronic Care Unit

Team Player- Dominique Rowland, Caseworker, Foster Care/Adoption Unit

July 2014

Team Leader- Bobbie Bradway, Senior Social Welfare Examiner, Medicaid Managed Care/Third Party Health Insurance (TPHI) Unit

Team Player- Mary Moynihan, Keyboard Specialist, Services Unit

Mr. Westcott thanked the aforementioned staff members for all of their hard work and a round of applause was given.

Moving on to Agenda Item 4A, Personnel Requests, Ms. Schmidt stated Items A1 - A5 consisted of requests to fill vacant positions within the Department of Social Services. Paul Dusek, County Administrator, pointed out that the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position forms provided included a new format requiring completion of a more in-depth Civil Service related section. He added that the Human Resources Department now had the capability to provide a monthly summary to keep the Committee Members informed of the budgetary impacts related to the hiring process as various positions were filled.

Ms. Schmidt presented the requests to fill vacant positions, and to backfill any vacancies created by promotion, as follows:

- A1) Social Welfare Examiner #21, Temporary Assistance/SNAP Unit, (*Grade 8, Base Annual Salary \$30,835*), due to retirement;
- A2) Social Welfare Examiner #41, Temporary Assistant/SNAP Unit, (*Grade 8, Base Annual Salary \$30,835*), due to retirement;
- A3) Social Welfare Examiner #40, Temporary Assistant/SNAP Unit, (*Grade 8, Base Annual Salary \$30,835*), due to resignation,
- A4) Senior Social Welfare Examiner #6, Temporary Assistant/SNAP Unit, (*Grade 11, Annual Salary \$33,687*), due to promotion,
- A5) Social Services Attorney, (*Annual Salary \$73,000*), due to resignation.

Mr. Dusek informed the filling of these vacancies would bring the Department of Social Services to a standard staffing level. With regard to the Social Services Attorney position, he noted there was a qualified attorney ready to fill the position and he stated his opinion that due to the importance of this position it was crucial that it be filled immediately.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mr. Simpson and carried unanimously to authorizing the filling of all of the above referenced positions, as well as any vacancies created by promotion, and refer same to the Personnel Committee for reporting purposes. *Copies of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position forms are on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was extended to Julie Montero, Fiscal Manager, who distributed copies of the Department of Social Services Budget Analysis to the Committee. *A copy of the Analysis is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Montero reviewed the Budget Analysis, noting a decrease in revenues compared to the prior year. She advised that not all of the budget figures had been updated by the Treasurers Office and she explained that, as per her calculations, although the revenue figures were a bit low, the budget was still in good shape.

Mr. Westcott requested that, in the future, any financial statements could be emailed to the Committee a few days before the meeting to provide more time for review.

Continuing the agenda review with Item 4B, Finance Requests, Ms. Montero presented two requests for transfer of funds. The first, she stated, requested to transfer \$169,633 from Budget Code A.1990 469 (Contingent Account Other Payments/Contributions) to Budget Code A.6100 470 (Medicaid Contract), to cover the local share of IGT (Intergovernmental

Transfer) funding to Westmount, which was higher than anticipated.

Motion was made by Mr. Strough, seconded by Mr. Simpson and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds, as outlined above, and to refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Montero stated that the second request for a transfer of funds was in the amount of \$25,000 from Budget Code A.6010 110 (Social Services Salaries-Regular) to Budget Code A.6010 130 (Social Services Salaries Part Time), to cover salaries for temporary caseworkers and HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) examiners through the end of the year.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mr. Strough and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds, as outlined above, and to refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was then extended to Gretchen Steffan, County Human Resources Director, who distributed copies of a document entitled "Reallocation Committee Recommendations Regarding Caseworkers in the Department of Social Services", a copy of which is on file with the meeting minutes.

Ms. Steffan stated that the Reallocation Committee had been working on providing promotional progression opportunities for the Caseworker staff, due to the large turnover in the Department of Social Services. She added that this issue had been brought to the attention of the Social Services Committee with the explanation that the turnover was attributed to salary rates. Ms. Steffan stated that after completing research on the compensation provided by surrounding counties for their Caseworker staff, they had determined that in comparison, Warren County was under compensating their staff. She stated that at the last Committee meeting she had discussed a Caseworker Trainee position, which would provide a base salary for a new employee and allow means for progression from the position. Ms. Steffan stated that after the Reallocation Committee had met a few times they had come to the conclusion that the Caseworker Trainee position title was insufficient because the title did not provide any credibility in a Court setting. As an alternate solution, she said they had considered incorporating a step system for Caseworker positions, numbering them as 1 through 3; however, she noted, this process would require different job descriptions and promotional Civil Service testing at each step. Ms. Steffan stated that at the conclusion of their review, the Reallocation Committee had decided to retain the Caseworker Trainee position in its current state. She advised they were seeking to increase the grades of the current positions, increasing the Caseworker from a Grade 14 to a Grade 16, the Senior Caseworkers from a Grade 15 to a Grade 18 and the Case B Supervisor from a Grade 17 to a Grade 20.

Ms. Steffan proceeded with a review of the documentation she had distributed to the Committee members. She noted that State and Federal reimbursements ranging from 62%-75% were received for Caseworker position salaries and she noted that for comparison purposes, she had decided to continuously use 62% as the base rate of reimbursement for these positions. Ms. Steffan stated that currently, the County was spending about

\$1,852,000 on salaries and benefits for the existing Caseworker staff for the current position title grades. She informed that if the proposed scenario for increasing title grades was incorporated, the overall increase in Caseworker salary costs would be approximately \$129,000; however, she added, due to the State and Federal reimbursements received, the actual increased cost to the County would be in the range of \$50,000 annually, but would help to retain existing Caseworker staff and reduce turnover. Ms. Steffan pointed out the graph depicted in her handout indicated that Warren County's Caseworker staff were paid less than any other county within driving distance. She noted that under the proposed scenario of increasing the title grades and providing a higher starting salary, at the end of a five-year term Warren County would be providing very competitive salary rates in comparison to surrounding counties.

Mr. Sokol commented that the Caseworkers dealt with very difficult situations, and to hold a position like that for five years was amazing. He noted Ms. Steffan's prior indication that the cost to the County for the grade reclassifications would be about \$50,000 after reimbursements, or about \$1,000 per week, and he asked if the Budget Officer should be consulted on this matter due to the increased salary costs. Ms. Steffan responded that the first step was to seek the approval of the Social Services Committee, following which the matter would be referred to both the Budget and Personnel Committees for their review and approval. Mr. Sokol stated he was supportive of the reorganization and felt the Caseworker staff was deserving of the increase. Mr. Westcott said that he concurred.

Mr. Dusek noted the next step in this process would be for the Social Services Committee to vote on the proposed grade increases, as presented by Ms. Steffan, in order to refer the matter to the Budget and Personnel Committees for their review and approval.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Strough and carried unanimously to support the position grade increases, and commensurate salary increases, as presented by Ms. Steffan and to refer same to the Budget and Personnel Committees for review and approval.

Mr. Thomas questioned why the reimbursement rate was only 62%. Ms. Montero answered that because the State assumed the majority of the Medicaid operations, it was likely the reimbursement rate would slowly decrease. She added that although the reimbursement rates could remain as high as 75%, they felt it was best to base their calculation on a lower reimbursement figure.

Moving on to Item 4C, Training & Travel Requests, Ms. Schmidt outlined Items 1&2, which consisted of requests to authorize travel for State mandated training, as follows:

- 1) Pat Diamond, Natashia Dishong and Heidi Knickerbocker to attend Child Support 101 Training in Castleton, NY on 9/30 - 10/2/2014; and
- 2) Terra Cahill, Catherine Bearor, Jacqueline Bell, Sarah Montero and Dominique Rowland to attend, Child Protective Services Response Training in Albany, NY on 8/25 - 8/29/2014 and 9/8 - 9/12/2014.

Motion was made by Mrs. Frasier, seconded by Mr. Simpson and carried unanimously to

approve both of the aforementioned travel requests. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Item 6, Ms. Schmidt stated, was being presented on behalf of Countryside Adult Home and consisted of a request for authorization to make payment in the amount of \$1,676.21 to Jack Hall Plumbing & Heating, Inc. for emergency repairs to the main water supply of the Countryside building. Ms. Schmidt advised the funds for this work were available within Countryside's existing budget.

Motion was made by Mrs. Frasier, seconded by Ms. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request as presented and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 15th Board meeting; *a copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Dusek gave an update on the currently vacant Commissioner of Social Services position. He stated that he had received nine (9) applications, a few of which were qualified for the position. Mr. Dusek informed the Committee that he would send copies of the qualifying resumes to all members of the Board of Supervisors, followed by which Ms. Steffan would forward a report of the candidates to be interviewed. He stated that the Supervisors could accept or reject any of the applications and he noted that if, for some reason, the Committee was not satisfied with the applicants, a more extensive search for candidates could be performed.

Returning to Agenda Item 5, Pending Item, Ms. Schmidt reminded the Committee that at their June meeting they tabled a request regarding an amendment to the agreement with the Council for Prevention of Alcohol & Substance Abuse, Inc., for a Youth Court Program to increase the total contract amount to \$55,335, reflecting an increase of \$4,460 in the Local Share cost, as a result of anticipated funding from municipalities that had not been received.

Mr. Strough advised the Town of Queensbury had not received any requests for funding of the Youth Court Program and he said the Council should submit a formal request. Ms. Wood stated that the funds to be contributed by the Town of Thurman would be forthcoming.

It was the consensus of the Committee to revisit this issue at a subsequent meeting.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Ms. Wood and seconded by Mr. Simpson, Mr. Westcott adjourned the meeting at 10:18 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Samantha Hogan, Legislative Office Specialist