

**Health and Human Services Committee Meeting
Chenango County Office Building – Board Room
Monday, January 25, 2021 – 10:00 am**

Present Were: Chairwoman Grace Nucero-Alger, Supervisor Wayne Outwater, Supervisor Robert Wansor, Commissioner of Social Services Dan Auwarter, Youth Bureau Director Kathy Clemens, Public Health Director Marc Flindt, CCSI Representatives Kristi Empett & Rebecca Pecka, Clerk of the Board/County Auditor RC Woodford and Chairman of the Board George Seneck.

Present via Teleconference Were: Supervisor Thomas Grace, Supervisor Jeremiah Micklas and Director of Community Services Ruth Roberts.

Absent: Supervisor Raymond Wakefield Jr.

Chairwoman Grace Nucero-Alger called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Dan Auwarter, Commissioner, Social Services

Refill - Caseworker - A6010.123:

Mr. Auwarter requested to refill Caseworker position #A6010.123. The last day worked was January 13, 2021, refill request date for February 2, 2021.

Mr. Outwater made a motion, seconded by Mr. Micklas, to refer to the Personnel Committee to refill Caseworker Position #A6010.123. Carried.

Referral to Personnel

Discussion: Dr. Wansor asked how long the individual was in that position. Mr. Auwarter stated approximately one year.

Refill - Social Welfare Examiner - A6010.128:

Mr. Auwarter requested to refill Social Worker Welfare Examiner position # A6010-128. The last day worked was January 8, 2021, refill request date for January 18, 2021.

Dr. Wansor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grace, to refer to the Personnel Committee to refill Social Welfare Examiner Position #A6010-128. Carried.

Referral to Personnel

Discussion: Mr. Auwarter stated this person left to take a position with a neighboring county.

Refill- Caseworker - A6010.107:

Mr. Auwarter requested to refill Caseworker position #A6010.107. This position is vacant due to a promotion to Senior Caseworker. Mr. Auwarter requested an immediate refill date.

Dr. Wansor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grace, to refer to the Personnel Committee to refill Caseworker Position #A6010.107. Carried.

Referral to Personnel

Kathy Clemens, Youth Bureau Director

Update on Recreation Programs:

Ms. Clemens stated that she submitted the applications. Ms. Clemens stated that because many programs did not occur last year, she created applications for anyone who did any youth programs. Ms. Clemens stated Bainbridge was reimbursed 50% of expenses to pay staff and mulch their playground. Ms. Clemens stated that Greene with the help of Raymond's offered a program at the Ball Flats for which they were reimbursed 100% of their direct program expenses. Ms. Clemens stated the City of Norwich offered some programs and they covered as much of the expenses as they could. Youth programs in Otselic, Plymouth, Sherburne, and the Village of New Berlin received 100% reimbursement.

Ms. Clemens stated that she was able to split expenses evenly between Safe Harbour and the Recreation Programs which allowed her to allocate more funds to the recreation programs. Ms. Clemens stated that she plans to do the same thing again this year.

Ms. Clemens stated that she has not received confirmation that the applications were accepted at this point. Ms. Clemens stated that she is reluctant to send anything to the townships before receiving approval. Ms. Clemens stated that she hopes to receive approval within the next couple of weeks.

Safe Harbour Acceptance of Funding:

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked Ms. Clemens to explain Safe Harbour for the new committee members.

Ms. Clemens stated that Safe Harbour was a grant the Youth Bureau submitted for last year. Ms. Clemens stated the grant is primarily for youth through the age of 21 who are in jeopardy of being trafficked or have been trafficked.

Ms. Clemens stated that she worked with The Place to host two different trainings, one of which is still available online. Ms. Clemens stated that she recommends the Sheriff's Office completes this training, as it provides specific information that is relevant to what is occurring in Chenango County.

Ms. Clemens stated that she would like to contract some of the money from Safe Harbour to Liberty Resources and the Child Advocacy Center. Ms. Clemens stated that she was previously instructed to wait because they may have to pay the county back the 20% withholding if state reimbursement is not provided within 12 months. Ms. Clemens stated Liberty Resources, and the Child Advocacy Center would not accept any funding if they may have to pay back 20%.

Ms. Clemens stated that she received a letter awarding them \$23,000 for continued participation in Safe Harbour during 2021. Ms. Clemens stated that she does not want to decline the funding and will work with her board to decide how to use these funds since they cannot currently contract with Liberty Resources or the Child Advocacy Center.

Ms. Clemens stated that she would like to reinstate the revenue and expenditure lines placed in the budget for last year to be used again for 2021.

Mr. Wansor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Outwater to refer to the Finance Committee to accept and appropriate \$23,000 from the Safe Harbour Grant. Carried.

Referral to Finance

Discussion: Mr. Outwater asked if Ms. Clemens knew whether to expect a decrease in funding for 2021.

Ms. Clemens stated that she cannot be sure at this point.

Mr. Outwater asked Ms. Clemens how much money they got back this year compared to last year.

Ms. Clemens stated that it was the same minus the 20% withheld.

Marc Flindt, Director, Public Health

Authorizing the Transfer of Funds Related To COVID-19 - Department of Public Health:

Mr. Flindt stated that in the Case Investigation COVID-19 Grant he received funding to hire both an RN and an LPN. Mr. Flindt stated that he has not been able to fill the LPN position. Mr. Flindt stated that he would like to transfer the funding from this position and put it towards overtime and other extra hires. Mr. Flindt stated that he would like to do the same with the Bioterrorism Grant.

Mr. Outwater made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grace to refer to the Finance Committee in order to authorize the transfer of funds related to COVID-19. Carried.

Refer To Finance

Comp Schedule Bonus for COVID-19 Work:

Mr. Flindt stated that the legislature previously was kind enough to grant a bonus to department managers in July. Mr. Flindt stated that he thought it made sense to examine this again. Mr. Flindt stated that his staff is working 8-14 hours a day, seven days a week and that his staff is very committed to lowering the death and disease rates within the county. Mr. Flindt stated that many of his staff members are getting paid more than their supervisors because of the amount of overtime they are receiving.

Mr. Flindt stated that he would like to request \$17,000 to split between his comp schedule employees from line A4010.17.

Mr. Flindt stated that his Director of Patient Services started in September and his Supervising Community Health Nurse started in August, so they have never received an additional bonus.

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked if Mr. Flindt foresees this happening again. Mr. Flindt stated that it is possible if things continue into the fall.

Mr. Outwater stated that he is not against providing a bonus but that he felt it was not the right timing. Mr. Outwater stated that he thought it was appropriate to provide a bonus for the two supervisors who have not yet received one but that he would elect to vote no if the bonus was for all of the comp schedule employees.

Mr. Grace made a motion, seconded by Mr. Wansor to refer to the Personnel Committee to provide a \$17,000 bonus spread out between the 6 comp schedule employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Carried.

Referral to Personnel

COVID-19 Update:

Mr. Flindt stated that currently there are 647 people under quarantine and there are over 30 new cases daily. The seven-day average positivity rate for Chenango County is 5.8%. The state average rate is 5.95%. Currently there have been 35 deaths in Chenango County related to COVID-19.

Mr. Flindt stated that vaccination started the week of January 11th. Mr. Flindt stated they have vaccinated the health department staff, the Bida home, the Chenango Valley Home and Apartments, CIT, and Law Enforcement. Mr. Flindt stated vaccine distribution is slow. Mr. Flindt ordered 600 vaccines for this week, but he is unsure how many we will receive. Mr. Flindt stated this afternoon at the Broad Street Methodist Church they are administering 210 doses of the vaccine for those who are 65 years old and over. Mr. Flindt stated at the end of today a total of 605 initial vaccines will have been administered in the County. Mr. Flindt stated they have a system in place to keep track of who has received the vaccine and when the second dose will be due.

Mr. Flindt stated that currently the labs have not reported any positive tests for the new UK variant of COVID-19 within Chenango County. Mr. Flindt stated that currently the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines seem to be effective against the new variants.

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked if there is a vaccine schedule in place for county employees, what the status was on the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, and whether those with a penicillin allergy should receive the Moderna vaccine. Ms. Nucero-Alger reminded everyone of the Public Health conference call every Tuesday which provides a lot of information. Mr. Flindt stated that he is following the New York State government phased system for administering vaccines and that they will adhere strictly to this guidance. Mr. Flindt stated that Johnson and Johnson have not yet applied for emergency use of the vaccine with the FDA, but he thinks this may occur within the next couple weeks. Mr. Flindt stated that he expects to be administering vaccines within the county for probably close to the next year with the help of pharmacies, hospitals, and other care providers. Mr. Flindt stated that those concerned about an allergic reaction to the Moderna vaccine should speak with their primary care provider.

Mr. Outwater asked for a break-down of demographics on the 35 deaths from COVID-19 within the county. Mr. Flindt stated that he could research the information and send it to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Seneck stated that the state will not know until Wednesday what federal allotment of vaccines they will receive so the county will not likely know until then either. Mr. Flindt stated that he has not scheduled any clinics into the future because of the uncertainty of vaccine allotment. Mr. Flindt stated that there is a pre-registration process in place for every clinic that he does. To pre-register for the clinics the Department of Health has created an email address, covid19@co.chenango.ny.us, to which those who qualify can send their information. From this they are creating a database so that they can send emails with a link to register for clinics to individuals who qualify. Mr. Seneck asked if this information has been sent out to the newspaper. Mr. Flindt stated that no they have not. Mr. Seneck stated that he thought it would be important to notify the local papers.

Mr. Outwater asked who determined the vaccine allotments distributed throughout the state. Mr. Flindt stated the Governor's Office and the NYS Health Department made this determination. Mr. Outwater stated that he was concerned that most of the vaccine would be distributed down state and that upstate New York would receive very little.

Mr. Outwater made a motion, seconded by Dr. Wansor, to refer to the next BOS meeting for a Resolution to be sent to state legislators to make sure that upstate New York is receiving their fair share of vaccines.

Resolution To Follow

Mr. Micklas asked if there was still plenty of space available within local hospitals given that 22 Chenango County residents are currently hospitalized due to COVID-19. Mr. Flindt stated to keep in mind that not all of the Chenango County residents who have been hospitalized are in Chenango Memorial Hospital. Mr. Flindt stated that over the weekend the hospital was well within capacity.

Mr. Outwater asked what town supervisors should tell those who call with questions about what to do if they think they may have COVID. Mr. Flindt stated that they should be directed to contact the Department of Health.

Ruth Roberts, Director, Community Services
Agreement with LEAF, Inc. for SUD Prevention:

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked if Ms. Roberts could explain what LEAF is for the new members of the committee. Ms. Roberts stated that she planned last year to move the OASIS State Aid Prevention dollars out of county operations and into an agreement with a nonprofit organization such as LEAF. LEAF specializes in providing educational and prevention services. Ms. Roberts stated that the county operated School Based Prevention Program had one full time employee who retired at the end of 2020. This position, A4150.70, was entirely supported by state aid. Ms. Roberts stated that LEAF, Inc. provides substance use disorder prevention services in our region. Ms. Roberts stated that they are experts in providing school and community-based prevention efforts. Ms. Roberts stated that she believes entering into an agreement with LEAF will greatly strengthen their ability to provide prevention services within the county.

Dr. Wansor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grace, to refer to the Finance Committee in order to enter into an agreement with LEAF, Inc. for substance abuse services using \$74,017 from A4150.70 to fund the agreement, upon county attorney approval.

Referral to Finance.

Corporate Compliance / Quality Assurance Update:

Ms. Roberts stated that they are required to have a Corporate Compliance and Quality Assurance Officer. Ms. Roberts stated that Chenango County has combined these two functions into one position as there were several areas of cross-over responsibilities. The Corporate Compliance aspect focuses on their clinical and billing practices to prevent and reduce fraud, waste, and abuse. The quality assurance works with the administration and the CQI committee to assess practices to ensure quality service is provided in the most efficient manner. Ms. Roberts stated that this position since 2010 has been in the RSS contract and is supported entirely with state aid. Ms. Roberts stated that with a line item transfer we will be moving \$87,000 out of the RSS contract, A4320.50, and into CCSI contract A4320.53. Ms. Roberts stated that CCSI will recruit, train, and oversee this individual. Ms. Roberts stated that she believes this will strengthen existing practices.

Ms. Roberts stated that the Office of Medicaid Inspector General has audited 32 clinics and they do not need to physically come in to do so as everything is electronic. Ms. Roberts stated that is a good reminder that they need to have safeguards in place to review their practices.

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked if this was a concern given the IT issues Chenango County is having. Ms. Roberts stated that this was a concern as they are scrambling to catch up but there is a higher potential for mistakes to be made because of this.

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked what the repercussions of an audit could be for the county if there was an issue found. Ms. Roberts stated that a fine would be likely in this instance, which could be very expensive.

Mr. Outwater asked when they expected to be caught up on claims. Ms. Roberts stated she is in the process of figuring that out. Ms. Roberts stated that there is a 90-day window in which to submit a claim for services billed to Medicaid or Medicare, while others had a longer grace period. Ms. Roberts stated that between the COVID shutdown and the cyber-attack they have a lot of catching up to do. Ms. Roberts stated that she thinks there will be some losses. Ms. Roberts stated that Fidelis gave a verbal promise to extend the 90-day window, but she has yet to receive anything in writing.

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked how long the denial process is if claims were submitted and denied. Ms. Empett stated that usually they hear back within 30 days and then the 90-day window to file the claim starts over again. Ms. Empett stated that this 90-day renewal could occur for up to two-years.

IT Update:

Ms. Roberts stated that some progress has been made but there is still a lot of work needed. Ms. Roberts stated that they purchased 35 tablets earlier this year, 18 of which were configured. Ms. Roberts stated that the remaining ones were found in IT and that is important to get them to the clinicians.

Ms. Roberts stated that they are highly dependent on their computers and software programs for both medical records and billing. Ms. Roberts stated that they are required to have electronic records for both. Ms. Roberts stated that they are still waiting on historical documents, but she was informed that they should eventually be able to retrieve this from the server. Ms. Roberts stated that they are making some progress on their connection with RHIO, a depository of data. This is important for sending and retrieving information through Health Connections.

Ms. Roberts stated that she is trying to keep track of all the issues to reduce the number of phone calls to IT. Ms. Roberts stated that it may be beneficial to schedule a time for IT to come or establish a call ticket system.

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked if the IT department has received any support from the Social Services group to help with computer issues. Ms. Roberts stated that yes, they have provided some additional assistance for which she is very grateful.

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked if they were certain whether all the historical medical records would be recovered. Ms. Roberts stated that she is not certain at this time and while this is important, they have what they need to provide services at this time.

Mr. Outwater made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grace, to refer to the next BOS meeting in order to authorize a resolution to contact NYS representatives and Congressional representatives for an extension on the 90-day requirement for billing services.

Resolution To Follow

Mr. Outwater made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grace to refer to the Finance Committee in order to provide an update regarding the cyber attack in each department and provide an estimate on when they expect things to be resolved.

Referral To Finance

Ms. Nucero-Alger asked if Chenango Memorial Hospital could assist them with getting caught up on claims and billing. Ms. Roberts stated that they could look into this but they would need to familiarize them with their software and provide compensation.

Adjournment:

Ms. Nucero-Alger adjourned the meeting at 11:21 a.m.