



MINUTES
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, April 9, 2020
Live Streamed

CALL TO ORDER: By Hon. Elane Daly, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:15PM

MEMBERS: Legislators Michael Didio, Tricia Kerr, Timothy Lattimore, Heidi Nightengale, Hans Pecher, and Charlie Ripley (Vice Chair)

OTHERS: Legislators Chris Petrus, Ryan Foley, Keith Batman, Paul Pinckney, County Attorney Chris Palermo, Assistant County Attorney Richard Graham, Director of Office for the Aging Brenda Wiemann, Public Health Director Kathleen Cuddy, Assistant County Attorney Brittany Massi, Director of Community Services Ray Bizzari and Deputy Clerk of the Legislature Amanda Morgan

MINUTES TO APPROVE: March 12, 2020, Motion by Didio, 2nd by Kerr, all in favor.

APPOINTMENTS: None

RESOLUTIONS:

HEALTH:

4-20-HH-1 Authorizing the Chairman of the Legislature and the Public Health Director to enter into an anticipated one year extension with NYSDOH for the Health Neighborhoods Program and accept funding associated with the extension when notified from the State. **Motion by Nightengale, 2nd by Kerr, all in favor.**

4-20-HH-2 Authorizing the Public Health Director to create and fill a Supervising Billing Specialist position in the Health Department. **Motion by Nightengale, 2nd by Lattimore.**

Discussion:

Nightengale feels at this time we should be judicious and follow the example of other committees and or Chairwoman and table this position for at least 60 days.

Motion by Nightengale to table, 2nd by Kerr.

Discussion:

Lattimore would hate to see this go unfilled if we need someone in this position to do the correct billing. Daly says her understanding is a current employee had gotten out of the billing in the early intervention, but has found herself in the role of needing to support and supervise a current staff. The hope was when Cuddy introduced it that potentially the legislature would upgrade the current staff and compensate her for the supervision that she is currently doing. She says the argument was made at the last HHS Meeting and at this point the more of the discussion is not about the upgrade, which is not significant amount of money is warranted, it is whether or not we want to upgrade the position at this time or wait until we have more information of where we are at financially. She says that is why the discussion was to table until June and relook at it. Lattimore says he is in agreement with Nightengale about following what other committees are doing, but if this is bringing money back to the county if we are currently under billing. Daly says Cuddy can speak better to it, but her understanding is that she is currently assisting with this work right now it would be upgrading the title to give compensation for that. Cuddy says that is correct. Daly says to Lattimore that the work is getting done, but this is about making a change in a title of a current employee. Graham asks if there is a question of whether or not this person is working out of title right now. Cuddy says that the employee has not brought that forward. Lattimore asks when doing these billing if we get money back from the state or feds. Cuddy responds that we do. Lattimore says it is an important position and wants to make sure we are billing correctly. Nightengale wants to mention that the resolution does include per the question about working out of grade, in the third whereas the civil service commission recently reviewed and approved the duties and classification of the full time Supervising Billing Specialist. Kerr agrees that it is an important position and we need to be billing and making sure we have the staff to do the billing. She says the billing is complicated and it is important, but she does not believe it is necessarily urgent and would like to see it go through the process and be evaluated with the context of the global picture for the county workforce.

All in favor.

Kathleen Cuddy (Health) –

COVID -19 response effort

Discussion:

Cuddy says they have been doing a lot, all primarily related to the COVID-19 response. She says there have been some different things forthcoming that will come up for discussion as far as whether they are considered mandatory or not. She says for instance we will learn more about campgrounds and whether they are going to be opened sooner or later. She says the WIC Office is really going strong and they are serving numerous clients and doing so remotely and doing a great job. She says other employees have really picked up duties as part of our response planning. She says for instance we have people in our early intervention area service coordinators that are calling back our community members that have negative lab results. They have also started utilizing some of our Auburn Enlarged City School District nurses and just rolling them in. She says they are working some telephone work for us. She says it helps to not only provide the service that we are supposed to with our employees who are performing this duty it allows them more time to work in some other areas. She says thinking of their nurses primarily in that regard. They have one of their environmental health people that has just taken to being in charge of all of their purchasing and she is doing a great job. She says someone might not think there is a huge need for that, but it is the purchasing and the inventory, so it is inventorying all of the personal protective equipment, anticipating needs-working with EMO, purchasing agent for the county, and also the employees that Social Services helped to designate to assist them to provide the needs of some of the people in isolation. They also have someone from the environmental unit that is assisting the nurses who are doing the testing. They also have environmental health staff who are doing some of the driving around the county to lay eyes on people who are on isolation to make sure they are home and doing a double check with those individuals. They got a great compliment from someone who had come out of isolation and was particularly complimentary or not only the people she spoke with here, but was quite pleased and looked forward to the visit from the environmental health person who would come by and help her laugh a little bit each day. She says it is not secret that our numbers are climbing up and got notification of the first person in our county who died as a result of COVID-19. She thinks it has been rather humbling because this was not the stereotype and the person was in their early 40s and brought home how potentially dangerous this virus is. She says as we see our numbers climb we will see what direction things are going. They mentioned yesterday that NYC is hopeful that they are at their peak and might be starting a downward trend, but upstate NY always has that lag from NYC and we are just climbing our hill right now. She says it appears that people who desire testing and it is considered appropriate due to symptoms it is still the state recommendation that someone is symptomatic and she believes everyone is able to get a test who should at this point. She says there are various options, Onondaga and Tompkins County through their drive thru, if their healthcare provider makes recommendations to the health department then our staff is still providing service, and open this week and will have more conversation this week, but the respiratory care clinic that is being house at the former county nursing home. She says it has opened its doors and it taking appointments to receive anybody from our area that has respiratory illness. She says that it is by appointment only and if necessary they can provide a COVID test or screen someone and send them to our community based testing. They have also partnered with our Port Byron Healthcare Center and have done some mobile testing and going to some worksites to provide testing and seems to have been successful as well. She says it is a 7 day a week operation and her employees and staff are great, they have a great attitude, and they understand the importance of the work they are doing. They provide great customer service and she is completely impressed every day.

Lattimore says congratulations to Cuddy on putting together a good team. He is wondering in regard to billing if we are back charging to the feds any additional regarding this outbreak. Cuddy says what she can tell him is that they are tracking their time very specifically, so not only on timesheets, but they break it down into more detailed sheets that say what type of work they are doing, whether it is testing work, isolation and quarantine, or risk and communication. She says our accounting/fiscal staff are utilizing that to put against some of the grant funding that we have and it will also be held onto as part of any additional funding that comes our way. She is deferring a lot of that to our financial experts to analyze at this point. Lattimore says if we have to hire someone to make sure we account for all of the costs related to this, so that we can get FEMA or somebody else like that to reimburse us we need to be on top pf that. Cuddy says she does believe that not only in the health department, but throughout the county people are being very conscientious about identifying their time that is being spent on this public health effort.

Nightengale applauds Cuddy on her efforts and wants to send a message back to her staff of great thanks and gratitude. She can imagine the position they are all in and is truly 24/7 for all of them. She asks about the transparency of reports that we are getting. She says we are getting reports very quickly and daily from the health department. She says what we see in those reports is whether or not a case is in the city or not in the city. She is wondering if there is the potential, so that people do not stay complacent if it is not affecting their town of village or not their city. She asks if there is potential for more transparency

or what Cuddy's thoughts are on not mentioning that. Cuddy says that she has heard those concerns. She says first that it is very short sided for someone to think that this virus is not in their community. She says that it is everywhere and she cannot stress that enough. She says there is a curiosity for people to know whether the case is in Weedsport or Moravia and she fully appreciates the curiosity factor. She thinks with the numbers that we have currently of our positive cases she is very hesitant and not looking to reveal zip codes or towns at this in order to protect the anonymity of the people who have been diagnosed because they have found in other circumstances that people are kind of being painted with a scarlet letter. However, she does realize that people identify more with their own backyard and she understands that. She thinks as we see more cases diagnosed that perhaps that will lend itself more to be able to say that, but she would like to see what transpires. She says this is not the time for complacency and it is throughout our entire county.

Lattimore thinks there was an outbreak of flu in Cato in like December. He asks whether we know if we had it here sooner than later and if we can test for antibodies. Cuddy says certainly there could have been cases here prior to them being tested because until we had a means to test it was not being done, so it is a possibility. She says what she has understood is through Upstate Hospital one of their infectious disease doctors is reaching out to some people who have been diagnosed and are now healthy again to do some serology testing. She thinks that is being done in other places as well as part of a larger study to get a better sense of peoples symptoms, what they knew, how they fared, and what can we learn from them recuperating from an unknown diagnosis. Lattimore says he asked for no visitation for the prison and he asks about the health of the prison population. Cuddy says to the best of their knowledge that is the case. She says they have had some interactions as everyone is aware when there had been a prisoner transferred out of Auburn Correctional Facility to another facility. She says there was a number of correction officers and support staff who were in quarantine as a result of that, so they have had some communications with their infectious disease nurses there in the facilities. Lattimore says it is good cooperation between that population and the health department. Cuddy responds that overall yes, but it has been a challenge from the beginning. She says historically corrections has been its own entity, so the State Health Department is trying to work more closely with State Department of Corrections to try and facilitate discussion. She has reached out a few times to people in State Corrections and had very ready response that was very helpful. She says our staff locally has been able to reach correction staff locally.

Kerr thanks Cuddy and says they are doing a great job managing everything. She asks about the hotline that was setup and if people are using it and are people still calling the health department and what should people call the hotline for. Cuddy says the county resource line that Kelly Anderson has been monitoring has seen calls diminish, so they are looking at some considerations about shortening the hours potentially there. She says the health department has not gotten as many as to there one extension, but most still come through the mainline. She says it waxes and wanes with the number of calls they get. She says sometimes the calls are about health needs and sometimes about concerns.

Lattimore says psychology since we are penned up in our homes, he asks what the psychological implications, damage, or cost could be to our community because of the lockdown. Cuddy says it is hard especially when the weather turns nice to stay on our homes. She says Bizzari could probably speak better to the psychological aspect. She says they are trying to share information about staying emotionally healthy by reaching out and making phone calls.

HUMAN SERVICES:

Motion by Didio on HH 3-6, 2nd by Nightengale.

Motion by Kerr to table HH 3-6 until June, 2nd by Nightengale, all in favor.

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| 4-20-HH-3 | Authorizing the Chairman of the Legislature to create and the Director of Community Services to fill a Supervisor of Family Services position in the Department of Social Services. |
| 4-20-HH-4 | Authorizing the Chairman of the Legislature to create and the Director of Community Services to fill a Sr. Social Welfare Examiner position and abolish a Clerk position in the Department of Social Services. |
| 4-20-HH-5 | Authorizing the Chairman of the Legislature to create and the Director of Community Services to fill an Accountant position in the Department of Social Services due to a retirement. |
| 4-20-HH-6 | Authorizing the County Legislature to create and the Director of Community Services to fill a Case Supervisor Grade B (Permanency Specialist) position in the Children & Family Services Unit |

Discussion:

Daly brings up the Mental Health Technical Assistance Coordinator position. She says this is a 100% funded position and would be the third position that we committed to hire when we received the grant for the HEALing community study. She says

they are going to start resuming their work this month and the funders did want the county to move forward with the third position.

Motion by Nightengale to bring resolution to Ways, 2nd by Lattimore, all in favor.

Ray Bizzari (Mental Health/Social Services) –

Mental Health

- We remain open for new/crisis patients. Most visits are telephonic at this time. Therapists/prescribers rotate working from home/office. Visit volume only mildly affected. Patients responding well to changes. Nurses continue with injections.
- The telemedicine platform is rolling out as part of “next phase” change in operations.
- We stay in contact with contract agencies/providers to assist in any way we can. We are pushing out state aid funding as soon as it comes in.
- HEALING Communities grant work suspended due to Monika’s reassignment.

DSS

- Child Welfare staff working in field. No waiver on face to face visit requirement for preventive/foster care/CPS/adult protective. Foster care placements are stable. Adult Protective folks getting served pretty well.
- No detention availability for juvenile delinquents. Very few residential treatment centers accepting placements.
- Temporary Assistance staff rotate in building. They are unable to work remotely and we have to process cases to get benefits out. Many first time applicants are calling for help. It is heartbreaking to hear their stories.
- Accounting staff rotate as well so we can continue to pay all vendors/contract agencies. No work at home capability.
- Staff at both departments have been, and continue to be, dedicated, hard-working, creative and adaptable.

Discussion:

Bizzari appreciates Cuddy and her staff. He says the IT Department has been amazing. He says IT helped convert the Department of Mental Health rapidly to telephonic and telehealth services, which kept them from having any interruption in services. The Northwoods work was really key because we never would have been able to have those folks work remotely. The temporary assistance side of the department is 50% reduction, they are processing a lot of cases and people are requesting services that never had to. The SNAP cases since the beginning of March there are 403 new ones, which is a really significant jump for the county. They have people coming in the evenings and off hours to accommodate their schedule. They are open for emergency services in the county office building and get 5 to 6 people a day. He says they are doing alright on the homeless end and they are getting a lot of parole and jail discharges. They are trying to move people around to keep homeless shelters from getting full. He has suspended home visits for foster care preventative staff except in extreme measures. He says child protective services we still have an occasion to do home visits and practices around that and doing visits outside and with technology.

Brenda Wiemann (Office for the Aging) –

OFA remains operational M-F, 9-2. Staff rotate in office 1/day per wk and work from home remainder. Abandoned Boyle office temporarily. Answering a dozen or more calls a day. Maintaining current information for website.

Meals on Wheels program continues M-F for over 320 seniors, with 6 P/T and 2 F/T staff working daily. Some volunteers have stepped down, others filling in, thankfully! All are verbally screened for symptoms daily. No direct contact with clients – all meals left in a bag on the door and volunteer steps 6ft away before client opens door. A 10-day supply of food has been delivered to each participant in case of service disruption.

Health insurance counseling continues via phone and e-mail, multiple people enrolled in plans for 4/1. Still doing advocacy work for Medicare problems and counseling for 5/1 enrollments. NYConnects functioning well by phone, mail and e-mail.

Case managers call their clients weekly/as needed. Will start a “Friendly Call” service with volunteers soon to provide socialization for isolated seniors.

Staff assisting with county COVID efforts including helping with Hotline and contacting and delivering supplies to food pantries. Grateful for increased IT equipment and assistance!

Motion by Nightengale to adjourn at 7:13PM, 2nd by Lattimore, all in favor.