



MINUTES
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, June 11, 2020
Live Stream Link: [https://youtu.be/ ODE2O-3Jgs](https://youtu.be/ODE2O-3Jgs)

CALL TO ORDER: By Hon. Elane Daly, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:50PM

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

OTHERS: Chair Aileen McNabb-Coleman, Legislators Chris Petrus, Ben Vitale, 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, Human Resources Administrator Lisa Lippoldt, and Deputy Clerk of the Legislature Amanda Morgan

MINUTES TO APPROVE: May 14, 2020, Motion by Ripley, 2nd by Nightengale, all in favor.

RESOLUTIONS:

HEALTH:

6-20-HH-1 Authorizing the Public Health Director to carry out a budget modification in the WIC program budget. **Motion by Ripley, 2nd by Nightengale, all in favor.**

HUMAN SERVICES:

6-20-HH-2 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. **Motion by Kerr, 2nd by Nightengale, all in favor except Pecher.**

DEPARTMENT UPDATES FOR COMMITTEE:

Brenda Wiemann (Office for the Aging) –

The Office for the Aging received our walk-through from Public Health staff. We will be ordering appropriate barriers to help protect staff. Thinking ahead to an eventual COBre- opening to clients, there is concern that the OFA COB office lacks sufficient space to safely accommodate clients **and** staff, which will impede our ability to conduct face-to-face caregiver, benefits, and insurance counseling with the public.

Farmer's Market Coupons are expected to be available on or after July 15th, 2020.

Kathleen Cuddy (Health) –

Update on COVID-19 activities
Update on other programs

Discussion:

Daly asks about the COVID testing twice a week. Cuddy says right now they are, but she believes it just came out that the Governor has scaled back the mandatory testing requirements for skilled nursing home employees and for adult home employees to once a week. She says that it had been twice a week, so they were fairly busy being utilized by our adult homes to meet that requirement. She thinks that may reduce our number, but they will continue to be available for all the people who are going back to work and will include phase three. She says our PPE we have enough for about 5 more clinics. The purchasing office is working hard to buy some through our vendors. The emergency management office just got word that Homeland Security will not be supplying that anymore and Russett could speak better to it, but they are moving from the response phase to a recovery phase. She says that will impact some PPE availability for all entities.

Foley says he has heard that there is a suggestion that there might be a second surge of COVID later in the year and he just wanted to see if Cuddy could clear that up. Cuddy says that they are reading a lot of things in the health department that are being seen in the news as well. She says that there is so much unknown with the virus, but that is correct and is what is being anticipated.

Kerr asks if Cuddy could speak to the reopening guidelines around the salons, hairdressers, and what the health department's role is in monitoring those. She says she has heard some feedback about concerns with regard to the severity of those requirements compared to some other industries and just curious about the health department involvement. Cuddy says one of the questions they brought forward at the State Meeting yesterday was as we move into phase 3 will all of those same expectations for every two week testing for hairdressers and barbers still be expected. She says they do not have a clear answer to that, but as they saw with skilled nursing homes and adult nursing homes there was a scale back on frequency of testing. She says as of right now the guidance stands as it was issued. They certainly encourage and provide information to all the personal care providers on where testing can be obtained and resources for protective equipment that they utilize. She says where they have seen a lot of issues is frustration when there are businesses that are not enforcing the guidance with employees or patrons, so when they get word of that they make an educational phone call and have done that a few times. They have been sharing the hotline number on the daily releases for people to make complaints to the state hotline. She says through the hotline it gets vetted and sent back down to the county it belongs to. She says our city police and county sheriff's department are seeing more phone calls related to that because it is their job to do enforcement follow-up.

Ray Bizzari (Mental Health/Social Services) –

Mental Health:

- Furloughs have been a challenge here compounded by a support staff going out an extended medical. We've asked to call a support staff person back but have to receive a reply as of this writing.
- We currently have two social work staff openings with permission to fill one. Social workers carry between 90-150 cases and bill out for twice their salary/fringe. We are struggling to meet the community need and are no longer always able to see people same day. People are reacting to the pressures of loss of routine, loss of social support, loss of employment, fear of COVID and an unsettled society. Staff is having a hard time keeping up.
- We are working on a re-opening plan. In-person sessions are the standard. Telehealth options are helpful and useful as one tool in the bag but the experience of in person treatment is most valuable. We are waiting to see what happens with the OMH/OASAS/DOH telehealth waivers.
- The HEALING Community's work is impactful and timely. There's been a spike in overdoses and overdose deaths. Nick's Ride for Friends partnership with the county continues.

Social Services:

- Furloughs have been challenging for the Department. As of this writing, we have not received a reply to our request to return the Support Collection Staff in preparations for SC Court reopening. The docket is full of catch up cases.
- SNAP caseloads while high, have stabilized. Our guess is that job losses have leveled off: everyone that might lose their job has lost their job
- The Accounting Unit is down several positions and is looking to fill a senior level staff position. The Unit moves over \$30 million in claiming every year and is responsible for accurate and timely claiming/reporting. This has reached crisis levels
- We continue to position ourselves to manage Family First implementations and are eager to make the proposed/abled organizational changes in child welfare. The purpose of all this work is to improve out foster care work, perfect eligibility and claiming and protect the county from what is accurately millions of dollars of congregate care expenses.
- We need to know the status of the OTDA waivers to accurately craft a plan for when the public is allowed back in the building. Further complicating this work is the status and needs of other departments operating in the COB, use of shared space, etc.
- Substance Use and domestic violence continues to be a prime driver of CPS complaints.
- We've also experienced an increase in Adult Protective referrals and Article 81 guardianships. Many folks have lost their natural supports, suffered emotionally and/or physically from social isolation and even access to regular medical care.
- Case Integrity is staffed by a lone supervisor and we are unable to keep up with Front End Detections (FEDS) and fraud investigations.
- It's worth noting again how valuable Northwoods software has been during this time. We appreciate having it.

Discussion:

Kerr asks for an update on what is happening with our homeless population as well as knowing that evictions have been extended and thinks it has been extended. She asks what kind of conversations Bizzari is hearing around that. Bizzari says there was a big spike at the beginning of COVID. They went out and grabbed a couple of additional hotels and put more people in hotels than typical to try to keep numbers down in shelters, so they did not have to worry about situation where they could not social distance. He says the shelters were really cooperative and they did a really great job of keep people separated. He says there is no way for us to know how many people could possibly be kicked out of their living situations. He says they have been able to drive the numbers down because there is not a lot people looking for apartments, so landlords have been more amenable to renting to folks and they have moved a lot of people to permanent housing.

Motion by Ripley to adjourn at 8:01PM, 2nd by Lattimore, all in favor.