

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
Monday, February 14, 2022 - 10:30 AM

JoePete Wilson, Chairperson  
Charles Harrington, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Wilson called this Human Services Meeting to order at 11:03 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Stephanie DeZalia, Derek Doty, Shaun Gilliland, Charlie Harrington, Roy Holzer, Kenneth Hughes, Steve McNally, Noel Merrihew, Jim Monty, Tom Scozzafava, Matt Stanley, Ike Tyler Joe Pete Wilson, Davina Winemiller, Margaret Wood and Mark Wright. Robin DeLoria was excused.

Department Heads present: Linda Beers, Dan Palmer, Judy Garrison, Krissy Leerkes, Michael Mascarenas and Terri Morse.

News Media: Tim Rowland – SUN

WILSON: Okay if everybody is ready we are going to call to order our Human Services committee. Up first is Mike Mascarenas with Department of Social Services. Floor is yours, Mike.

MASCARENAS: Thank you. Good morning everybody. I do have a couple resolutions this morning. I'd like to start with a resolution of congratulations to David Scaglione. He'll be retiring from our department later this month. Anybody that knows Dave, Dave is our lead attorney in the social services office. He's been an absolute godsend to our department and I'm going to miss him dearly.

**RESOLUTION OF CONGRATULATIONS AND APPRECIATION TO DAVID SCAGLIONE UPON HIS RETIREMENT FROM ESSEX COUNTY. Hughes, unanimous**

WILSON: Motion carries.

MASCARENAS: Okay, thank you. The second resolution is changing the salaries of the attorneys in the DSS department so with the retirement of Dave, you will see what the current salaries are in my report there and we have gotten, we have the proper number of people. I know I had some questions on that. We did luck out and get somebody to apply from another county that has a lot of experience. It was our only applicant so to get that quality of applicant and only having one was nice. So, we'll adjust those salaries somewhat, the adjustment of the salaries would actually produce a savings of \$8830, in the current year budget. So any questions, comments in regards to that?

STANLEY: I'll make that motion.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SALARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR THREE (3) ATTORNEY POSITIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES. Stanley, Scozzafava**

WILSON: Questions? All in favor aye, opposed – motion carries.

MASCARENAS: What I handed out to everybody and the newer supervisors already had

received it was the updated Social Services guide. I just updated it in December of this year. It basically speaks to every program that is operational in social services, income guideline levels, all those types of things in order to qualify for any particular program, it speaks to child welfare, it speaks to our SNAP programs and those types of things. One of the big reasons I like to supply you with that is you get a lot of calls right, you're the one stop shop in your community when people are in need so you have something in front of you where you can point people in the right direction. I mean, giving them my number is always appropriate too that's fine but at least if you have something in front of you that kind of allows you to see what those things are it also helps to elevate some of that perception out there of what social services actually is, what we do for our communities so if you get a chance look at it. I offer that the new supervisors visit my department. I'm happy to do a tour but that goes for anyone of you. I know a number of you have come in the past and have taken that tour and I think you left with wow, it's way different than what was in my mind so if you have a minute and never had done it I encourage you to stop in and say hi and see the people that do the hard work for our department.

One other thing I do have there is a lifeguard training on the last page of the report that's going to be happening at the end of March. There's a certain amount of work remote to do with that in terms of bookwork for students as well as in person work that's going to have to be completed. We struggled in recent years getting people to be lifeguards at your local beaches and the State facilities so hopefully we'll get a good turnout but if you could post that in your town halls, your websites whatever if it's easier to do it digitally I can send it to you there as well.

WILSON: Any other questions for Mr. Mascarenas?

STANLEY: Can you send that lifeguard training to us electronically?

MASCARENAS: Absolutely I will send it to the whole board.

STANLEY: Thank you.

WINEMILLER: Mike I was just wondering, we recently had a fire happen in Bloomingdale and folks lost their home just like that. Are there any facilities in Essex County that offer like a thirty-day emergency household? I know there's motels and things but is there something else?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I mean everything with us and certainly in winter I can do things a little different than I can do any other time of year because of the code blue laws that exist so a family such as that becomes immediately homeless so I could certainly put them up in those type of facilities. We don't have shelters in Essex County. We do use the hotel/motel system in terms of dealing with that clientele so we could do it. A lot of times independent programs will help pick that up, programs like the United Way have helped us before with that sort of thing and Catholic Charities those types of programs too but anytime you have questions I can certainly, whether it is weekend, evening give me a buzz we can connect people with those network of individuals very rapidly in terms of getting them housed. Emergency services is aware of a lot of those things and they are dealing with those situations so they can also connect them pretty quickly.

WINEMILLER: But do we have a facility?

MASCARENAS: No, we do not. There's no homeless shelter in our county.

WINEMILLER: I don't know if I'm saying a homeless shelter I mean, emergency housing?

MASCARENAS: No.

WINEMILLER: I think we should work on that.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, it is certainly something we can look into and see what it involves.

WINEMILLER: Right because in the summer all the hotels are full where are they supposed to go?

MASCARENAS: Sure.

WINEMILLER: I think we need; you know a thirty-day facility something to help out our residents.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I can look into that and see what happens in other counties. Typically, people stay with family, friends but they don't always have that.

WINEMILLER: Thank you Mike.

SCOZZAFAVA: Usually when I've been faced with that in Moriah with a total loss of a home, Red Cross usually steps in and helps and finds some shelter or as Mike pointed out, they put with immediate family or family members and so on. Does Red Cross get involved up there at all?

WINEMILLER: I'm not sure. These folks actually were okay, they have family right there but there are other situations where people don't have family and also where people have pets so I mean, some people their dog is their child and they don't want to go to a hotel if they can't have their dog.

SCOZZAFAVA: Usually I've always felt that Red Cross has been very good when I've had to use them.

WINEMILLER: Thank you.

WOOD: We also had a fire on New Year's Eve and a family in Paradox lost everything and yes, they had a place for that night because of neighbors who were only summer residents but their problem now is they recover and rebuild is the short term rental situation. They can't find a home to rent for nine, to twelve or fifteen months. The most anybody would give them is 90 days and they don't know what will happen by the time May comes along so it's an issue.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, absolutely well our housing issue is this problem period right you know that from all the work we've been doing on our committee so yeah.

MONTY: I do want to say that during that last, the flood down there a group of people got together out of emergency services I was part of that group that contacted all of the agencies in the North Country. I mean we had Catholic Charities, we had NYSEG, we had so many different people working to help them so it's nothing that isn't seen as a problem but I think I've got to say, Essex County has done a great job in trying to help those people and stuff. Is there more we can do? Absolutely but like anything there's more we can do but I think that went, I mean we put that one woman and her kids up for how many?

MASCARENAS: Oh jeepers, it was a couple of months.

MONTY: I was going to say at least three months that I was aware of because she couldn't get back in her home so there is a group. Like Tom said, the American Red Cross, you were part of that group too Linda and stuff so there are groups out there to help.

WILSON: Anyone else? Thank you.

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The next item on the agenda was the Mental Health Department with Terri Morse reporting as follows:

MORSE: Good morning everyone. For the purpose of new people that are here I'm going to talk a little bit about the, 'Did you know?' on my page and about the law enforcement Mental Health referral system. This is a program that we put together back in 2018, as a result of law enforcement both the Sheriff's Department and New York State Troopers getting trained in something called, Crisis Intervention Team. So, if you ever hear of CIT that's what that is so we have a fair amount of law enforcement that are trained and how to deescalate situations and/or refer with individuals with substance abuse or mental health concerns. So what we did is we took that training one step further and we thought, how can we make this better? Okay, we've got these people trained but how do we connect the people that they are encountering with the system and so we created something we called, law enforcement mental health referral system. It is an online HIPPA compliant referral portal that law enforcement fills out. There's rudimentary information on it like I said, it's HIPPA compliant and it has what was going on and then how we could reach out to the individual to connect them with substance abuse or mental health services so we have the mental health association in Essex County over in Westport, on the flats across the street from the Westport Health Center, Essex County Mental Health which is the department I oversee and also St. Joseph's and we vet the referral and determine what is an appropriate outreach to that individual. In 2021, we had 201 individuals referred to that system those are duplicated numbers and I can say that about a third of them are either already engaged or engaged in services. It's also for if we encounter somebody that has food deficits or housing deficits so there's case management aspects of it too, whether the individual was arrested or not arrested, if they were taken to the hospital or not taken to the hospital we're trying to connect those individuals with our system so that's my, Did you Know.

I wanted to also bring to your attention that BRIEF, Building Resilience in Essex Families coalition will be making a short presentation at next month's meeting so you'll get updated on that. That's been going on, BRIEF has been in place for about two months, two years excuse me and there's a lot of exciting things to share with you about what's been going on.

I have two resolutions that I would like to review with you, one is about adding a part time account clerk to our organization. We've been watching our services climb up and if you look at the front page of my report you can see 2019 to 2021 we are doing a lot more services almost 50% more services so that has been really difficult for my one account person, accounting person to process all that billing and so we've gotten to the point where we need to hire a part time person. I did crunch the numbers for me to use my electronic health records billing processing services, I can save about \$20,000, if I do it internally so I have a resolution to add a part time account clerk that means I will have to change my budget.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE HIRING OF A PART-TIME ACCOUNT CLERK IN THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT. Hughes, Scozzafava**

WILSON: Any questions?

SCOZZAFAVA: So I just caught when you said do it eternally so, are we? What's that mean?

MORSE: I'm not going to outsource the billing responsibilities to our electronic health record organization. I could go that route but at a 4% loss of revenue, that is not going to be economically beneficial.

SCOZZAFAVA: I'm assuming you talked this over with Dan?

MORSE: I did. We explored different options.

GILLILLAND: Are you debiting this from another portion of your budget or to pay for this or are you asking for an increase from your budget?

MORSE: We are asking for an increase in our budget.

PALMER: No you're not. No, look I mean, again these are the kinds of things if you create a new position in what is February of this year I'm not going to transfer any money into your account. We'll wait until November and we'll see where you stand. If you in fact need money in November, we'll talk about it but from the current funding we'll have to take it out of your existing budget until we get to that point.

SCOZZAFAVA: To continue, I see health insurance benefits on here part time, do we?

PALMER: Yeah, I've got to check that out. I'm not sure that that is necessarily correct.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay.

PALMER: Because I'm not sure she is entitled to a family plan.

MORSE: Well, we don't know who we are hiring.

PALMER: It doesn't matter who you're hiring it's a part time position which means she's entitled to individual coverage he or she whoever you happen to hire is going to be entitled to individual coverage not family coverage. If she wants to buy up to the family plan she can but it's her own money.

MORSE: So there will be revenue, not revenue but offsetting from that.

PALMER: Some but I'm not sure the number you have in there as a family plan cost is accurate, it should be an individual plan.

WILSON: Other questions?

McNALLY: So you have no one you've talked to about taking this position?

MORSE: You mean internally?

McNALLY: Right.

MORSE: No. I mean if there is somebody internally that applies for it then I'm going to have to backfill their position I do not have extra staffing time.

McNALLY: It just makes poor business sense in my opinion, to hire somebody for 20 hours a week, where the benefit package is going to be more than the actual salary. I mean, you would get more if we had a full time in this position.

PALMER: Well, again I'm not sure that that benefit number is right. Like I said, I don't believe she's entitled to a family plan.

McNALLY: But still if it was that case you get twice the work for an additional \$20,000.

PALMER: Well, we'll see what that number looks like.

HUGHES: But isn't there an argument to be made that if you hire person, this allows the department to generate revenue that couldn't be potentially generated by this individual, single person who is already overworked? Am I incorrect in stating that?

PALMER: Yeah, I don't know I mean, Terri can probably answer that but I don't think you generate more revenue because they are not a revenue producing individual all they do is bill. They bring in revenue but they don't create.

HUGHES: That's my point.

MORSE: They will process it more efficiently and effectively.

PALMER: But I don't think that increases your revenue number overall.

MORSE: It does not.

McNALLY: You cannot rely on efficiency to create this kind of money.

PALMER: No you can't. There's money to be spent here.

SCOZZAFAVA: I certainly agree you need a position you need some help over there but I think that once again, so apparently, I shouldn't say apparently so Dan you haven't had a discussion on this it sounds like?

PALMER: We had a discussion on the position itself. We did not talk about what the actual level of costs was.

SCOZZAFAVA: So by ways and means it will be all sorted out?

PALMER: Yeah, I will tell you what the actual benefit cost is.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay, thank you.

MORSE: Your welcome. I will just say we've been trying to kind of string along here for about a year and a half and the numbers are not going down.

WILSON: And to go back to a point you made we have to bill and if we go to automated billing to do our service it's more expensive so of our choices, this seems to be the more economical and maybe as Steve is saying it gives some option in the future to make it full time if the need arises.

SCOZZAFAVA: Do we have a list Dan for account clerk?

PALMER: I'm not really sure. We don't get many people applying much unfortunately.

WILSON: Further questions? All in favor aye, opposed – motion carries. Thank you.

MORSE: Thank you. I'll make sure those numbers are more appropriate. The next resolution is to accept \$36,000 from an Office of Mental Health Workforce grant and I outlined the three things that we can use that funding for and if there is any questions? Again, Dan and I talked about what would be a beneficial way to utilize that funding.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO ACCEPT FUNDING FROM EMERGENCY CMHS ADULT FEDERAL COVID ONE-TIME ALLOCATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$36,000.00, AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE SAME. Hughes, Wright**

WILSON: Any questions, concerns?

SCOZZAFAVA: I see looking at the recruitment and retention incentives, explain that a little bit more.

MORSE: So the \$36,000 could be utilized for longevity bonuses that are already on my books so will basically reimburse.

SCOZZAFAVA: I just don't want to open the door here to four hundred and something employees  
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PALMER: No we specifically checked on this one. Those funds can be used to pay our longevity payments out of that department doesn't increase them, doesn't change them it just provides back fill.

MORSE: And it can also accommodate any training fees that I have normally budgeted, I can utilize this funding to offset that budget item.

PALMER: Some grants that you get you can't offset existing lines; this one provides that you can.

SCOZZAFAVA: Thank you.

WILSON: Anyone else? All in favor aye, opposed – motion carries. Thank you.

MORSE: That concludes my report.

WILSON: Anything else for Ms. Morse? Alright, thank you very much.

MORSE: Your welcome.

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The next item on the agenda was the Public Health Department with Linda Beers reporting as follows:

BEERS: Hello everybody. Thank you for being here today. I see many of you have it and thank you Judy for handing them out, we had the great pleasure of meeting the new supervisors that we made packets for them. Our staff thought it was a valuable opportunity to share that with all of you so I know you're seeing ECHO baggage which stands for Essex County Heroin other, we changed it, it says opioid on that but I really do want you to all look inside your packet at one thing in particular you don't have to pull it up now but one thing I would really like you to do is there's couple cardboardish kind of signs, WIC signs. Can you hang them up in your building? We really want to promote WIC and the other displays inside there's one for every one of our units. So in Essex County Health Department I oversee early intervention pre-school services which is children services so we call it the Children Services Unit. I oversee CHHA out of the certified home health agency unit and that is our skilled nursing home. We oversee the public health unit which has really done Covid campaigning or pandemic response and lastly we have WIC underneath the public health department so that are all department underneath what we call the public health house and there's individual brochures on each one of them.

I also want to talk to you or just tell you starting in March we'll start doing our rabies clinics again so my staff will be reaching out. We're going to do it very similar as we did last year we were really productive. We did lots of large clinics and they were really, really good and we'll go with that drive thru format it was much more productive and the Vets loved it verses bringing animals in the building and terrifying them and really it was a great campaign, it was really successful.

Also, I have a resolution. It is to accept funding for Jingle Bell, this is part of WIC. In the amount of \$800, the Jingle Bell fund donation from the Adirondack Health in the amount of \$800, if I can get a resolution to accept those funds in the WIC budget.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH WIC DEPARTMENT, INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$800.00, JINGLE BELL RUN DONATION. Hughes, Stanley.**

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor aye, opposed – motion carries. Thank you.

BEERS: So I didn't really do a huge thing about it honestly we just got behind with Covid but I do want to say, we did an amazing job this Christmas and what probably many didn't recognize the Sheriff's Department did the fill the bus and what not, they donated all of those gifts to us and the WIC Department in Essex County did something unique that was just an amazing opportunity for parents and their families. I believe overall there were 57 families that came so this is Covid time and we wiped everything down in between but instead of picking items for your child and what not we allowed parents to come in and shop. We had an idea of how many children they had and all the toys were there. They were so empowered. We had wrapping paper for them to wrap their own gifts, tap for them to tap them together you know, no cards. I think it was a really empowering experience for parents to honestly know what was inside the things that we often wrap and give them. They actually picked something and said oh my gosh, you know there's three trucks, you know my kid really likes blue that's his favorite color I can only again, tell you Krista Berger did an amazing job as did all of the staff in pulling this off. It was absolutely an amazing opportunity to watch these wonderful families come in and feel such great joy to be able to do something for their own kids and feel empowered by doing that so, that is part of the spiel with the \$800 for the Jingle Bell fund.

My report today is really this, our time capsule. Andrea Whitmarsh has done an amazing job

since day one of keeping this Covid response going and going so I'm not really sure where I left off last time but I will tell you in the Covid response in the last six months so if just have you turn to the last page, we would just call on that so in June of 2021, to present what happened and you know I just call attention to some of these amazing things the MRC recognition day, the new omicron variants, community transmission reaches a high I love on June 2021, Essex County reached twelve consecutive days with no daily Covid. I remember all of us going wow, alright and then, fast forward to August 18, based on CDC community transmission Essex County reaches the highest rate of transmission we were at 14% that day. It was unbelievable. I think one of the numbers here which stands out to me, if you go fast forward to early January so I leave for you to read this. I'm not sure this story is ending hopefully it will be one more page but I really think it shows the difference what happened in a rural county than other counties. I don't know if you know but I've been asked to represent rural counties and speak at a rural county convention. I will be using this. Ours did not roll out the way big cities rolled out and you'll see a lot of volunteerism, lots of groups, lots of boarding or action how do we get the players it's a different tale. One of the things on early January of 2022, on January 6, 2022, the Essex County Health Department reported 199 new daily cases this total ended up being the highest in the pandemic so that was the highest number we ever had in the pandemic and just remember, that wasn't long ago right? January of 2022 so we are really making great gains and we're working really hard to get back in the swing of public health and core public health and all of those things are coming back lead poisonings and all of those type of things we've held dear to as our core for public health so that's really my report today.

WILSON: Anything else for Public Health? Thank you very much.

BEERS: Thank you.

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The next item on the agenda was the Office for the Aging Department with Krissy Leerkes reporting as follows:

LEERKES: Good morning. So once again, I stand between you and lunch I will not take up a lot of your time. I do have a couple of updates. Since last month, we've worked with Linda and her team obviously for the last however long, with Covid right now what we are doing which is pretty unique across the State is I have one of my staff that are linked with her Comcare, am I correct Linda in the Comcare system and December actually goes in and she makes contacts now with every Covid positive case that is somebody that is 60 and over so it's a form of outreach for us obviously to reach maybe those individuals that we would typically not have reached but it is that, you know that local touch for older adults and their care givers so that is something really cool that we've implemented.

We worked with Emergency Services with their Covid tests, their shipments so all of our home delivered meal clients have received the N95 masks, the Covid tests we shipped out to anybody that has called our office.

We just had a, those of you that have been on the board may remember that we worked with New York State Office for the Aging for a PILOT project with our companion pets so they are the little robotic cats and dogs; we have a pretty big supply so last week we held an online adoption event which actually was very well received all those kitties and the two dogs have been, actually have found a new home so that's cool.

We worked with our 4H through Cornell Cooperative Extension as well as my personal Girl Scout Troop and they created Valentines that have been shipped out to many of the home delivered meal clients.

I just actually in my email got notice from one of my staff that we'll be hosting a healthy living workshop, a lot of you may recall that the called chronic disease self-management, we're going to be doing that from March 17 – April 21 on Thursdays from 10:30 to 11:30 over the phone so it takes that barrier of having to have any type of Zoom or do anything in person.

So that's a couple of quick updates. You have my reports of our clients and services provided in 2021, as everybody can note obviously our services increased pretty significantly for some services I would say 80-85% of our services jumped a ton some actually decreased for many different reasons.

You know we are the alternate certifier for HEAP. Any questions on that before I go into resolutions? Perfect. So I do have three resolutions and this is carrying money over that was not used in 2021, to bring it into the 2022 fiscal year. So the first is to carry over special and urgent needs funds from Adirondack Foundation and there's other just miscellaneous funds in this amount of \$14,638.26.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$14,638.26, CARRY OVER UNEXPENDED 2021 SPECIAL AND URGENT NEEDS GRANT FROM ADIRONDACK FOUNDATION. Stanley, Harrington**

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor aye, opposed – the motion carries.

LEERKES: The next one is on to carry over unexpended DSRIP money which is the delivery system reform incentive payment program in the amount of \$169,935.15.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$169,935.15, CARRY OVER UNEXPENDED 2021 DSRIP FUNDS FROM ADIRONDACK HEALTH INSTITUTE. Stanley, Wood**

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor aye, opposed – the motion carries.

LEERKES: And the last one is to carry over unexpended FFCRA, this is our stimulus Covid 19 funds from a wide variety of accounts. These funds have to be expended by December of 2024, and those funds are in the amount of \$252,267.54.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$252,267.54, CARRY OVER UNEXPENDED 2021 FFCRA STIMULUS COVID 19 FUNDING. Wright, Scozzafava**

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor aye, opposed – the motion carries. Anything else for Office for the Aging? Alright thank you very much.

LEERKES: Thank you.

WILSON: Anything else to come before this committee?

MONTY: Yeah, this is pertaining to the United Way campaign. A week ago I put a flyer in everybody's mail box here and I'm the 2022 Chairman for Essex County, the United Way campaign and every year I like to issue a challenge to the Board of Supervisors to donate to the

United Way campaign. As you know, you can choose any group within Essex County to donate that money, that money goes directly to them. I'm hoping we all will donate. I can think of a half a dozen times just recently, where United Way stepped in and helped families here in Essex County. It's a great group. If they can't find the resources themselves, they partner with many agencies so I'm challenging the Board of Supervisors to donate. Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you. Anyone else? Before I adjourn, an invitation to a solid waste task force meeting in the board room in five minutes otherwise we're adjourned. Thank you.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Human Services committee it was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk  
Board of Supervisors