

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Monday, February 8, 2021 - 9:30 AM

Clerk's note – This meeting was held virtually.

Joseph Giordano, Chairperson
Charles Harrington, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Giordano called this Human Services Meeting to order at 9:30 am with the following Supervisors virtually in attendance: Clayton Barber, Robin DeLoria, Archie Depo, Stephanie DeZalia, Shaun Gilliland (in person), Joseph Giordano, Charlie Harrington, Roy Holzer, Kenneth Hughes, Steve McNally, Jim Monty, Noel Merrihew, Jay Rand, Tom Scozzafava, Jeffrey Subra, Ike Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson and Davina Winemiller.

Department Heads present: Dan Palmer (in person) Linda Beers, James Dougan, Judy Garrison, Krissy Leerkes, Michael Mascarenas, Terri Morse and Heather Sheehan.

Also virtually present: Sun News, Tim Rowland.

GIORDANO: I will call this Human Service Committee to order. Please stand for the pledge. We will begin with the Department of Social Services, Mike Mascarenas.

MASCARENAS: I come to you with a little bit of good news today. Give a little bit of history for those of you who are unaware, on an annual basis about \$6.5 million of our levy is Medicaid payout. Two states in the entire country are required counties to make Medicaid payments to fulfill their obligation and those states are California and New York State. For Essex County that amounts to about \$6.5 million dollars a year those come out weekly in the form of weekly shares it's simply a deduction from our account here at the county to the State account. So just to make a long story short, if the county provided no other service we'd still look at a \$6.5-million-dollar levy so that amount comes out prior to us being able to perform any other services that we would perform not just social services but the county as a whole. With that being said, the Federal Government increased their share over the past year. The state did try to get them give back because they do have a significant shortcoming in terms of Medicaid statewide. The Board and Mr. Gilliland helped fight that and we kind of won that battle and that money is going to remain with the counties. The way the State decided to do that was to reduce the amount of weekly shares that they are taking out of our account instead of just giving us a check for what we were supposed to get they reduce that amount the year resulting in what we have to pay, for this year alone that amount will be about \$600,000 that we have to pay less in Medicaid. Additional savings is going to be about \$102,000, so there's some good news in terms of that in helping us meet our budgetary obligations. That's all I really got this month. I did provide my report if anybody has any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

GIORDANO: Thank you Mike. Does anybody have any questions for Mike?

HUGHES: If I could please. Good morning Mike. I have a couple of questions about your report. On page, one the very top of the page under CPS, you said, there's a total for this year of 537 reports. Is that for 537 from January 1st to right now?

MASCARENAS: Yup, that is correct. For this year, we were actually down somewhat over last year, many of the mandated reporters which were school systems were out. To be honest, it was helpful in some ways because we were also very low on staff, with state testing not happening, state training's not happening. It's hard to put bodies out in the field that are untrained so we're still down a handful of caseworkers those that remain are over extended like I'm sure they are in many departments but yes, that represents the total from January through December for 2020.

HUGHES: Oh, for 2020. I thought it was January 1 to date of 2021. I misread that.

MASCARENAS: No, that was for the year in total. I'm always reporting a month behind, just so everybody's aware.

HUGHES: Okay, more questions to elongate this process. Foster care, the first line when you mentioned the custody of Commissioner of Social Services, are you the Commissioner of Social Services or is that the State of New York?

MASCARENAS: That's me. So yes, those children are under my direct supervision and guidance and custody.

HUGHES: Okay, thank you. On page three, under child support it says your year to date collections worth \$3.4 million dollars, does that go into social services? How does that money, that's revenue? I mean is that revenue? Can you explain that a little bit? Where does it go? How does that work?

MASCARENAS: I'm glad you asked. I typically keep my presentation short because we always run over and child support is something I always want to talk about. Child support is a different animal a little bit and it's an important one due to the fact that they are the collection agency for all those payments that are due to children. Those accounts don't run through the county, what happens is those parents that are required to pay for their children we have an account with Champlain National Bank, that money comes in and then we pay it out to the person that rightfully should be getting it. The reason why I say it's a little bit of a different animal is because most people that are coming to us in those eligibility realms have needs whether it be housing or SNAP or Medicaid or something like that but what that \$3.4 million dollars really does is it keeps people from applying for SNAP or Medicaid or TANF you know, and that's why it's so critical to the services we provide because it really does keep the levels down somewhat when the people are meeting their mandated costs for their children throughout the county.

HUGHES: Okay, that's a helpful explanation I appreciate that and my final question, I had a chance to read this during the Super Bowl last night; on page 5, as a result our new weekly payment will be just shy of \$98,000, can you explain? Is that more or less than what we've paid? How is that money handled?

MASCARENAS: Yes, that's the F map funding and I started to explain that in the beginning and that's the Federal costs. So what we were paying at the beginning of the year was \$110,000 a week. That's just the electronic withdrawal from a county account to the state account. We have no say; those were mandated by law to pay that. The additional funding that the Feds put out there reduced our local share to the \$97,000 so that will produce an extra \$152,000 a year savings for Essex County taxpayers. Now, prior to budget, I would say we can account for some of that which the total is really \$656,000, is what our savings is going to be for the year but I was able to

account for some of it, not knowing that we were going to get additional come January so the additional amounts to the hundred-fifty-two, it's less than what we have been paying.

HUGHES: Thank you for circling back on that topic, I appreciate it.

MASCARENAS: Yup, no problem.

HUGHES: That's it for me.

GIORDANO: Anybody else have any questions for Mike?

SUBRA: I'm not on the committee but Mike can I ask a question? Because that is Federal monies that have been contributed towards your, that fund is there going to be in the future that they're going to try to offset or save some of that money on the other end or your next paragraph there or not?

MASCARENAS: You know me and Mr. Palmer have this conversation quite often and sometimes you do see that so when the Feds take a stand on something and apportion more money to us sometimes you will see the State cut us in another area so that they try to get their money back one way or another. I think that's what you're getting at? Right now they are not doing that we are actually hearing just the opposite, what's being proposed by the Governor a 20% cut is now looking like it's going to be a 5%. He has a couple different proposals out there. I think one is \$18 billion of something for stimulus or another is somewhere around \$6 billion in terms of the stimulus so that is going to make a difference in what the State settles on but these next couple of months are going to be crucial in determining locally how we make out due to that.

SUBRA: Thanks Mike.

MASCARENAS: Yes sir.

GIORDANO: Anyone else have any other questions for Mike? If not, thank you Mike.

MASCARENAS: Thank you.

GIORDANO: We will move onto Department of Mental Health with Terri Morse. Good morning Terri.

MORSE: Good morning everyone. I hope everyone is doing well on this very, very chilly day. I have a number of resolutions to go through so I think I'm going to organize this by kind of having news and a resolution that goes along with news. However, this is one news that I did not prepare a resolution for because I wasn't really sure of how I would do a resolution on this. So the fourth bullet item on my report is a request or guidance request for writing off bad debts that have existed in this department probably even before 2012 to January 1, 2019. The total is \$27,636.71, that is pure, bad debt. That is for those individual that did not pay their co-pay and should have, that is for those who were supposed to pay self-pay and did not. It also includes some bad debt from, there was a practice from insurance companies years ago that if an individual came to seek services and they had private insurance sometimes what would happen is the check the insurance for the insurance reimbursement would go to the client and not to our building so then we would bill the client and the client was supposed to take that insurance that they got and pass it off to us

but there are thousands of dollars in that \$27,000, I would say somewhere around probably six to eight thousand for that kind of scenario. Thank goodness insurance companies do not practice that way anymore but there are times that our community members took the money and did not pay their bill. I will have to say I listed in my report the number of ways that my front office staff have structured the way they do receipts so that the number should be stable. So I guess what I'm asking for is like a pre-resolution. I didn't type up a resolution yet because I wanted to work through anything, any questions or any comments before I actually wrote a resolution.

TYLER: I have a question. I'm not on the committee but is there any criminal action against these individuals taking the check and not passing it back to you? Have you looked into that?

MORSE: The situation that that happened was years ago probably 2017 or before. I was not in the role that I am in now so that was not done back then. The answer to your question is no and I don't know if I could do that retroactively for something that happened four years ago? I can tell you that one of the situations was an individual who does work for our county in a different department. The front office staff probably sent a dozen invoices to this individual and even sent one interoffice mail so, we did not get payment.

GIORDANO: Dan, if I could interject. I know Joe Provoncha spoke to the board a couple of years ago just kind of sharing these, sort of similar losses that counties incurred in different departments in the past. Did we ever, and I forget how we resolved to handle that? Of if it's something that was made known but not necessarily needed to have action take upon it?

PALMER: Typically these are, we end up writing these off as bad debt so you do a resolution essentially saying that this is a bad debt in the Mental Health Department in that amount of money and you write it off and the reason we do that is because the Comptroller's when they do audits want to know what you did with that bad debt, did you try to collect it, did you write it off, how did you do it? You know, we do invoices. You know, at one time we actually went out to bid for a debt collection service from Attorneys' and the only way yep, the Health Department was one of them that we did it in and the only way attorneys will take this is at a \$250, typically \$250 an hour rate and they give no guarantee that they are going to collect. Like I say, we did attempt that it ended up costing us more for the attorneys than it did for the debt we were trying to collect. Unfortunately, these things do occur it's also difficult at times to collect some of these money. The ones that are you know, that ended up getting an insurance check in and then don't properly reimburse us as the vendor is problematic and I'm hoping that the insurance companies have modified how that is done but the other ones that you know, I honestly don't believe you would have much luck collecting co-pays and some of those ones. Some of the people that we're talking about are pretty low income and it's pretty difficult for them to pay. So my recommendation in these things is that you know regardless of whether we like it or not we end up having to write off the debt and it's really for accounting purposes to justify why we didn't collect what we did.

MORSE: And I appreciate all of what is said. I want you to know that a lot of this \$27,000, is like \$250 here, \$100 there they are such tiny amounts I think the highest amount was \$2250, so as Dan said, are we going to – I just don't think as Linda often says the juice is worth the squeeze and this is like, more than seven years' worth of bad debt. I'm pretty proud of the fact that it's really averages about \$3,000 a year that's pretty good. It's not a lot.

SCOZZAFAVA: I will move that we write it off. This has been customary for years actually I'm surprised that the amount is as small as it is because I can remember years it was significantly

higher and most of it always occurs in Mental Health so I would so move that we write off the debt.

GIORDANO: Thank you Tom. Can I get a second? Thank you Ken.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO WRITE OFF \$27,636.71, IN BAD DEBT. Scozzafava, Hughes.

GIORDANO: Any further discussion? All those in favor signify by saying aye, anyone opposed – so carried. Okay, next resolution Terri.

MORSE: I have one piece of news and then I'm going to jump into a bunch of resolutions. So the third bullet item in my work indicates that the previously hired Director of Clinical Services at Essex County Mental Health has determined that she would like to have her job duties re allocated to a more direct services position and not an administrative position. So I just wanted to inform you of that. I am working on finding a replacement and also figuring out if her request to provide direct services makes sense to do financially and programmatically in our organization. So that's just news. Any questions or comments about that?

GIORDANO: Any questions?

MORSE: Okay I'm going to start with the resolution about a, this actually comes from a request from a board of supervisor that we do more work in Essex County under the topic of suicide prevention so we were able to get some funding from the Workforce Development Institute to have two train the trainers for a program called QPR which stands for question, persuade and refer. These two trainers will, the cost of the training is minimal but we are requesting that we sign a memorandum of understanding with the Workforce Development Institute to gain approximately \$2200.00, for this purpose and also to purchase these training modalities.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO ENTER INTO A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE IN AN AMOUNT UP TO \$2200.00, FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING TRAIN-THE-TRAINER FOR QPR (QUESTION, PERSUADE, REFER) SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING FOR TWO PEOPLE AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE SAID MOU. Monty, Harrington

GIORDANO: Discussion? If not, all those in favor signify by saying aye, anyone opposed – so carried.

MORSE: I just want to say one more point about that, once these trainers are trained so, for example if the Department of Social Services wanted to have a video training for this hour long QPR then we would take that training gratis to the Department of Social Services so these trainers will be utilized across the entire county for both in county and out of county resources so that we can get more people vocal and talking about suicidal thoughts if they occur. I would also like to request a rollover of auto supplies and repairs in the amount of \$1,390.72, based as the resolution as worded.

GIORDANO: Someone want to move that?

HARRINGTON: I'll move it.

GIORDANO: Thanks Charlie.

PALMER: No, I don't think we can do this one. This is not how the budget works. You don't roll over specific accounts. You can roll over funds that are grant funded but you can't rollover budget accounts.

MORSE: Okay.

PALMER: On December 31st any money in the budget account falls back to the general fund. If you have an invoice you can use that as you know, something that you're going to pay in the following year but you can't rollover accounts per say.

MORSE: Got it.

PALMER: If you have additional money in those accounts you can ask later for a budget transfer from the contingent account but we simply don't roll account money over.

MORSE: Duly noted. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

HARRINGTON: I would withdraw the resolution.

GIORDANO: Thanks Charlie. Dan, is it too late to encumber if she has a specific use for it? I guess it would be.

PALMER: Well yeah at this point it would be late for an encumbrance. We haven't closed the books so if you had an invoice per say that you said, okay you know I'm going to purchase a car out of the equipment supply and you already bid it and you know the invoice was out there then you can encumber the funds but you can only do that in those cases that you know exactly that you have an invoice that represents a cost that you are going to take out of 2020 and you just weren't procedurally able to do that.

MORSE: Okay great I appreciate that because that's a nice lead in for the other rollover that I have. This is a grant. Mental Health received \$257,795.10 through the CARES Act. We have until June, 2021 to obtain expenses or allocate expenses associated with that grant funding. We're working with the Public Health Department in making sure that that grant funding is allocated so that we don't have to send any back but I have to roll that over from 2020 to 2021 for that purpose.

PALMER: And that is correct. Those are the kind that you will see. You will see those on a regular basis in the departments and typically it's because of different fiscal years from the grant sources either State or Federal or both on different fiscal years and we are, so you will see a number of those resolutions between now and April when departments will be asking to roll those funds over and those are entirely appropriate.

GIORDANO: Okay, can I get someone who would like to move that? Jay moves it, Tom second.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A CARRYOVER IN THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF

UNEXPENDED 2020 CARES ACT FUNDS, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$257,795.10. Rand, Scozzafava

GIORDANO: Discussion? All in favor signify with aye, anyone opposed – so carried.

MORSE: I did include the 2019 compared to 2020 demand for services in our report, in some ways that is kind of justifying my next three resolutions. So, we would like to contract with an individual whose name is Vanessa Funfsinn, she is a licensed marriage and family therapist. We do not have anyone with that background on our staff currently and we have needed one for a very long time. I would like to contract with her for one day a week at \$75 an hour.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH VANESSA FUNFSINN, LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST FOR ONE DAY A WEEK IN THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT AT \$75.00/HOUR. Monty, Rand

GIORDANO: Any discussion on this resolution?

SCOZZAFAVA: I have a question. Is this a program that we are currently offering?

MORSE: So, you know it's a good question Tom. Essex County Mental Health has always said that we provide family services and we do. I would have to say that the specialty in that is not something that many of our counselors have and in my efforts to provide more proactive services in the county for children and family services this is a win. This is a wonderful add to our organization to try to help children in that 0 to 5 population that were was a day in my early years here that we didn't even serve that population. So this is a win for the county.

GIORDANO: Anyone else? And Terri the money for this is coming out of, there's an increase in the personnel budget.

MORSE: Yes, sorry my Fiscal Officer was at home with vaccine two symptoms so could not really help me with the document. The hourly rate would be covered by billable services so it should be a wash.

GIORDANO: Oh, okay. All those in favor signify with an aye, anyone opposed – so carried.

MORSE: So just to reiterate that is a contracted so there would be no benefits associated with that.

The last resolutions are related to one another as the demand on our services increases and how that impacts staffing. I would like to increase the number of hours for the Deputy Director of Administrative Services that is Sean Ganter, from a 35-hour work week to a 40-hour work week. This would be on some level, it's a temporary request because it's really kind of associated with the demands of Covid on his time so I'm only asking at this point while Covid is active.

PALMER: So what you're saying this is a temporary increase from 35 to 40 for the period in which we're in Covid response? And the other question I guess I have and we may have talked about this Terri I'm not sure, is it was not budgeted for so where are you specifically getting the budgeted funds from?

MORSE: Reimbursement, not State aid but our clinical reimbursement monies.

PALMER: Okay.

SCOZZAFAVA: I have a question. So, I understand we're all stressed putting in additional time and so on with Covid but I'm just going to say that this is a slippery slope we are heading down if we're going to start increasing hours for county employees due to Covid. We are opening the door wide open because I'm sure that we have literally hundreds of employees who are putting in a heck of lot more time than their usual schedule. I'm not saying I'm opposed to it I'm just saying we're opening the door here believe me. You need to justify when you say because of Covid, give me an example I mean, what are they doing more right now because of the Covid outside of what this individual ordinarily does?

MORSE: So as the document that I attached to my packet informs is that our clinical services have increased, when our clinical services increased while that translates as increased revenue it also translates as increased billing transactions so the amount of demand on you know, our front office workers have to take 30% more phone calls than they are used to.

SCOZZAFAVA: Is that happening? Are they staying over? I'm thinking of Public Health right now who every day is scrambling to put reports together, who every day is scrambling to do one thousand things a day and we have not increased anybody's hours over there. I don't think I can support this Terri because I just don't feel that it's fair to other county employees who I know are putting in a significant amount of time. And again, once you open that door it's open. Dan, I'm looking to you maybe we need to do a little more looking into in this one position?

PALMER: Yeah, again I guess I would have to see that Terri. I got to believe that, you know the increase in clinical and I know you say the increase in clinical is going to cover the cost but it does start to, when you combine this one with your other one. If you're talking about increasing a clinician's time that he is going to see patients that he can bill for then you start to get to that, okay there's the extra revenue I can say that he's going to spend another hour or three hours a week seeing a patient so therefore he's going to bring in more revenue based upon that. I do understand the concept that if you see more patients you will generate more back end paperwork, that has to be addressed I just have to see more clearly where those revenue numbers are because we didn't see them. If we had added them into the 2021 budget process when we were doing it back in November, then that might be easier to kind of justify at this point but I'm, I guess I really have to be convinced on those numbers.

MORSE: Okay I will get back to you in the next one, sorry.

HUGHES: If I could just jump in real quick, to counter a little bit what Tom just mentioned, Linda did say very clearly to use that if she needed help that she would ask. You know and if she needed that extra support she would be the first person we would hear from the Director of Public Health if there was more need in her department and we just haven't heard that. So I'm glad that they have an efficient way of getting things done over there with the mountains of work that is piled onto them on a daily basis.

I would also like to say that I feel mental health is directly linked to public health. I think that we're seeing upticks in mental health calls and billable services because people even though they may not have Covid, they're stressed and struggling and really having a difficult time from the mental health aspect. I mean, that's well-known and well documented in a wide variety of newspapers

and media outlets so I would be supportive of this conversation. I would like to know what Covid time is though? When is Covid over? What does that look like? When do you official declare Covid over? When does that temporary timeline done for Essex County? I would want to know more about that and I do agree with Mr. Palmer that it would be nice to know a little bit more about the money aspects and the financial aspects but I just want to put those thoughts in there, thank you.

GIORDANO: Thank you Ken.

MONTY: I'm a very strong proponent for mental health all the way but as far as the billing here I got to say and I hate to say this because I will sound crazy but I agree with Tom. You know I think this is a dangerous area to get into because that is his job is the billing aspect of it because I think you can go into any department whether it's public health, social services, probation, any of these other departments where people have had to actually step up and do more and not get reimbursed for that. It's unfortunate. This is unprecedented times. I think we really need to look at this clearly, I'm not saying it's not needed but we just wrote off \$27,000 worth of bad debt. I think that all of this kind of goes hand in hand. Thank you.

GIORDANO: Thank you Jim.

MORSE: If I may comment, so Linda Beers was able to utilize volunteers within the county to help support the contract tracing initiative. This job responsibility is not something I can go get a volunteer to do additionally if anybody looks at my timesheet, my timesheet you will see that I work until like 6:30 most nights.

PALMER: Alright well let's, I will sit down with you Terri and we'll look at the numbers and we'll see where we are and if this is something I think is justifiable we'll come back and talk either at ways and means or at the regular board and make a further recommendation. At this point, it's a big ticket, it's \$10,000 and I just need to see where those clinical dollars are going to be coming from and whether they actually cover the cost that we need.

MORSE: I would just say that I am passing more of my responsibilities onto this person so that I'm not working until 6:30 every night.

PALMER: No, I understand that.

MORSE: I don't have a secretary.

PALMER: Yup, neither do I. I understand. So we will again, we will look at the numbers and see where we are. It's not like it's the end of it here once we determine whether there's clinical dollars to support it I'll come back to this board and make a further recommendation but at this point I'm just not able to it's a \$10,000 change and I don't know where the revenue is coming from.

DELORIA: May I? I don't know, it's one thing to be on the board and listen to some of this but this is a decision that Linda, I'm sorry not Linda but Linda also but Terri and Dan Palmer really need to converge on when it's too easy for us to listen for a resolution asking for this and not really, truly understand the impact that it's having on her department. So, I say, absolutely let Dan and Terri Morse get together on this and from my standpoint, I'm not on the committee but I absolutely support it. There's people in the county that is doing less work because of Covid and

this burden is being shifted to the top administration that we need them in position and they need their mental health too. So, that's my position on that. I'll rest.

GIORDANO: Thank you. Good point, Robin. We'll defer this one Terri for you and Dan to have further conversations and Dan can bring it back to the board for a recommendation. What's your next resolution?

MORSE: Sorry, thank you. In addition to that, one of the ways that I'm trying to solve the problem of meeting the demand of mental health services is to look at how we can increase the amount of staff members for clinical services. So one of the solutions I have talked to Dan and Mike Mascarenas about is rather than hiring additional staff increasing staff from 35-hour workweek to 40-hour work week, during Covid, whatever that means and to defray having to add an additional staff member and additional expenses associated with benefits etc. some of the frontline staff workers, to increase their number of hours to a 40-hour workweek. Expenses would be offset with revenue.

PALMER: Right, this one we did have a discussion on and I know we talked specifically about this and I don't have an objection to it. The problem that I have right now with the way the resolution is worded is because we have no numbers to attach to that in terms of what the board is asking but again, it's not the end of the world, it doesn't stop here it still can occur we just need to get better numbers for the board members to look at prior to asking again so we'll sit down, we'll figure out where which members of the clinical staff you want to increase and what you anticipate as a change in revenue and what we're really talking about here is the change in the budget format from what it was adopted during the 2021 process so let's do that. Let's not get over excited about it. We can make this; we can certainly get enough information to make this work. And if the revenue is there, this is the same case as the other position that, essentially if the revenues are there then we can go ahead and make a recommendation directly to the board but anytime I make a recommendation to the board they want to know what the real hard numbers are. Where are we in terms of revenue and what will that cover in terms of our additional costs which it's going to generate obviously. We don't know how many clinical staff and those kinds of things, so let's work those out and then we'll come back with it okay?

MORSE: I appreciate that. I think and I just want to say this is like a chicken and egg conversation that if you guys were going to no, not possible, we won't allow you to do that I'm not going to open the door to the staff and having a conversation with them and ask, well how many staff are going to want to do this then find out it's not possible. So, the reason I didn't put staff like, I couldn't attach numbers to it is I haven't had a conversation with staff yet like I said, it's a chicken and egg conversation.

PALMER: Well, to some extent Terri certainly will, you know at some point though you're still the department head and irrespective of what the staff thinks if you say we're going from 35 to 40 then you're going from 35 to 40 we still direct and deploy the workforce, we still determine what the schedule is going to be. If that's the case and you have a need for it you have the right to direct them to do that so we can work that out but at this point we'll leave these two resolutions alone until we get better information, okay?

MORSE: Yup, thank you.

PALMER: We all appreciate the amount of effort and time that everybody is putting in on these

things and I know these agencies DSS, Public Health and Mental Health are taking the crush of this a lot so we'll figure out something.

GIORDANO: Great, thank you Dan.

MORSE: Sorry to have gotten emotional. I have two other points regarding and I'm so sorry I went over. The Essex County Community Services Board I want to let you know that we were not awarded the ESSHI grant so we're back to the drawing table with obtaining support in housing in Essex County.

I have one resolution about authorizing the appointment of Kenneth Hughes as a member of the community services board for a term January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2023 and that concludes my resolution.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF KENNETH HUGHES TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD FOR A TERM JANUARY 1, 2020 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2023. Monty, Wilson

GIORDANO: Any discussion? If not, all those in favor signify by saying aye, anyone opposed – so carried. Great, thank you very much Terri.

We will move onto Public Health, with Linda Beers. Good morning Linda.

BEERS: Good morning. I have two resolutions I think we'll get to them very quickly. They are both from WIC. The first one is AHI, it is taking funding and it is a grant just exactly similar. It is to accept Jingle Bell Run donation of \$400 and move it into the next year.

GIORDANO: Is that \$300 or \$400?

HARRINGTON: \$400

BEERS: Yes, sorry to accept \$400 into the budget.

GIORDANO: The resolution says \$300 so I just want to make sure. Okay can I get a first and someone to move that? Charlie Harrington, second Jay Rand.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$400.00, JINGLE BELL DONATION FROM ADIRONDACK HEALTH. Harrington, Rand

GIORDANO: Any further discussion? All those in favor signify by saying aye, any opposed – carried.

BEERS: My next resolution is also from WIC to move forward unspent grant donation funds from fiscal year 2020 to 2021. It is in the amount of \$3500. It was a donation/grant and the fiscal categories are written on the grant for you and again moving forward to \$3500.00.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$3,500.00, UNSPENT 2020 GRANT AND DONATION FUNDS. Harrington, Hughes

GIORDANO: Any discussion? All those in favor signify by saying aye, any opposed – carried.

BEERS: So I have a report. I apologize I didn't get it out. I mailed it out last night and I did ask Ken if he would bring it up. We can go through it very, very quickly. You know, if you have questions I'm just going to present the information and feel free to go and do it. So this was our presentation. I emailed it to you all individually, Judy made copies of it. I am going to say this version has two mistakes on it, I apologize. It talks about bowl, it's the Super Bowl and there's a date that's incorrect on the data.

So the beginning talks about you know, our Thanksgiving Day response and what we saw, I think it's really noteworthy to say that from March through the beginning of November, we had 251 Covid cases total and then from November to February we had 962. I think that really just shows you what gatherings costs all of us right? And so we move forward, that's just you know just an understanding of what changes and how things ebb and flow. Terri is accurate, I did ask this board, I did ask the board for support. Shaun was gracious enough, you all were and I'm just going to thank my department heads because they gave me some folks from their departments, quite honestly, that aren't costing the county money because a lot of them are doing this within their normal role of work and just so you were really clear, I did get like 10 people but only some of them for one day a week so it wasn't like a whole bunch of people but it really come together. We trained 11 people to do about, maybe two, full time staff so there's a big lift in doing it that way but we definitely helped in save money in the county. We are very gracious to that and to Dave Reynold's group who has really stepped up and Terri gave us a person one day a week and son on and Joe Provoncha lent us staff so we are working through those.

I think you saw all about this the variant strains is not only in Essex County I said if it's in Essex County it's everywhere. It is often where there is great tracking that says this variant strain which is the UK strain, will be the prevalent strain in the entire United States by March so we hope that's not the case but in fact that is what the model is showing and again, this strain doesn't necessarily isn't nor more deadly but it is more contagious so then, what does that mean right? So there's been some thoughts about double masking and whatnot and really how important it is to keep six feet apart, less than ten minutes.

Thank you so much. This is where you can see it says bowl parties, I didn't mean that, I meant Super Bowl parties. So, you know this just comes back out about travel and about going places and that's coming up. I know spring breaks are coming up, people with kids. Mike Mascarenas did a beautiful job and did a flow chart and if you're going to travel how do you do it? Not necessarily, because I'm just going to say I don't think it's safe to travel and it's not about how to do it safe, but how to do it within New York State requirements and there's a really nice spreadsheet if you haven't seen that, he did send it to everyone. I would recommend you posting it on your Facebook sites and whatever. We did post it on ours and I think Mike has it out there and it really just talks about if you travel out of a non-contiguous state you're out for 10 days or you can test out of it. You test three days before you come home, quarantine in Essex County four days, get tested again. You should also know that a lot of this testing is on your money. The doctor's office and whatnot are really beginning to push back about surveillance testing and billing medical facilities and whatnot for testing because you're using it to test out of a quarantine for travel and vacation. I mean, you just need to understand there maybe costs to this for you.

TYLER: Can I ask a quick question please? I had numerous questions to me about people, I put this on social media, the requirements, travel requirements and I'm getting back question like, well, what if I had one shot or both shots? Are the same requirements for me even if I had my shots?

BEERS: Yeah, so that was in there I'm sorry I didn't capture it but it does say that the CDC has not changed any guidance for vaccinated people at this time. Maybe mostly because of the various strains you can, that information is available. We're certainly hoping that as we all get vaccinated and double shots and both shots if you doing Moderna or Pfizer that will loosen up and that we will have more freedoms because of that but at this time it is not accurate. The CDC is not loosened that up. We do have strains and we are nowhere close to herd immunity.

TYLER: Thank you very much for clearing that up.

BEERS: Oh, your welcome.

The percentage of the population vaccinated against begins to increase so does the help to return to normalcy. These are just numbers guys. You see these on the reports so there you go. Total number of cases in Essex County, the current cases which see that number there, there's my other error, it's not on 11/6/2020, that should say, 2/5/2021. I did give you an updated version just so you know. Thank you so much. That's accurate on that date. I don't know how that happened anyway so that's the information just purely numbers.

So, this has been an experience Covid vaccination, I will tell you it's too little, we want more. I work with Shaun all the time I can't tell you what a wonderful experience it has been having the partnership of Dan and Shaun and really working with the board on doing this. We've been in sync from the beginning. We could do more; you know we could do more. This is a fabulous picture of woman holding a little board there that was at our Moriah clinic. So we are trying to vaccinate a very, very large group with very little vaccines so in Essex County, 100 doses again, this week. We had hoped for more. The Governor said that the 15th is when we're going to even open up even more 1b's you saw that and if you scroll forward you'll see several underlying conditions. Look at that group. That's a group right? On top of, that we haven't reached all of our 65 plus, on top of these chronic diseases that we know make up more than 50% of the population in Essex County alone so we have a lot of groups that can now be vaccinated again, bear with us it's not about that we don't want to call it out, it's that with 100 doses here and better for us to target and be sure that we got groups and we haven't finished the firemen and we haven't finished the teachers but I am really proud to say we finished OPWDD, we finished almost all of the EMS kind of those folks. We have worked really hard with our law enforcement; they are almost all if not done. There's groups that were completely vaccinated over through time, working on teacher's groups and finishing up there.

On top of that and it was funny because before you got on I think it was Ike, he was like, oh, Linda is on ask here because she's responsible for everything and I only say that because this has been my world, if it wasn't enough doing that you know, the Governor announces just periodically that if you want to do things you should call the Public Health Director or the Department and they'll authorize that which started with the high risk sports. He allows it to be done but then said, you need permission or need some, you know sign off. So we worked really hard to get this, it was really a big group effort, that document we created is not standing alone in Essex County, the entire North Country chose the same documents so we move forward with that. There's always controversy to any decision. Shortly after that was the weddings so on 3/15, weddings can start if you get my permission so I got called from every young person getting married in tears, not in tears, wedding planners wanting to know what they need to do. So, there is no guidance but is forthcoming but again, I think it's really about having a plan in place, and having a safe way to do it and we'll work together, there will be guidance and that's what the plan will be.

Clusters and outbreaks. So, I just wanted to touch on this. This has been on our Facebook but in case, you're not, you know it's hard to follow sometimes. Champlain Valley Senior Center which is in Willsboro, New York has had what we would call a cluster and normally you know any

people that live somewhere close to each other that are connected we call the term a cluster from the State. So we've been working with this facility. The State's been working with this facility. We're hoping that's on the mend and it's turning around. I will say, at this facility the residents all did get their first shot. People have asked that so they are scheduling for a second those but if anybody's on quarantine, in isolation they would not be able to get it at this time. So I do believe although there have been five deaths, that it really may have been helpful that folks had that vaccine and were already working on building antibodies. And that brings me to my second thing which is the National Hockey League. You might have heard about this. This was something ORDA had asked us to do months and months ago honestly, it was way before hockey was even allowed. I was opposed of this from the start but really worked with this what they called a restrictive plan and people have termed it also a bubble to work really hard with players that would remain and be truthful and a league that followed these rules. And there was some idea of what was involved in it again I did not approve this. We did not give authorization we only reviewed it and we moved forward with the best of intentions. As many of you know, this did not go as well as planned and they had to cut their season short and they left Lake Placid as their Covid cases increased in this organization and throughout the group and I believe that concludes my report.

GIORDANO: Thank you very much Linda. Any questions on Linda's report?

SCOZZAFAVA: I have a question. Linda, there seems to be confusion in regards to the public employees who are qualified to get the vaccine and those that aren't. I do know that there are some townships that are signing up and they are sending their highway employees and so on to, you know, they have appointments I don't know if they are necessarily going to get it or not but can you add anything to that? I mean, because I hear it from my highway department they're all teamsters, I hear it from my clerical staff. Are we or are we not qualified for the vaccine?

BEERS: First of all you're talking about a large group of people and the way that it's written up it's actually individually by title so I couldn't answer that in a blanket, broad statement.

SCOZZAFAVA: Let's take a heavy equipment operator at DPW.

BEERS: No, not at this time.

GILLILLAND: No.

BEERS: Let me tell you I was on a call with the HUB and Ashley Waite from Lewis County, Tug Hill said, if we can't plow our roads, no EMS, no firemen get to where they are going, nobody, there's no doubt in my mind that I don't consider them deemed the most essential, it has nothing to do with that. I want to tell you that they said, if I use this vaccine incorrectly they will not give me any more. Just so you know.

SCOZZAFAVA: I'm just trying to straighten out the confusion. So your town clerk, your tax collector no? Not qualified? No. I want to ask one more question now I'm hearing that firemen obviously are part of that group which I totally support but I'm also hearing that their auxiliaries are also getting vaccinated.

BEERS: So Patty Bashaw provided the notes, provided the groups so we asked for identification for every person that comes. The Fire Departments and through our emergency operations systems identified those people, gave the list to those people I didn't even hand them out I gave

them specifically to groups and A group and said, who do you believe is eligible? They came with paper in hand from their organizations identifying them as firemen and that's what we used to qualify them. So, if that happened at their organization, their organizations believe they were frontline workers and qualified for that vaccine and we gave it.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay, thank you. I will look further into that. Thank you.

GILLILLAND: I did run the DPW workers up to the Governor's office and it did come back down no, they are not on the list at this time. I think Linda will agree if they go through that Am I eligible website and they answer those questions truthfully then they should be able to get the vaccination at the State site but the State has said not at this time. The seven counties in the North Country have gone on record with the Governor's office that we believe the DPW workers, the plow drivers and heavy equipment operators etc. are frontline, first responders for the North Country because of the nature of our climate and we got lip service but they're still not there. So I just wanted everybody understood that.

SCOZZAFAVA: And our wastewater treatment plant operators I think they absolutely are frontline.

BEERS: You won't get any argument from me. Just remember there's 100 vaccines. Right? I mean there's 100 vaccines to do, I have teachers that have to get vaccinated keeping schools open every day so I get it.

SCOZZAFAVA: I fully support what you're doing, you've done a fantastic job and understand the restraints that are placed upon you I know that you don't get to say who gets it, who doesn't get it and I understand that.

BARBER: So, what you're saying is the highway is not eligible through the county or they are not eligible even through the State?

BEERS: I believe the answer is either.

GILLILLAND: They are not eligible for either.

BARBER: I don't understand because as you know Shaun, I talked to you my highway superintendent who got an email from Clinton County supposedly and that came from Clinton County Health Department that sent that out to them.

GILLILLAND: That doesn't mean it's correct. I checked through the control room and up and through the HUB and so did all the other counties up to the State and the State Department of Health and that was the answer down. Would you agree with me there Linda?

BEERS: Yeah, I would. As the vaccine gets deeper we will roll out any of them obviously you can see the list of 1B. If you feel that you're in a group and you qualify under any one of those titles, we certainly will move forward with vaccination but if you came to me with a plow driver right now I wouldn't and couldn't be able to do that.

On a good note, we are vaccinating Mike Mascarenas's folks who have been waiting on a list from day one and we hope to be able to open up those folks this week and get them vaccinated.

BARBER: So, I'm just saying because I know I talked to the highway superintendent in Peru and the one in Plattsburgh and they all have their dates for the middle of March for all their highway.

BEERS: Yeah, they must be going through the State site. You know, here's the story if you go through the state site you are going to go through Am I eligible and if those people have attested to their eligibility, they answered those questions and they got to the end and they were eligible for a vaccine then they attest to that right? So the system works where it asks a series of questions when you get to the bottom if you've attest yes, yes, yes, you get to the bottom it says hey, schedule a vaccine. I will tell you there's a fee and a fine for anybody not being truthful on that and I've said this repeatedly one thing about Covid is always better it is personal responsibility from isolation to quarantine to any of us wearing a mask is nothing anybody in society do to make or not do this right? This is personal responsibility. If you believe you've answered those questions at the very bottom, you have to attest to it when you get to that state site if they ask you for that identification and what you have attested for which they will what did you say you were? Okay I'm going to say, I was a whatever, a health care worker I better show some ID that says I'm a health care worker. If I said I'm a school teacher, you need ID that says you're a teacher so I'm not sure what they are going to use to get vaccinated because my understanding is and again, Shaun was really forceful about wanting this that the answer was no. I mean we'll look to it more and I, but I don't know just because somebody else is doing it doesn't mean that we would do it.

DEZALIA: Can I add something? I would like Shaun to check further into that because I know 100%, for a fact that the State is sending DOT workers to the Utica location for vaccinations.

BARBER: Exactly.

DEZALIA: And they are not going on the portals to fill out questionnaires.

GILLILLAND: Then they are lying. If you go through that portal and you go to make State thing, it says, what you can or can't do. Now some people have come in and decided for themselves they are transit workers by DPW transit workers or DOT. They are not transit workers according to what the Governor's office is saying or the State Department of Health. Transit workers are people who work on ferry's, buses, now taxi cabs, trains, aircraft those are considered transit workers, not DPW. So the state does realize that they have this going right now they did say that they're going to be turning people back alright? I mean, but at the same time as I said, we are pushing to get DPW you know, highway workers etc. that keep the roads cleared and the roads safe because they are frontline workers as everybody here agrees but I'm just reporting what we ran up the flagpole and what came back. I'll recheck on tomorrow's call Stephanie as requested.

BEERS: I think like DOCS, the Department of Correction has had their own vaccine and has gone without any help or support online that group was always eligible but they did go and vaccinate at different pods at Federal prisons so if that's something you're discussing like State DOT workers being given an appointment outside of that, we would just not know it until somebody said it Steph. So I hear what you're saying if it has been done but from our understand and whatnot, I would gladly do that right? If we give 100 vaccines, there's a long line of people for this 100 doses just be fair and there's 1A's and 1B's that are way before that group that we have not crossed off the list because our low vaccine amount that we've been given. You know that we can do lots and lots more so we're hoping February 15th fingers crossed, we'll get a lot more then we'll open it up.

GIORDANO: Thank you Linda.

RAND: One question. You know I know the shortage of the vaccine and everything it's a big problem and again Linda, thank you and your staff for everything that you've done. I know it's a major task. From my staff I often get the question, you know, not only from highway workers but from office workers here for example, at the town hall when possibly town's and village's staff in general would get an opportunity to be vaccinated and for example, our town hall right now the frontline workers were doing it by phone and by drop box so in retrospect do you have any thoughts on that?

BEERS: Well, again I think we need to look at places that mitigate and places that can't. What you just described is a way that you're mitigating risk until they can vaccinate right? We're all holding on but then there's groups of people that there is no way to hold on. Right? A teacher out there every day, a fireman being called out, an EMS person there is no holding they're putting everything they can, you know using masks and whatnot but there's no ability to rate themselves as much as there are in other positions. I again, didn't priorities these, they're called priority groups. You know, we went through 1A, we are at 1B and again I don't think anyone would ever be a concern or question there's just isn't a vaccine. If you have 100 doses and even if right now, I mean 30% of the people in Essex County are over 65, that's a huge amount of number that the amount of data we have is nowhere close to even capturing that before we had anybody else and on that I just want to Segway Krissy Leerkes comes behind me, I don't believe I'm not even I and her share work she has done, we share an office space together, I can't think of a better partner to have. This whole vaccine for seniors that really challengingly with them absolutely having them to have an email she, because of our close proximity she worked on this for weeks before it ever came out, she worked with Nate and our IT department to get website up when those vaccine sites opened I am telling you I thought I was like in an operator system everybody had their headsets on, one ringy-dingy and two and they were making appointments just, if our seniors are vaccinated it is a large, larger really large part of her department and I can't thank them enough really so there's ways to move mountains. It's absolutely not the best scenario that we wanted but gosh, I really just can't say enough about the ingenuity of people.

GIORDANO: Thank you Linda. In the interest of time, we are going to move to Krissy Leerkes with the Office for the Aging. Good morning Krissy.

LEERKES: Good morning everybody. You have a copy of my report. I do have a few resolutions but I do want to touch base and add on to what Linda had said, because you know the vaccine is a very hot topic. So as like Linda has said we have assisted older adults that do not have access to technology, emails so on and so forth and that also do not have access to a family member or somebody else that's able to assist them. You know, we don't have any special links that are provided to us to get these individuals vaccinated so when the State site in Plattsburgh opened up we were vying for those same appointments against thousands and thousands and thousands of every other people. So our staff has worked extremely diligently with older adults to get them vaccinated. I will say that we worked really closely with Kinney's and now with Walgreens but if any of you have gone on to try to enroll if you are eligible in one of those prior groups it's not the most user friendly system sometimes so we're just trying to work through the kinks for that. I've been in touch with many of you. So If you have older adults in your communities that do not have the support from family members and need that help, give us a call and we will walk them through that.

I will also say that in my packet, you'll see that we're working with RSVP. They're rolling out a

new telephone visitor program just to basically combat social isolation and you'll notice that on the flyer, it's not just their original name of RSVP of Essex County, they're going through a branding, a new name if you will. So, going forward they will be referring to themselves as AmeriCorps Seniors of Essex County. They're still going to have the tagline RSVP just because everybody is so familiar with that title and you'll also, I'll draw your attention to a report that the Association on Aging in New York was also provided to you and that really breaks down all of the services that our network across the State has been providing to older adults and then, towards the end of the report it breaks down really the North Country region. So if you have the time, I would definitely recommend you just take a peek at that and if there's ever any questions never hesitate to give me a call.

Last, because I know for timing I do have a couple of resolutions. The first one is to apply and accept if awarded a special and urgent needs fund grant in the amount of \$10,000 from the Adirondack Foundation.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING APPLY FOR A SPECIAL AND URGENT NEEDS GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$10,000.00. Rand, Monty

GIORDANO: Any discussion? All in favor signify by saying aye, anyone opposed – so carried.

LEERKES: The next one is to appoint the following individuals to the Office for the Aging Advisory Council for the term January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2023, and that is Fred Shaw from Elizabethtown, William Dolbeck from Ticonderoga, Suzie Dubay from Lewis and March Welch from the Town of Lake Placid.

RESOLUTION APPOINTING FRED SHAW, WILLIAM DOLBECK, SUZIE DUBAY AND MARY WELCH TO THE ESSEX COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE TERM 1/01/2021 THROUGH 12/31/2023. Monty, Hughes

GIORDANO: Any discussion? All in favor signify by saying aye, anyone opposed – so carried. Your last one Krissy?

LEERKES: Yup, the last one is to carry over unexpended DSRIP delivery system reform incentive payment program funds from 2020 to 2021 from Adirondack Health Institute in the amount of \$170,089.33 please.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CARRYOVER IN THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING OF UNEXPENDED 2020 DSRIP FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$170,089.33, FROM ADIRONDACK HEALTH INSTITUTE. Monty, Harrington

GIORDANO: Any discussion? All in favor signify by saying aye, anyone opposed – so carried. Anything else Krissy?

LEERKES: I'm all set.

GIORDANO: If not, we will go ahead and adjourn. Thank you very much.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Human Services Committee it was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors