

## **HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, January 16, 2024 - 9:30 AM

Joe Pete Wilson, Chairperson  
Charles Harrington, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Wilson called this Human Services Committee to order at 9:30 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matthew Brassard, Chris Clark, Robin DeLoria, Shaun Gilliland, Charlie Harrington, Kenneth Hughes, Steve McNally, Jim Monty, Cathleen Reusser, Favor Smith, Matthew Stanley, Michael Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson, Davina Winemiller, Meg Wood and Mark Wright.

Department Heads present: Angie Allen, Linda Beers, Jim Dougan, Krissy Leerkes, and Mike Mascarenas. Dan Manning was absent. Judy Garrison and Terri Morse had been previously excused.

Deputies Present: Josh Dina Garvey

News Media present: Alania Penny - Sun Community News.

WILSON: Alright, we're so close to being on track with time, it's impressive, so I am going to try and keep that moving. I'll call the Human Services together.

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The first item on the agenda was the Department of Social Services with Angie Allen reporting as follows:

ALLEN: Good morning, Happy 2024, everyone. Before I ask for any questions, I just wanted to note a mistake for correction in my report. Look on page 3, where the reported vacancies said 11 full time, and 3 part time, it's actually 13 full time and 3 part time. So, I just wanted to make sure that correction was out there and then I did attach, for some of you, you may already know, but we are such a great big organization, I am going to have the privilege of meeting with the new supervisors, I believe in February to be able to talk about the programs in DSS more, so I don't need to go over that day, but open for any questions to sit down with the four of you or anyone else.

MCNALLY: Do you have any idea why we have these vacancies? Is it money or training or onboarding? What is holding back people?

ALLEN: So, it's interesting, right now in the human service world, for the degree of a bachelor's, it's a 4-year degree, just in Essex County, alone, there is probably 5 agencies that we compete

with for the same exact degree, that would be ACAP for certain positions, it would be Mountain Lake Services, it would be the Youth Advocate Program, which we contract with, it is Families First, so we are all in there, fighting for the same pool of workers. Families First is offering a work from home program and that we have lost a lot of young mothers for that purpose. I'm not advocating for a work from home, but that has been a common theme. Also, I think that the Board has recognized the need to increase the grade, increase the salary, so that is helping. We are revamping our whole onboarding and staff orientation with a mid-year check in to kind of see what's working and what's not working. So, there's just a lot of common things going on. We've also have quite a few retirees. So, we're just not being able to fill the positions as fast as people are retiring and I think that's a piece of it, as well.

MCNALLY: Are we losing people to other organizations?

ALLEN: We are losing individuals to BHSN, which is based out of Plattsburgh. They offer a work from home program, so every young mother we've actually lost went there. They're back in the County to didn't positions. I think over in Probation there's two individuals that returned, but again, we don't offer that option. I'm not advocating for it, putting it out there. I don't want to stir up that pot again, but that is something that we do see. Unfortunately, in our line of work the accountability piece from a work from home perspective is just unfeasible at this time. Many positions can't even work from home, so then you get the strife of why them and not us and that whole competition also plays a role. But, it's really, we're all competing for the same pool, same degree, same age category, right? So, I think that also plays a part. You know, Mike keeps speaking about our census and the retirement age and we're not getting people back when they go away for college; right? They're not moving back in here, because of housing. So, I do think that is also a piece of the pie. We did, actually offer a position as a caseworker to a gentleman that lived in Arizona, was from the area, looking to move back with his family. We were like, great, he couldn't find a house, so he had to decline the position. So, I think that's also a huge piece of the pie in terms of recruiting people into the County, as well.

MCNALLY: Just one more question, I know that we have really good employees that are working really hard at their mission, but when are we going to get to the point that we can't fulfil our mission to the best of our ability or what our taxpayers and what the people deserve? Are we going to get to that point with 17 employees short or 20? Do you have an idea of when this is going to come to an end?

ALLEN: So, right now, I want to say that we staff at the boiling point; right? Because when one leaves, so we just had someone leave, same 4-year degree position and we lost her to Vermont and she left behind a caseload which got dispersed amongst new cases for the existing caseworkers, so we at a boiling point. We actually restructured a little bit, administratively. So, I've taken on some administrative tasks, so the administrators can support the caseworkers more, in more of the direct hands one, because we don't want to lose any more; right? We're taking a look at how the on-call system works. Again, the burden shouldn't be placed on the caseworkers when it's administrative issue; right? Keeping and recruiting staff is an administrative issue, it isn't a casework issue. So, therefore it's about what can we do to alleviate that impact happening on

my staff. I'm reviewing cases, I'm putting in progress notes, I'm making phone calls, again, to alleviate that type of burden. Administratively, we've taken away the timesheet program approves, my office has absorbed it, again to allow the supervisors time to be in the field with the caseworkers, so I think that's huge. So, we are at the boiling point. Unfortunately, with the caseworker position, it is a 12-week training program in Albany. So, we have caseworkers that are here, that really can't offer any help without the extensive regulatory training, hopefully with the approval that you gave for the HELP program, removing the civil service requirement for some of these positions, I think will be helpful, as well. I know a lot of people that are good test takers, but they have their hearts in the right place and they great common sense and so I think that's something that we're hopeful about, as well. But, we're at a boiling point and you know we've offered some comp time to work on cases. We still have the regulations, so even during Covid, my staff were in the homes, 24 hour response, 7 days a week. So, I think that also tainted some mouths when other agencies didn't have that kind of regulation. The State recognizes where the cracks in the system are, but the State is not offering any solutions at the same time. So, we still have the regulatory burden, even though we're less staffed.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, if I can just add a little bit to this conversation, because it isn't necessary all gloom and doom, so of it is just want we're dealing with as a society. When you look at our demographics, Angie talked about it quick, the bottom line is we don't have a lot of people residing in Essex County that have bachelor degrees, period. So, what you're seeing is movement among a class of individuals between jobs. Our people aren't just leaving for BHSN, we're also taking them from BHSN and Families First and all those places.

ALLEN: I didn't want to put that out.

MASCARENAS: Well, I think you have to, because it's not that we're such a horrible employer that everybody is just going out and that's not the alarm I want to sound, because it's simply not true. What's happening is you're seeing a circuital motion of individuals that now have choices and it's a difficult job, so if you have any credentials, if you have any of those things, you know, when I was a little boy, my mom said, you can be anything you want to be, she lied, right? But, that is kind of true right now, that is kind of true right now. It's the first time, I think, that I've ever witnessed where there's more job opportunities then there are people to fill them. When I came into the workforce, it was just the opposite. You applied anywhere you could, you grabbed onto the first person that would hire you and you were loyal and were going to stay around forever, times have changed. So, I think we need to say that, too. I will tell you payment wise, our caseworkers, we're very competitive. We pay a higher rate than our surrounding counties. So, it's not that, necessarily. Now maybe there's payments in other areas of the workforce when people qualify, but in terms of casework, the recent contract put us above Clinton, put us above Warren and Washington. So, I can tell you that, I mean I guess payment could be an issue, but I don't know where you go when you're already higher than your counterparts in the State. I think referrals certain drive workload there. I think that's why they've been able to stay somewhat afloat. Two years ago, if we were looking at referrals in the 700, like we got in CPS in 2020-2021, that we would be in a way worse situation and we know that those things go like this and it's just a matter of time before you see those start to ramp up again. So, sorry to take over the conversation,

but I don't want everybody to think that people are just leaving, we're also getting them from those places, too. We just got a young man from BHSN, we get people from Mountain Lake all the time, it's just something that's been prevalent.

HUGHES: Just a quick comment, Steve, I think your question was valid and not just for DSS, but also for DPW, for Mental Health, for Public Health or Office of the Aging, I mean at what point do we reach that boiling point of providing the mission to our taxpayers. So, what's very important to remember is that we have a recruitment and retention conversation that's ongoing and it doesn't stop and we have to consider how we can continue to be creative in that recruitment and retention area, through the Personnel Committee to continue to attach and play that game, money is not always the deciding factor, you can throw a ton of money at somebody, that still doesn't mean that they want the job. So, we have to continue to refine and reflect upon our recruitment and retention opportunities, so that we can continue to be as attractive as we possibly can.

REUSSER: Do we still offer or does the state still offer advanced degree opportunities, so going from the bachelor's to a masters, essentially for free?

ALLEN: At this point in time, the County has chosen not to. We will support an associate's degree to a bachelor's, but about 4-5 years we decided to not follow through with the master's level, because we were losing staff to the local clinic and so Terri and I have had that conversation and Mike was really a part of those conversations, as well. What we found was we were paying for and allotting time for a master's level degree and people with that level of degree, back then we didn't have the salary that we have for caseworkers and they were choosing to leave, more than stay, unfortunately. So, that has been something that has been tried in the past.

WILSON: The State is starting to recognize this and suspended the testing for certain critical, including caseworkers in DSS. They're looking at expanding that, basically to almost every classification. I just provided a quote to Billy Jones, who's commenting on some legislation that would basically suspend it, the testing requirements, because the State is doing it basically for the State and Assemblyman Jones wants to make sure that the County and municipal members are also allowing that as well.

Today, 15-minutes ago, the Governor started about her budget, what I read so far, doesn't have much, I think it's going to have a lot of amendments in that, because they got a \$4.5 billion hole that they have to fill and I think we're really going to take put some pressure on the legislature to make sure that the recruitment and retention issues for public workers is in the forefront. Also, I was just going to ask Angie, does your organization of all the commissioners, are they pushing on Albany, about this issue, as well?

ALLEN: There's a lot of advocating from the Organization of Commissioners. They're in the forefront of requesting the new extension of the HELP Program. They were in the forefront of recognizing more positions than just social worker/caseworker type positions, to clerical staff, accounting staff, so the recognize and really are, really pushing hard. We've met with the New York State Office of Civil Service to discuss what they are responsible for, what they're doing. Some commissioners and I are taking a look at the training requirements and can those trainings

happen virtually, versus always in Albany and in person? So, when you have a young family with young children going to Albany for 12-weeks, that's something that a lot of parents can't agree with. So, there's a lot of push from the community of commissioners.

GILLILLAND: I'm not sure at what point do we, I mean, you can't just say, we hit the target, we can't do it, we're not doing it, because these are vital services to the citizens and deploying the National Guard, we'll have to provide caseworkers in the homes, so we're really going to have to figure something out and I think we're going to have to do it ourselves, because the Calvary won't come on this one.

ALLEN: I just want to compliment my staff, because we have preserved. They have endured, even though we've lost a few, we've gained some, like Mike said. We are a great group and we here from the workers that have come BHSN that they appreciate the flexibility, the appreciate the person centered approach with staff, as well as with the families. So, the staff are commendable, they're really busting as hard as they go. We are having to tell people to take the day off, because that mental health and that burnout is just as important as getting that case closed. So, the staff has been amazing and I just want to applaud them.

WILSON: Pass along our thanks, please. We know everyone is working hard and we appreciate it.

ALLEN: Yes, thank you. Anything else?

MONTY: I just want to say that this situation, we've been discussing for many years and I honestly feel that we as a Board and as Essex County have made some progress in this. The Recruitment and Retention have provided some inventive ideas that we have implemented that have helped. It's going to be a continuing ongoing struggle, county isn't the only employer out there who's facing these issues. It's, I want to say it's statewide. I know it's regional. I think you people do a great job and I think we continue to look for ideas to solve this issue, but I think Mike hit the nail right on the head, the employer market has outgrown the employee market. We just don't have people here for that and we have a number of people who want to come to Essex County, but can't find a place live. So, I think, like I said, a multi-faceted issue that we need to address many areas to solve it, if we can.

WILSON: Thank you, Angie.

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The next item on the agenda was the Mental Health Department with Terri Morse having been previously excused.

MASCARENAS: Terri couldn't be with us this morning, she was a bit under the weather. I think we have a lot of departments that are suffering from illness this week, last week.

A resolution authorizing the County Chairman or County Manager to execute a contract with Adirondack Foundation and the Mental Health Department for a project to track and report the experience of partners, infants and toddlers in the amount not to exceed \$10,000.00, which will be paid on the hourly basis of \$75.00. This really should be in a form a budget amendment that increases our revenue by \$10,000.00 for providing this service, so there's no cost to Essex County. This is money that will be coming in to support this.

WILSON: Got a motion by Mr. Wright, second by Mr. Doty

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH ADIRONDACK FOUNDATION AND THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT FOR A PROJECT TO TRACK AND REPORT THE EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS, INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN RURAL ESSEX COUNTY IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$10,000.00, WHICH WILL BE PAID ON AN HOURLY BASIS OF \$75.00 WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS.**

Wright, Doty

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor, aye? Opposed? Motion carries, thank you.

MASCARENAS: Resolution authorizing board term renewals for various subcommittees and then she's got those attached. Those are just for her board appointments.

WILSON: Motion by Mr. Harrington, second by Mr. Brassard.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BOARD TERM RENEWALS FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD, MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEES.**

Harrington, Brassard

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor, aye? Opposed? Motion carries, thank you.

MASCARENAS: This next resolution should also be in the form of a budget amendment. Terri and I had a conversation about that, so it will be more appropriate in the future. Resolution authorizing the Mental Health Department to allocate a \$149,594.00, opioid settlement funding through OASIS to providers in community based organizations in alignment with NYS OSF guidelines. What you need to understand, that there's two separate pots of money, some are directed and they come directly to the Community Services Board for disbursement. When the Community Services Board makes those awards they will have to bring that back to this Board. Terri understands that, this is really to increase revenues and appropriations by \$149,594.00 and the other opioid money is a settlement to the County where then we allocate to who we want. So, there's two different pots of money here, it's important to understand that.

WILSON: Motion by Mr. Wright, second by Mr. Doty.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO ALLOCATE \$149,594.00 OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDING THROUGH OASIS TO PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN ALIGNMENT WITH NYS OSF GUIDELINES.**

Wright, Doty

WILSON: Any other questions? All in favor, aye? Opposed? Motion carries, thank you.

MASCARENAS: That's all I got.

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

BEERS: Welcome, Happy 2024, I am excited to see a new Board, new players. I took the opportunity for those that have been on the Board, it's kind of a rehash, my report kind of goes through every one of our departments. I encourage you all to read it and maybe get back up to speed or for new people, hopefully it gives you an idea of what each one of our department does. Probably more important to you is what happens in Essex County Health Department, which we call our house and under the house that I help organize and run are several groups. So, we have the Public Health Unit, we have Children's Service Unit, which is Early Intervention and Preschool, we have WIC, which is Women, Infant and Children and we have a Home Health Unit, all of those are areas that I oversee and each one of them have different funding and different mission and different things. Really proud that we really have a birth to 3 or birth to 5 Early Intervention, focused with maternal child health, with WIC and of course Early Intervention and Preschool services. So, I will let you to read the report, but I thought, really interesting, I wanted to turn your page to page 6, which is Early Intervention, as we talk about services and issues, Lucianna Celotti who is our new Children Services Director, she went from Coordinator to Director and kudos to her for her years of service here, but I want you to read, in Early Intervention, we are mandated, it is a mandated service to provide those things and there's 32 children that we're found eligible and currently enrolled. We have 14 children waiting to be evaluated, 10 children waiting for speech, 5 children waiting for OT, 5 children waiting physical therapy and 6 children waiting for special instructions, which is special ed. services. The same thing goes down below, at this time there's 93 children enrolled in preschool, 27 children on a referral list, to the same point, I don't know that I can throw money at this program, but I will say, Essex County has done an amazing job, you did increase our funding and that did bring more providers in, even if I took them from another county. They rolled into our county, because, you know a dollar more an hour, at the rate in which they bill, matters to the providers. So, I am grateful for that. There is absolutely a shortage of qualified staff. I can't create them, the State of New York is looking into that, but to Shaun's point, there are other things here, too. Jim's point, does it always have to be a speech pathologist? Couldn't a speech pathologist write some goals for mom and dad or somebody of a lower leave to do, right? So, we're really looking at those approaches, because in rural areas, I don't see a quick fix and kids getting no services cannot be the answer. So, we're looking and Terri's working on this, as well. We have another person, who is called a shim coordinator, that we just got and that person is looking to fill in the blanks. So, I just tell you about that.

I thought interesting, Home Health is our Certified Home Health Agency, unique to Essex County. There's only 5 of us, left of us in New York State that do it and we're all up here in the North Country, it should not be surprising, people in Essex County value that service being done in the home are not going to be by anyone else, if we didn't stand up and do it ourselves. That's when you get out of the hospital , usually, occupational therapy, physical therapy, nursing services. I

had Jen do a report and it was skewed originally by how many people were saw in each county and so I can tell you Moriah is way up there, but then I said, let's look at it a different way, let's look at the populations, so if you look at page 9. I can tell you, if I showed up where the nurses worked, this report doesn't look anything like that, because Newcomb never shows up high on our reports, because of its population, but when you look at the amount of people that we see in these towns compared to the population you will see that and again, is Newcomb an easy place to access and drive to? That's the kind of things you're getting in our Home Health Agency, I think you all know that and that they continue to do. You know when other people and nurses ask what is you want and your nurses all vote to get Zak Tracks on their shoes, that's a special kind of person. So, that's what they have. So, they're really doing great stuff. So, really that's my report, if you don't have any questions, I'll go into resolutions.

WILSON: Any questions for Linda?

BEERS: So, I know I kind of threw people off with this today, Judy even called me and said, is Krissy Leerkes, leaving. So, I have department heads meetings for those people underneath my house and we were sitting last month and talking and Krissy's name came up repeatedly about all these good things she does, within each one of those, even in early intervention and WIC and how she contributes. I was at a meeting with ACO, Karen Ashline, she went on and on about Krissy Leerkes and I thought, you know what, Krissy Leerkes is the Director of Office for the Aging, she'll come up after me. So, my staff, I did not write this, the person that runs the Home Health Agency, wrote this, her staff all wrote sentences and wrote this that she does and my staff wrote it. So, we want to just commend Krissy Leerkes, my fellow colleague, on just an amazing job that she does and you know, so I will just read this. During her tenure at the Office for the Aging, Krissy Leerkes has exhibited the highest degree of professionalism, integrity, strong work ethic, competency, respect, proactive initiatives, care, organization, offering training and resources, adapting to changes, working through a pandemic, managing priorities, exceptional leadership skills to the County of Essex and its residents. I can only tell you, we're probably one of the few counties if any county that does this, because we have a home health agency, Krissy gets in our system, with permission, obviously and all the seniors that are being referred to us for any kind of health issue, she reaches out to them and says, hey, at this time, do you need meals on wheels, hey, do you need somebody to come out. I cannot tell you how that loops around and we really blanket our seniors in care, because of her efforts, so I just want to recognize her, so, congratulations, Krissy (applause).

WILSON: Would someone like to move that resolution? Mr. Wright, second, Mr. Doty.

**RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION TO KRISSY LEERKES, DIRECTOR OF OFFICE FOR THE AGING.**

Wright, Doty

WILSON: All in favor? That motion carries, thank you.

BEERS: The next resolution is a budget amendment, it is as written. I am amending the resolution that you already wrote for \$12,100.00 in revenue and \$12,100.00 in appropriations.



WILSON: Need a motion, Mr. Brassard, second Mr. Doty

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$12,100.00 - NYS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HEALTH RESEARCH  
BRASSARD, DOTY**

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor, aye? Any opposed? Motion carries, thank you.

BEERS: So, four times a year the Essex County Health Department, by law is required to have a PAC, Professional Advisory Council and a PHAC, which is a Public Health Advisory Council. Mr. Doty sits on our board representing you and this is a resolution, Dr. Celotti is our medical director, he has already approved and read all of these and behind all you will see what we did and the policy and procedures that we changed. This is a resolution to approve that.

WILSON: Motion by Mr. Doty, second Mr. Hughes.

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING AND APPROVING THE REVISED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND QUARTERLY REPORTS FOR THE HOME HEALTH SERVICES AND APPROVED BY THE PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (PAC) AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (PHAC) ON DECEMBER 5, 2023.**

Doty, Hughes

WILSON: Any questions? All in favor, aye? Any opposed? Motion carries, thank you. Any other questions for Linda?

HARRINGTON: Yes, a couple of statements, one, I was in Walgreens last week and I noticed that they are no longer marketing tobacco products. I was in the Middlebury Walgreens and I witnessed that they had very low inventory of tobacco products. So, I think it's about time that they got on with realize that they were working both ends against the middle. So, that's a good thing.

Also, in regards to the solar eclipse, I know that the school districts are working very aggressively to make sure that parents and students are aware of the dangers of the solar eclipse and that I know two school districts, one in Clinton and one in Essex that already has these glasses in inventory. So, I am assuming that all of the school districts have these glasses ready to go. Also, I know that the school districts are having an early dismissal on that day, which they feel is going to give greater guidance to the students in regards to the eclipse from their parents. I feel that this is a terrific thing, because I don't think that it's easy for students, especially young students to realize the potential dangers of a solar eclipse.

BEERS: I appreciate that, that's a fabulous thing and certainly a population health thing that we can tackle. ROOST has been doing that, but, agreed, if we're only giving them out to students and sending them home, is almost to me, encouraging you to look at. What would mom and dad do, who's watching these kiddos, there's lots of questions. But, rest assured we will be putting out lots of information on that as we move forward. So, thank you, Charlie that was great. Also, hopefully you all saw the billboard that we just put up between Moriah and Ticonderoga, that says, *In the North Country, we weather together*, that's really a slight kind of thing, in taking about reducing the stigma of substance abuse disorder in the weeks ahead there will be more, it will change, every three months. We're excited about that campaign, we've had lots of feedback. On another quick note on our Facebook campaign, we wrote out to people, how did you quit smoking. We had like 98 responses, now I know that seems, maybe not a lot, that's huge for

Facebook, so much so that the State Department of Health, it caught their eye and was like, how did you do that? And it's really because of the Facebook presence of the Essex County Health Department has stayed alive since Covid, so people are tuning in there for their latest information. Love us, hate us, they still watch. So, thanks for everything, look forward to working with you.

HARRINGTON: Also, the Board of Supervisors, there's two less smokers.

BEERS: Yay, in case you didn't know, this Board was instrumental in passing Tobacco 21 and raising the age. The day this Board went Tobacco 21, above New York State, two days later, Governor Cuomo said, alright, he went Tobacco 21 across all of New York State. They really, still to this day say, it was because of Essex County. Thank you

WILSON: Thank you, Linda.

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

LEERKES: Good morning, everybody, so first I want to thank Linda and her team. I definitely called Judy and Dina and said, am I going to get my pink slip on Tuesday and then I called Mike and Mike, didn't answer and I called Jen, and I was a little nervous, so thank you. The one thing that I will say and I've said this many times and I am glad I am up here in front of everyone is 2020 and 2021 were definitely very stressful for everybody, regardless of the role that you had. Whether you were a parent, a child, a provider, human services, medical, but I think the one thing that I have away from it and I think my counterparts, I know my staff is, her staff has as well, is that it taught us that every single person in this County has a value. Whether it was our Buildings and Grounds guys delivering meals for us, whether it was Linda's team working countless hours during contact tracing, Angie's team, everybody had a value and I think that was the most important thing that came out and that has forced and allowed us to work much better as department heads, as departments and as the County as a whole, so thank you, Linda.

I do also want to thank Cheri Reynolds from Angie's team. I know in her report she mentioned the Toys for Tots, but this year Cheri had reached out to me and said, hey, we have some very generous donors that would like to donate some Christmas gifts to older adults, do you have anybody? We had plenty and boy, did they make those individuals that received the gifts, just, it was an amazing time for our staff to deliver and explain the process, where one of the women that received the gifts, actually broke down in tears and said she had not received a Christmas present in years and it was the best day that she had in a long time. So, for an 80 year old that lives by herself, no family, no supports, except for human services providers that work with her, to get toiletries was a huge day for her and it was just a huge day for us and all thanks to Angie's team.

So, with that being said, I did put, I have one resolution and a couple of quick updates, it's not in your packet. It came to fruition on Friday morning. I had a very quick conversation with Mike about it, but this is to, permission to apply and accept, if awarded, funds from the Generous Acts Programs through Adirondack Foundation. Our goal and intent is to increase awareness and education to older adults and providers in regards to financial exploration and elder abuse and

neglect. We have an enhancement multi-disciplinary team that consists of myself, adult protective, our District Attorney, our Sheriff, many other law enforcement agencies, our human service providers and unfortunately, but not just unique to Essex County, we are seeing cases where older adults are definitely being financially exploited, they're being scammed upon by ones that should be caring for them. So, we really just want to provide more education and opportunity and with that, hopefully these funds will allow us to roll out a couple of programs.

WILSON: A motion by Mr. Stanley, second Ms. Wood.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING TO APPLY FOR FUNDS FROM THE GENEROUS ACTS PROGRAM THROUGH ADIRONDACK FOUNDATION.**

Stanley, Wood

WILSON: Any questions? Being none, all in favor? Any opposed? Motion carries, thank you.

LEERKES: And just also this morning, I handed, just kind of as a reminder. We have been very fortunate that New York State Office for the Aging has brought us many opportunities to pilot programs or to implement programs that they have been funding for us. So, many of these, I have talked in front of you, but I just wanted you to have kind of a handout of all them. So, ElliQ is basically a wonderful little computer type thing that can be setup in an older adults home to really increase companionship. I can tell you, here in Essex County we deployed ElliQ and ElliQ comes back within days. ElliQ is very needy, if you will. She has a goal and that is to definitely increase socialization, but it's not really what our older adults are welcoming at this time, but we will continue to deploy her in hopes that one day she says at her forever home for a long time.

So, another couple of opportunities. There's are web based, so GetSetUp. We're always, especially since 2020, we wanted to increase opportunities for older adults to socialize, become, you know, continue their education on whatever manners. So, New York State Office for the Aging has funded a program under GetSetUp, so it's online education courses. So, whether it is an exercise program that they want to do or a cooking class or they want to learn about a museum in Paris, there's a ton of different courses. If an older adult lives in New York State they can sign up for free in New York Office for the Aging funds it. Kind of the same concept for Trualta, it's an online caregiver base. Many of you, I'm sure, have that caregiver role, whether it's for children or grandchildren or parents or siblings or what have you. It's hard to get caregivers into an in-person class. There's no enough time in the day. So, this Trualta online caregiving program is basically at a caregiver's discretion. It's can be at 3:00 in the morning, just to learn about tips on how to care for their loved ones and so on and so forth, but again, completely free of charge.

Again, New York State Office for the Aging worked with Ageless Innovations and that's the companion pet company, which I'll talk about, quickly and the Reach Out and Play opportunity, so we received a ton of those fun games that I talked about, I believe in maybe June, July maybe, but these were a spin on your tradition board games to increase opportunities for generational play. So, we were looking at rolling these out at our congregate sites, but it's really hard to get kids in during the day, especially if they have school or during the summer, they're at summer camp, so we brought it to the school and it was absolutely an amazing opportunity where we were looking to expand into a few other districts in a couple of months and then again in October.

So, Joy for All Pets, those are our companion kitties and our walker squawkers. We've shown those before.

Blooming Health we've talked about. That's that broadcast messaging and the last thing, there's a few more, but I'll let you just read those, is a program that we brought forth last year, which is a Be My Valentine project. So, we put it out to the community, just to have some kids or some groups make us some valentines and for us to distribute to our home delivered meal clients, to our case management clients, maybe those individuals that don't receive services, but maybe through Linda's CHHA team and the response, we received almost, I believe over 800 valentines last year. It was such a great program that a lot of counterparts took to on as well. Clinton County is also doing it this year. Linda mentioned Facebook and in our Facebook we try to keep it as active as possible and we get some, those same likes and same shares, but as of those morning that post has 71 shares. So, we have school districts contacting us. We've actually had some staff from the jail that are curious if maybe some inmates could make some valentines, so we are going to distribute a lot of valentines. So, you may see some of the staff in your town hall giving you a valentine. So, that's all I have unless somebody has some questions.

WILSON: Thank you, anything else for Krissy?

HUGHES: Just a quick question, what's the status of the ACAP Meals on Wheels, are we going out to RFP for that?

MASCARENAS: We did and we awarded to ACAP, so business as usual.

HUGHES: Thank you

WILSON: Anything else?

STANLEY: Krissy, I would thank you. I came to you last year about our seniors wanting to pay pickleball. You quickly got us pickleball equipment and I would like to report that we have pickleballers playing almost year around at our community center. I then had some of those people come to me and ask for expanded activities. So, you guys have reached out and got us a ping pong table now for our seniors and I just want to thank you, because that activity, I have seen more and more seniors come into our community center to start to be active, hopefully starting to increase our senior meal site. So, I just want to say thank you, because it's really starting to let people who are seniors, it's not just a place to come and have a meal, it's a place to come congregate and actually find support and friends and it's been great. I mean our pickleballers have been sitting 14 deep waiting to play pickleball in the gym. So, thank you and it's all from you and staff, so thank you.

LEERKES: Well, thank you, I do now have to take one more minute, I know I stand between you and dismissal, but the big thing with our congregate sites, over the past many years, we have seen a decline and that's for I think many reasons. The whole goal and it's our goal, it's ACAP goal is to move forward is to make those congregate sites a place that people want to go. The stigma is, that's where Mrs. So and So goes, because she's just going to go get a hot meal. That's

not the case, that's not what those sites are really developed for, but your site completely is definitely what we're striving to get, you know, luckily we have a contract and this is on the last page of the handout that I gave you. We have a contract with Cornell Cooperative Extension for our health promotion and this is providing the highest level of evidence based program through Stanford University of different exercise programs, so there's tai chi, a matter of balance, an exercise program and this is not just for your fit and active older adults. If I came in and I had some type of mobility impairments and maybe I need to rely on a wheelchair, I could still, maybe not be hitting that pickleball, but I could play Ping-Pong and I can do my exercise program, so it's really just get people out and about, out of their homes, if they're able to and get them active, social and engage in their community, because, again, we want older adults to age in place and if we can get them out, it's going to allow them to age in place and if we can get them out, it's going to allow them to age in place, longer in our communities versus going to that nursing home, going to that assisted living, so thank you.

MONTY: I want to say, that's great, that's great they're doing that, Matt. One of the things, I think, it's important Krissy, and you do hit on, it's not just the meal, it's the socialization, that's huge for a lot of these seniors and just a thought crossed my large mind, that we now have these DEC buses that are available. I think a lot of the issues pertain to transportation, which means that they can't get to their congregate sites. Maybe if we could supply a bus to get these seniors to a congregate site, we may be able to bring more people in, thus offering more things to those seniors.

LEERKES: Yeah

GILLILLAND: They're not DEC buses, they're Essex County buses.

MONTY: I know that, I know that, that was just a slam at DEC.

LEERKES: And I think that Mr. Barber, I think you can attest to this. I know you had an older bus, but without transportation, you know, regardless of who was funding it, because we're very, very fortunate that many of your communities support above and beyond what the County budget does for older adults. Mr. Barber, your team provides that bus.

BARBER: That is very true, because we had an older bus, it kept breaking down. I did reach out to try and find funding, unfortunately we did not find it, but the Town of AuSable, the Town of Chesterfield both pitched in, because it was very important for transportation for participation to the nutrition center.

LEERKES: And without that bus the numbers definitely dwindled and I know that Mr. Dougan and I over the last 7-8 months, we've had a lot of conversations about our programming. There have been conversations about how bus schedules maybe could be intertwined. It's just diving a little bit deeper into that and getting all the key players together and really coming up a plan, but I think with transportation, it definitely increases the opportunities for many.

MONTY: Thank you

WILSON: Thank you very much, Krissy. Any other business for this committee? I do a motion to go into executive session for legal conversation about the Fish Hatchery.

Moved by Mr. Hughes, second by Mr. Stanley. All in favor of going into executive session at 11:20.

THE COMMITTEE ENTERED EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 11:20 AM AND RECONVENED AT 12:04 PM.

WILSON: We will enter back into regular session, no decisions were made. In there any other business to come before this committee? Otherwise, we are adjourned.

**AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:04 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy Clerk  
Board of Supervisors