

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Monday, February 9, 2026 - 10:30 AM

Davina Thurston, Chairperson
Cathleen Reusser, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Thurston called this Human Services Committee to order at 10:51 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matthew Brassard, Chris Clark, Timothy Follos, Kenneth Hughes, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, Steve McNally, Clayton Menser, James O'Bryan, Timothy Pierce, Richard Preston, Cathleen Reusser, Matthew Stanley, Davina Thurston, Michael Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson and Meg Wood.

Department Heads present: Angie Allen, Linda Beers, Jim Dougan, Judy Garrison and Mike Mascarenas.

Also present: William Tansey, Renee Bruno, Stacia Carpenter, Kelli Duquette, Casey Green, Amanda Kohen-Napper, Joann Meachem and Tayler Strong.

THURSTON: Good morning. It is now 10:51, we will call the Human services committee meeting to order and Angie Allen.

ALLEN: Good morning, everyone. You have received my report. I do have some celebrations but any questions first? Wow you guys are being kind to me first thing on a Monday. Thank you. So, as you saw the hey, did you know for those new board members everything is set back a month right because there's no way I can ask my staff to give me a report on a Wednesday when the month ended on a Monday it's just not fair, so the numbers always reflect backward. I do have up to date numbers for your towns so if you every want, just call and ask and I can get you the town numbers quicker for you but in terms of an overall report it's always a little backwards so that was one big hey, did you know and because you know, it's the end of the year and claiming the other hey, did you know and this was in regards to Mr. Brassard's question last time was about that we do have eight different claiming funding streams so we have things coming from all over the place but those were the two hey, did you know. So, any other questions before we celebrate? Okay, so here's the celebration it was not really sent out earlier it's because we found out on Friday so I would like to have my child support unit all stand. For those of you that were here a couple months ago I did a shout out because they received a certificate of excellence for being the first county in terms of performance for all small counties in New York State that was like a couple of months ago well, on Friday we got the report card and they are number one out of all counties, 58 counties. It's very cool Meg, very, very cool so because again, I don't know it all I wish I did I like to pretend that I do I'm going to ask Tayler Strong who is our child support coordinator come up and kind of explain what that means to you.

STRONG: This is a district report card so for 2025, it calculates for paternity establishment, support establishment, collection on current support collection on arrears and it takes all of that and so we were first in the state overall for all of those categories combined so for example, our paternity establishment is 99.17% our support establishment is 96.91% and our collection on current support is 76% which overall the state average is only 69% and our collection on arrears is 72% the state is at 56% so, we are well above the state average which is good for us and good for our county and so yeah, number one overall for the entire state for the first time I will add.

MASCARENAS: If I could just add briefly, what does that mean to the county and their

constituents? What it essentially means is when you're aggressive in establishing paternity and making sure that families are getting the money they rightfully deserve by law it means that we're keeping people out of our other income eligible programs. When we have such a high rate of 99% that's less people that you're having that needs SNAP, that needs some of those other programs that are provided by DSS so the domino effect that that unit has over the rest of DSS is really tremendous and they should be commended for supporting. They are the one DSS agency that actually typically brings in money that helps the overall system and supports it. So, job well done I'm very proud to have been there formally I wish it would have been number one when I was there. Job well done.

STRONG: Thank you and thanks everybody.

THURSTON: I would like to make a motion, a resolution of congratulations to the staff for that. Do I have a second? Thank you, unanimous.

RESOLUTION OF CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ESSEX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES SUPPORT COLLECTION UNIT FOR PLACING NUMBER ONE IN NEW YORK STATE ON THE 2025 DISTRICT REPORT CARD. Thurston, unanimous

ALLEN: Any other questions? Well, I have one – how does the moon cut his hair? He eclipses it.

Thank you again ladies, it's a pleasure and thank you for all that you do.

THURSTON: Thank you. Okay Terri. Terri has a presentation for us.

MORSE: Good morning, everyone. There's a few individuals in the room that I have not yet met because I was sick in January with that blasted flu so welcome, it's wonderful to meet you and I represent the mental health department and I'm also the Essex County Community Services Board. I often share with you that I'm your Director of Community Services. You owe me. Thank was a joke.

So, I have two resolutions before I do a presentation about a beautiful resource that we have available in Essex County called Credible Mind. The first resolution is that our electronic health record at the Mental Health Department is expiring our five-year contract is expiring at the end of 2026 and I would like to do an RFP because we are not entirely thrilled with this current vendor so I'm hoping they apply for continuation but I would like to see what else is out there so I would like to do an RFP for this process.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO GO OUT TO RFP FOR ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD (EHR) SOFTWARE IN THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT. Hughes, Reusser

THURSTON: Any questions?

REUSSER: So, you're currently not thrilled with your electronic health record software?

MORSE: Correct.

REUSSER: What process are you using to evaluate response to the RFP?

MORSE: So, one of the beautiful things about being the Director of Community Services is there

is 26 other county clinics who have gone through this process before me and our RFP has like a 26-page beautiful questionnaire that people are going to have to fill in. We know that people say yes to things that they obviously don't always fulfill and so we've gone down that path before, so we feel like instrument that we're using that people are going to be responding for is a really good guide for us to use to go forward, to evaluate. We're going to have demonstrations, questions.

MASCARENAS: Just for the board is clear too RFP any decisions that are made in the future, that RFP will be brought back to the board for approval and you'll get a full answer on what was used to determine however recommending any change in the status quo. It's just really to get information and see where we are and if it is something we can utilize better. Can you just explain quick Terri what you use the record for?

MORSE: This is a good question, thank you. To house clinical records but also it has a billing mechanism in it so that we can automatically bill from those clinical revenues.

MASCARENAS: Right revenue is a big part of the operation there that we need to make sure we are maximizing in terms of keeping the cost manageable for the taxpayers so that's a big part of it.

MORSE: Yes, it used to be we operated with two systems which I know we lost a lot of billing as a result of that and now that we have this one system process, I think it's really up to speed efficient economically and also documentation wise.

THURSTON: Any other questions? All in favor aye, opposed, motion carries.

MORSE: Thank you and then the Community Services Board has their rosters and membership that are renewing starting January 1st so I'd like to offer up the list of individuals for going forward.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENTS TO THE ESSEX COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD – (GENERAL BOARD, ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SUBCOMMITTEE, MENTAL HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE). Hughes, Reusser

HUGHES: I just want to confirm that Rowena Smith is indeed 2027 filling an unexpired term and not 2029?

MORSE: Thank you. Yes, she is fulfilling an expired term.

THURSTON: Any other questions? All in favor aye, any opposed, motion carries.

MORSE: Just a follow up to that I did mention at the department head's presentations that we did for the new supervisors, that Mr. Hughes is your representative at the Community Services Board.

So what I would like to do now is a demonstration of a website called, Credible Mind and this is a collaboration between the public health department and also the mental health department but when we first launched this we originally had the public health departments logo and the mental health department's logo and Linda and I talked about it and we decided that really this platform belongs to Essex County. We want to give you guys the credit for investing in this resource for 37,000 residents in Essex County and just so you know I often get taken to task I don't talk about where the money comes from but the monies to pay for this platform has all come from grant

funding. It costs about \$6500 a year for a subscription which is very, very reasonable. So Credible Mind is a canned platform so if you opened up Credible Mind in some other state or county it would look very much like this it would have very similar content. What's different about it ours because it's essexcountyny.crediblemind.com is this opening page is a little bit different. I work with somebody at credible mind and he wants to put this on there, so we switched it around to make it fresh and inviting. The other thing that is unique to our website are all these community resources and if you want to visit the page, it tells me I'm going to be redirected and takes me directly to the public health departments page, so it does that for everyone of these. I was given 10 minutes so I'm going to kind of whip through this material. I'm going to the topics page and scroll down so you can just kind of see the topics that are available on this website. It is not about illness it's about wellness because our department in particular is trying to assist individuals in being more self-directed in maintaining their mental wellness.

So, you can see that there are a lot of things that probably people in your community may benefit from pursuing this website it goes on and on. Now let's say for example I'm going to use sleeping as an example because a lot of people have difficulty sleeping, you can actually there are a handful, there are 22 assessments associated with the credible mind sleep in particular has its own assessment specific to that so this is a if I want to take a little assessment about how my sleep quality is I can do that. I love how it says how many minutes each assessment is here's a thirteen minute one but here's a one minute one.

If you sign in and create profile for yourself, you can do the assessments more than one and it will store your data so that you can compare it with the last time you took the assessment to see how your results were, so these are the assessments. When I demo this I often say that credible mind is great to prevent a mental health situation, it can supplement the treatment for a mental health situation and it can be after care if somebody participated in a mental health treatment episode but one of the things I try to get my staff to do is really push people to this learning lab because these are tiny little courses that can take like an hour and they can supplement what my staff are trying to do in session to say, hey, when you're at home we would like you to invest in your recovery with this exercise. So for example they are trying to teach the one that they are serving about cognitive behavioral therapy they can actually go and encourage somebody to watch a 15 minute video, listen to a 43 minute podcast, watch another video and then learn how to do a technic to help the person be more empowered, more invested in their own recovery.

This youth tab is brand new, probably within a month ago and this is specific for youth. The data in Essex County shows that 50% around 50% of the people who are engaging in this platform are under the age of 24 which is awesome because what are we trying to do? We are trying to raise the next generation of healthy parents, right? Well, this is a way to do that so I'm really excited about that.

I'm going to email you a flyer that you can print out for your own, so it looks like this so watch for this. You'll see this in the bathroom here in the public space here. I know that in hospitals have put this in their bathrooms. I find that's a great place to catch somebody's attention, especially if you put it strategically positioned. I do have a stack of little cards that you can take. This is half of my stock at the office so please take a bunch and pass them down take as many as you want anyway that you think that you want to promote this within your town, please let me know. Again, this is our platform and we all own it.

THURSTON: How are you promoting this in schools?

MORSE: So every year I send the principals and the leadership in school an email to say, hey, reminder refresh this please, send this out to your parents using parent square so we ask every I don't know if it's always done but we do ask our superintendents to send it out to their parents because this for all 37,000 residents it's for everybody.

HUGHES: Good morning. I love this resource, it's amazing. I'm going to ask you a question that you probably can't answer but this board might want to explore but I don't know many people would actually sit actually at a computer/work station to look at this website but I do know that these are everywhere and I was just doing some research, there's no app for credible mind and I really think that and when I go on my phone to look at this website it is optimized pretty good for a phone screen, not great and I feel like the phones are where the people might be doing their meditation or looking or whatever they are doing in this app and I think it will behoove credible mind to develop an app that would work on a tablet, that would work on a phone so that they can have better flexibility with using this website, using our resource while they are on the fly, in a car for example while they are waiting for their kid for practice or something or if they are just somewhere in a park or something like that.

MORSE: Yes so if they did create one it would definitely be canned it would not be specific to Essex County because otherwise, we would have to pay a lot of money for them to do it for us.

HUGHES: I just think about what we did with the Emergency Services app and it has a positive vibe in this county and something like this has the same kind of outreach and yeah, we might have to pay a little bit more but again, is the juice worth the squeeze what's the value verses the dollars that we might be spending? I don't know if they are being asked about this type of technology, but I would encourage you to check in and let me know because I'm curious.

MORSE: I will do that absolutely and what the cost would be.

HUGHES: Yeah, because it might be worthwhile.

MORSE: Any other questions? Thank you for your support.

O'BRYAN: How is this promoted now across the county in schools? I know you are doing it with us.

MORSE: Any chance I get to stand or sit in front of a group or if I'm on a zoom call I will be like, hey, can I borrow the last ten minutes of the meeting to promote this. We, oh my gosh, Linda your staff has done an awesome job of getting this out there. We use some funding through a grant we had to get a billboard in Moriah that went on for at least a year. We also used some money, people like to give us money for this platform honestly, I haven't had to spend any county money on it so far. We purchased through Stewarts shops you know how you're at the island pumping your gas there was promotion during the holiday season for credible mind that was another way we did it. We haven't done the stickers yet on the front of the Times of Ti or Sun Newspapers, but we have talked about that. We've got pens for any type of tabling event, social media we're using.

STANLEY: Does it go through some of the Office for the Aging programs? Just to get a different demographic.

LEERKES: I'm fairly certain but will double check that we did use Terri's flyer at our congregate sites and our staff are familiar with it so we can put a push on that.

MORSE: I find that we have to do a push like every six months or so.

O'BRYAN: The question I was trying to get, and this is talking to Mr. Hughes was down to the level of high school age children is that where this will eventually proceed? I know you've talked

about people in the late teens, early twenties but how low will it go Terri?

MORSE: So, first thing I'm going to share with you is that I've got some data because I manage the website. So, first thing you should all know is that none of the information that people input or any of their assessments I have no access to that in any way this is all private so people that is really important to it's all not even DI identified but it's not information I can get to so here is some of the – that's our demographics. The teenagers. Any other questions? That's all I have today. I appreciate your time and I will have Judy send out the flyer to you, print out as many as you want and if there is any time that you need more materials from me please let me know I'd be happy to share them with you.

THURSTON: Terri, can you please make sure to send it to the supervisors in jpeg format so that we can get it out on our social media?

MORSE: I will do that. Sure.

HUGHES: If I may Terri, very quickly JoePete just said, those demographics scream social media, they scream iPhone, they scream –

MORSE: Yes, yes they do Mr. Hughes, thank you.

THURSTON: Thank you Terri. Okay, Linda Beers, Public Health come on up.

BEERS: Good morning. First and foremost I hope after this you're all coming to visit us at the health department. I think in very department you are going to find treats and goodies my staff literally cooked for you and I just couldn't be more happy. Krissy Leerkes' folks are there and we are all waiting to talk to you today about our program and what my staff do.

I have a very long report because I wasn't here at your meeting and I apologize for that but my annual report is in there and that's a look back at 2025 and all the things that we've accomplished so please take your time and look at it it's also digitally, Judy sent it to you online and it's in color, it's a lot easier to see in color especially since there is charts and graphs. Come visit, that is what's in my report. I have a ton of resolutions really moving money forward but I just want to take a second and say that platform is what we call a population health it's not necessary for anybody it's for everybody so that's what population health type of platform is about and Lindsey Java I think we've brought her name up before if you've haven't seen her she's a communication specialist. She's been the one doing it she laminated the things and put them in the bathrooms and all of those things and I just wanted to be sure to give credit to her as this was her platform and she's creating the billboard, she's been working to get materials out to schools, she's amazing at knowing her audience and understanding what demographics work best for them so she also has a work plan and I'm happy to share that shows where we will be rolling it out next and all of that so please take a peak at our data I think you'll be thrilled to see all the stuff that we do in the health department. We do a lot of stuff you may have never even known about. It talks about rabies, it talks about well visits, it talks about immunizations, STI's all of those things so, take your time go through it and I would love to hear any chitchat and if you come today you will get a whole packet on each department with their names and you will meet the people that are do it all lined up and waiting to meet you. I will move resolutions forward.

THURSTON: I was just informed that we can do all of these as one because they are budget.

BEERS: Right what this is is every year from these providers there is money left over and we

need to move it forward into the next budget. These are funds not completely expended so we don't want to leave them in 2025, I want to be able to spend them in 2026 so I'm going to move them forward, I'm just going to say and do it this way for Judy I'm going to say, I'm going to move resolution #1 forward – it's the credible minds grant and it's for \$6,327.01 there's a couple in this one that's why I need to move it. We also have the JUUL settlement payment, that's \$96,272.93, so we have two things moving forward Credible Minds and JUUL settlement that is on resolution #1.

Going to resolution #2 we are going to move forward the State Sudors reimbursement for \$600.00 and we also have Gifts and donations from the Adirondack Foundation \$3,811.93.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, so what you're seeing on these are equal amounts of revenue and appropriation.

THURSTON: So these are technically going to be resolution number one?

MASCARENAS: Yes, we'll put them all in one when they get written up so she's just reading them off so everybody understands them. If there is an objection to any amount we can certainly separate them and/or issue but when you see it in the final board report you're going to see it in one resolution anyway.

BEERS: This is for our medical reserve corps what we call our MRC in the amount of \$12,303, moving it forward. Number four, we are going to move forward lead poisoning prevention program that is \$29,000 even the breakdown is below. Number five, we are moving our other grant revenues, and they are \$412,095.95 and the breakdown is under neath that and that's moving forward. Number six is child car seat grant and it's \$4,700; we also have a highway safety grant which is \$2,800 moving it forward. And number seven near and dear is a wonderful thing, a woman passed away and she left us a donation in her name we still use her funds and it's \$34,986.96. It's a wonderful thing that when the woman passed away, she thought of us and it was very kind of her. We are celebrating her legacy. Opioid settlement funding \$54,476.70, opioid settlement pay \$34,227.97. I'm onto resolution number nine and reason to request to increase the budget and appropriation Medicaid R&R \$32,205.75. Resolution number ten, that is DSRIP funds that is what is called the 11-15 waiver that we were very successful with years ago and we still have \$579,312.19 and we're moving that forward.

THURSTON: Okay so that is all going to be in resolution one, can I get a motion?

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING VARIOUS BUDGET AMENDMENTS IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS, UNEXPENDED 2025 FUNDS TO 2026 BUDGET. Pierce, Reusser

THURSTON: Any questions?

HUGHES: I don't want to be a wet blanket but I'm not a huge fan of miscellaneous expense lines. There's a lot of money over \$35,000 - \$40,000 in miscellaneous if you cover everything. I struggle with the word miscellaneous because it doesn't seem like it's focused on how you're going to spend it. That's just my opinion my colleagues may disagree with me. I just struggle with the word miscellaneous. I know it's a budget line, we have it in there, but I just struggle with the miscellany of that line.

MASCARENAS: I don't know that I agree with you. We can get more specific. What I can tell you

it's really hard to spend miscellaneous even when it's in an account. Sometimes you get labeling of accounts that are that way and that's kind of where they fit but if you buy things and enter them under a commodity code you're going to end up doing a whole lot of work with those types of things but let us get you what's in there.

HUGHES: I appreciate that. I know a lot of it is funding and things like that but it's still money and if you have a real money hawk, how are you spending that, what does it look like?

MASCARENAS: We do, her name is Linda Wolf, everybody in the crowd is shaking their heads yes. They are not touching that \$32,000.

BEERS: And to be fair, Jessica Darney-Beuhler does this and she does an amazing job I'm not sure you see the breakdown in every single line in every one of these budgets. She went to the trouble of writing the amount writing every single budget line to make up the difference below so when the money comes forward it shows exactly in every bucket, she will be as helpful as she can to the treasurer's office but certainly, I'm more than happy to bring that back. Sometimes if we dedicate a line then we have to do a budget line to move it from this line to that line so leaving it in miscellaneous allows us to move it to the budget item line without knowing where it's going to go a year in advance. Does that make sense? Anyway, yes but I thank you for that and I appreciate the feedback.

MENSER: What it be better to call that discretionary funds instead of just miscellaneous?

THURSTON: We don't have a line for that.

BEERS: These are lines that are created by the county and the grant to be fair. I appreciate that.

STANLEY: I think Linda actually explained it well. It's in miscellaneous to carry over when you go to spend it there's a budget adjustment, so it goes to the line that it's being spent on. It's hard to say, money that's being rolled from year to year putting it in a certain line because it is then stuck to that line, leaving it the miscellaneous she can do her budget amendments at the time of spending.

BEERS: Right so if stamps go over I move it from miscellaneous and ask for \$30 more dollars to cover the stamps. If traveling budget goes over, I agree, there's a great check and balance and Linda Wolf does an amazing job and to be fair, I think my staff do a great job in making sure they spend every single penny that's on the table.

STANLEY: I am actually glad Mr. Hughes brought that up because in my mind it did get spent as miscellaneous. I'm glad we had the conversation now and we know at the time of the expenditure it gets moved.

MASCARENAS: Right and anything that's not budgeted specifically can't be spent without me asking for you to bring it back so if there's a pot of money that's in there contingent that's a \$250,000 amount, right? But I can't touch it, it's already budgeted it's planned for that rainy day fund I can't touch it until I bring it back to this board and say, we need a certain amount of these dollars here's what it is for and you say yay or nay miscellaneous is much like the same when it comes to that. It's that unknown, where are you going to push it, it's items that the grant form itself might not have thought of so anybody that's filled out a grant and/or have done that paperwork it's equipment, it's supplies, it's wages, it's miscellaneous what didn't we think of is

eligible under this grant that we all of sudden want to make sure we approve.

STANLEY: Not to mention when you go to actually report it and get it funded back, they could change it anyways.

BEERS: Right, all of those things that's true. I'm thinking we are doing a bunch of projects with Jim Dougan and not that he wouldn't, but he might have gotten this filter that needed to be on the water tanks so whatever and now we don't have that itemized but we'll move that money over there and cover that. I'm just picking on Jim, but we do have a lot of stuff going on and we are not construction experts, so we are moving that money around. Any other questions?

MASCARENAS: Did we get a first and second and a vote?

THURSTON: We have a first and second. Do we have any other questions? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries. And we do have, Judy brought to my attention that we do need a resolution placing on file Linda's annual report. So, I have Ms. Reusser, Mr. Preston.

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING AND PLACING ON FILE THE ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS 2025 ANNUAL REPORT. Ruesser, Preston

THURSTON: Any questions on the annual report? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries.

BEERS; Thank you so much. I hope to see you, Krissy and I both hope to see you down. We put a lot of work into having you down today, please come visit. Thank you.

MASCARENAS: If you need to know how to get there let me know.

THURSTON: I encourage everyone to go down and visit. I've done it before on a personal mission to see Linda but it's a really great place to go down and see and get to know everybody, all the workers behind the scenes so I encourage everyone to attend today if you can. Krissy, welcome.

LEERKES: So, everybody has my report and I don't have a lot of any additional information except for we are very fortunate to once again this year do a Be My Valentine project, so we opened it up to the community. We had a lot of schools participate, a lot of county staff and their children participated, and all those valentines are going out to some sites this week to our home delivered meals. We just got in another big box so we will be doing some visits to senior housing, assisted living so on and so forth but it is a fun, fresh breath of air for my staff and basically that is it. Do you have any questions on my report?

THURSTON: Anyone have any questions?

MENSER: It's not really on your report but last week I received a phone call from a lady recently moved into Crown Point and she said that she is elderly and disabled and that the department of aging told her that the town would plow her driveway.

LEERKES: No unfortunately that's not the scenario. We are often get told that we've said things that we have not said. We fully understand that the towns are not responsible for private homeowners plowing their driveways so if you want to refer that individual back to me, we can clarify.

MENSER: I just explained to her that town vehicles cannot be used for private property plowing.

THURSTON: So, Mr. Menser I once had someone call me because they said the State Police said I was responsible for issuing speeding tickets in the Town of St. Armand so as we all know that's not something we do. You hear all kinds of things. Does anyone have any other questions for Krissy? No, alright I encourage everyone to attend. Is there anything else to come before this committee today?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, if I could just say quickly, I don't know how many of you noticed that it's actually warm in here today. Normally when it was fifteen below we would all be sitting with hats and gloves and big coats the fact that it's normal is somewhat goes unnoticed so just to really thank the buildings and grounds crew for really these two units which are keeping us cool in the summer now because just the opposite happened in July and August it's really nice to have a room that's properly conditioned for these meetings and you're not freezing. So, Jim, thank your guys please. I know they don't get a lot of thanks but while we are in the giving mood today, we are thanking people more and thank you for the buildings and grounds crew is appropriate.

THURSTON: Anything else? The time is now 11:33 a.m. and we are adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Human Services committee it was adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors