HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Monday, May 11, 2026 - 10:30 AM

Davina Thurston, Chairperson
Cathleen Reusser, Vice-Chairperson

Chairwoman Thurston called this Human Services Committee to order at 10:53 a.m. with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Timothy Follos, Kenneth Hughes, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, Steve McNally, Clayton Menser, James O'Bryan, Timothy Pierce, Cathleen Reusser, Matthew Stanley, Davina Thurston, Michael Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson and Meg Wood. Matthew Brassard, Chris Clark and Richard Preston were excused.

Department Heads present: Angie Allen, Jim Dougan, Judy Garrison, Krissy Leerkes, Mike Mascarenas and Terri Morse.

Also present: William Tansey, Jessica Darney-Buehler and Renee Bruno.

THURSTON: Good morning. I'm going to call human services to order at 10:53. I just want to remind everyone that we do have a special board meeting at 11:15 a.m. so we perhaps could move along quickly today. Angie Allen, please join us.

ALLEN: Happy Monday, right? At least it's not snowing I think that's all I can say now adays when it's sunny out and everyone is why are you so cheery, at least it's not snowing. We can't really talk about the wind and everything else we had but it's definitely not snowing.
Prior to me going over my report I just had one resolution that I'd like to accomplish first and actually the supervisor that just left I'll have to talk with him about it but it is about the summer youth employment program. So there's a resolution authorizing DSS to enter into and execute worksite agreements with municipalities non-profit organizations and private sector employers for the purpose of operating the summer youth employment program. This was a program that ACAP ran DSS has since taken it over so we actually pay for the child, right? So there will be informational letters going out to each municipality. It employs children between the ages of 14 and 20. There are a list of what labor laws for such ages can accomplish so there is a certain age when someone can mow a lawn. Please contact DSS, contact me and then we can set that program up but in terms of the resolution.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES TO ENTER INTO AND EXECUTE WORK-SITE AGREEMENTS WITH MUNICIPALITIES, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS FOR OPERATING THE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM. Stanley, Reusser.

THURSTON; Questions? All in favor aye, any opposed. Thank you.

ALLEN: A flyer was sent and letters but I will send you guys out another flyer just so you can see and make sure people that you work with and your town stuff have an opportunity to employ someone for those special occasions specifically.
In terms of my report, do I have any questions? I have lots of questions but do you have questions for me?

THURSTON: Questions?

ALLEN: Well, I just want to let you know that there is Together for Youth it's a purple booth out there because this is Foster Care Awareness Month and without the support of adults youth and foster care are not going to be able to realize their full potential. So there is coffee and donuts outside. I understand you guys have a lot going on so if you get the opportunity please come on out and get yourself a cup of coffee. In terms of Essex County and foster care we had another adoption. As you can see our adoption and I do knock on wood a lot, our adoptions have actually increased in the last couple of months. Our foster care numbers are going down, we actually had in the last three months almost if not a little bit more 13 discharges for different reasons some were adoptions, some were children that aged out so a child at the age of 18 can request to remain in foster care through the age of 21 and so some of our younger gentlemen that Mr. McNally know, decided not to stay in foster care. Yup, that's why he's shaking his head. So our numbers are really good, however, the numbers of our foster homes are dropping. So, currently we have about 13 homes in Essex county right and of that we have 10 youth placed but three of those homes specifically are for relatives so when there is a foster moment and a child needs to come in the custody of the commissioner a relative has priority and we can either place a child with a relative without DSS involvement which the Judge does through custody or the relative can get financial support and coaching support and training support when they are approved and they want to be a foster parent for that child so they have to go through foster parent certification process but it's usually a relative that is setting themselves up to either be that pre adoptive home or they would like the support of the department when it comes to working with their relatives that the children they are taking right, that can be pretty contentious at times and so they have that choice. So, again of the homes we have at most we have three of those that are towards relative placements. We do have twelve children placed out of the county that's a big number. So last year we had 21 homes within the county. We had less children out of the county and right now we have 15 homes in the county and we have 12 children out of the county. So you can kind of see that there is a push for foster homes and foster parents. It takes a special person, a special family to be able to take on that responsibility. There is a significant training course it's about 10 weeks. I think they shortened it down now to six for a couple hours a week so we understand the commitment it does take however, when you take a look at reinvocation, when you take a look at adoption, when you take a look at being that bright side of resiliency in foster children's lives it is the foster parent that gives a child an opportunity to be like, hmm, I might want to grow up a little differently. I might want to have my children grow up a little differently because I know that it's out there and it can happen. So we will give you guys flyers again to put up in your town houses. I'm not sure if they have the purple light bulbs? I can get some so there's a light bulb you can put out in front of your town just help promote foster care and is probably one of the most heart-wrenching and touching programs that we have in terms of the unit and the work they do. Any questions?

STANLEY: We have some of your foster signs around our Jay that are green and those are LED light bulbs so this month our green is purple.

ALLEN: Oh, perfect thank you. Thank you very much. I can't get you LED lights sorry but I can probably just get you some regular, old bulbs. Any other questions?

THURSTON: Angie, all of the flyers that you send to us if you could send them in jpeg format that way we can put them up on our Facebook page?

ALLEN: Sure once I learn what jpeg format is.

THURSTON: Send it to Hugh and ask him to put in jpeg format that's what I always do.

ALLEN: Absolutely. Chat GBT or ask Hugh those are my two kind of things.

THURSTON: Ask Hugh. Anything else for Angie today?

ALLEN: Okay. So why did the Bee finally get married? He met his Honey. I like that one, it's cute.

THURSTON: Thank you Angie. Terri –

MASCARENAS: While Terri is on her way up look in your packet, a lot of you are starting your summer day camps. The new and improved flyer is there from the department of health speaks to your ratios at your summer camps those types of things that you're going to have to follow. There's a couple of nice check lists in there if you have board liaisons that handle your summer youth program directly the information is all right here.

MORSE: In spirit of urgency, are there any questions about my report as written before I move into resolutions?

THURSTON: Any questions for Terri?

MORSE: Well, May is mental health month and so I'm asking that the Board of Supervisors agree to a resolution I prepared for you. There are some highlights I'd like to identify in the resolution and that is that all people experience times of difficulty and stress in their lives and that prevention, early detection and prompt effective treatment are effect ways to reduce the burden of health conditions and allow individuals to recover and lead productive lives and Essex County wishes to highlight the importance of available resources including the 988 and suicide crisis lifeline and the tireless efforts of local behavioral health, employees, schools and the community organizations that support residents. So I ask you to proclaim the month of May of 2026 as Mental Health Awareness Month.

RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING MAY 2026 AS "MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH" IN ESSEX COUNTY. Thurston, unanimous

THURSTON: Any questions? Go ahead.

MORSE: Thank you. I believe last month I shared with you that I had just received notification that Essex County Mental Health received $9500 from the Adirondack Community Foundation. So the fund staff getting trained in two initiatives, one is called solution focused brief therapy and the other is concurrent documentation so I'm asking for your permission to receive that money.

RESOLUTIOIN AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF $9,500, ADIRONDACK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION. Reusser, Hughes

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

MASCARENAS: Just for the record, the resolution has to be in form of a budget amendment Judy. It looks like increasing the revenue and appropriation by the same $9,500.

GARRISON: Yes, on the agenda I have it listed that way. Thank you.

MORSE: The next item is, the Homeward Bound Adirondack is a recipient of funding that the community services board receives on an annual basis to support a peer-based Veterans program called, the Joseph P. Dwyer program. They receive about, we pass through about $105,000 to them on an annual basis. They have some funding left over from the prior year and they would like to purchase some camping equipment to support the Veterans that are involved in their program and just connecting with one another. They did give me a budget of a little over $13,000, I'm asking to allocate $20,000 because they have more than $20,000 still on the table. Thank you.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ADIRONDACK HOMEWARD BOUND TO UTILIZE AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $20,000.00, OF STATE FUNDING FROM THE OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH THE JOSEPH P. DWYER PROGRAM, TO PURCHASE CAMPING EQUIPMENT FOR VETERANS. Pierce, Lamphear

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

MORSE: And the final resolution is to add a board member to the Essex County Community Services Board that is Dr. Mary Halloran effective April 8, 2026 to December 31, 2029.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPPOINTMENT OF DR. MARY HALLORAN TO THE ESSEX COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD FOR A TERM EFFECTIVE APRIL 8, 2026 TO DECEMBER 31, 2029. Reusser, Wood

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

MORSE: That concludes my report.

THURSTON: Anything else for Terri? Thank you so much. Come on up Jessica.

DARNEY-BUEHLER: Good morning. We submitted a report and I did want to call your attention to some of things that are in there. We are really proud that the state public health partnership conference was held recently in April in beautiful Lake Placid. We had two presentations that we submitted and were accepted and we had lots of local health departments reach out to us afterwards to get further information about those presentations so we highlighted those on the front page of that report that we are talking about there and then WIC also presented at a virtual conference at the state level regarding their food health collaboration and what they've accomplished over the past few years and that was done as a poster board so within this report we submitted, there is that poster board as a one-pager for your review as well.
At the public health conference I also do want to highlight that we nominated the district director Kristen Sayers. She has been there for years and years and through her steadfast leadership collaborate approach and unwavering commitment to environmental health. She has exemplified excellence in public health service and she covers multiple counties with a very small office of staff and it's been very challenging over the past few years so as we approach camp season we have twelve running camps and eleven-day camps that she is going to be trying to open. Last year she had to call upon our regional and state level staff to support her in those efforts and we take this very seriously. We call upon multiple staff within our own department and try to cover all of those things we work with them on and that generally has to do with food borne illnesses, vaccine preventable illnesses and rabies exposures and she does a lot of that work too as a district office that covers Essex, Franklin and Hamilton counties we really felt that she deserved

that recognition and she did get that award so I wanted to draw that to your attention so that was there.
Also as we collaborate very strongly with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the USDA we have been able to work with them on our bait drops and we do have a bait drop that is going to sorry, we're beyond that day, that day went by here we are later in May than I realized. The bait drops were starting after May 6 and I left you some times at your desk that's a collaboration between NYS Department of Health and the NYS DEC reminding everybody to leave wildlife wild and we do often times this time of year start to see wildlife that are moving around we have lots of calls from people who are dealing with some of the kind efforts where they think they are being kind and they might try to adopt little wildlife babies or things like that and then we have to do lots of things with rabies exposure so we do a lot of these efforts in collaboration with the DEC and USDA and so as the bait drops are starting we wanted to draw your attention to that.
Then I also left you all a golf ball at your desk and that's just one of the, I think they are kind of a little bit cheeky, they are "keep your eye on the balls" is the message there as we approach testicular awareness month and that's just one of the things we do to try to raise awareness for one of our men's health messages because we want all the men folk in our area to take awareness of their men's health.

TYLER: I think this is great because I will be sharing this and after I hit it somebody will find it.

DARNEY-BUEHLER: We do have distribution plan and as lots of our communities have local golf courses and tournaments coming up, if you have an event that you would like us to get these out for please reach out to us and let us know and we'll be happy to get those out to you. We find that using humor is a great way to catch people's attention and get the message out to them and with our communication's specialist we've been able to do a lot of that. It helps people to take notice of the health issues that we are trying to draw your attention to and at least it gets you thinking and talking about those important health issues.

TYLER: The second weekend in June is the 46th Tanneberger in Westport and there will be a bunch of people there so if you could put it on your agenda.

DARNEY-BUEHLER: Okay yes. If we don't have the Tanneberger on our list I will make sure that we try and get some more for Westport. Did anybody have questions about the report? If not, I will move onto resolutions.

THURSTON: Any questions? Go ahead.

DARNEY-BUEHLER: The first resolution is in regard to a public health infrastructure grant, it's an amendment to resolution #38 that we have for March of 2026 and this is just as you see displayed there the redistribution of funds as a moving target that we have for the funds to be redistributed as displayed in that resolution.

RESOLUTION AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 38 OF MARCH 2, 2026, AUTHORIZING BUDGET AMENDMENTS FOR VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS FROM THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO INCREASE REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF $377,917.26, CARRY OVER 2025 UNEXPENDED GRANT FUNDS. Pierce, Reusser

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

DARNEY-BUEHLER: The second is for the New York State Governor and Traffic Safety Commission to apply for the highway safety grant in the amount of $3500. It allows us to do outreach and education for a safe ride home and as I also with my own family they would love to go out and see that Porche ride and tour we think that this is going to be an opportunity to do some impaired driving outreach that will be really important and it also allows to do some See and Be Seen bike and pedestrian safety outreach and education.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR THE NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR'S TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE HIGHWAY SAFETY GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF $3500.00. McGill, Reusser

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

DARNEY-BUEHLER: And the third is also with NYS Governor's Safety Traffic commission and that is for child passenger safety grant in the amount $5,720. It allows us to keep our child passenger safety technician certified, allows us to maintain our status as a permanent fitting station, allows us to do that public education allowing the correct seats for children and allows us to distribute the seats to income eligible families.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR THE NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR'S TRAFFIC SAFETY CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF $5,720.00. Stanley, Pierce

THURSTON: Any questions? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries. That is all? Thank you very much. Krissy.

LEERKES: Good morning everybody. I know you're on a time frame so I'll make this fast. So in addition to foster care awareness and mental health awareness month May is also Older Americans Month. This year the theme is Champion your health so I know that Elizabeth Lee had mentioned our partnership but we're very fortunate that we're adding a lot of additional opportunities for older adults to champion their health so range of motion is coming to fruition in Westport they held a matter of balance class in Westport last year and the year before and those individuals wanted more so for us to be able to bring that opportunity to Westport is great. They are going to be doing more walking, chair yoga, you name it they are doing it for us so we're excited for that. They are also developing she mentioned the garden in a bucket so they are going to do that at all of our congregate sites and they, each year the master gardeners prepare our bucket gardens for older adults that are still in their home but maybe they are not able to maintain a bigger garden, maybe they are relocated to senior housing so again it gives those opportunities. We are gearing up for our farmer's market coupon distribution so you'll be hearing from my staff to set up that time in your town hall to be able to hand those out. We're working with the Town of Chesterfield on their age friendly initiatives so that's been going great and at the end of May two of our constituents Roger Sayward of Willsboro and Kenneth Robillard from Elizabethtown will be in Albany at Older New Yorkers Day to be honored for their volunteer commitment to their communities. You have my report and I only have one resolution and that is to increase revenues and appropriations in the amount of $141,798.96 for a carryover of unexpended funds. We got these ones late in the year so that's why we are carrying them over.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF $141,798.96, CARRYOVER UNEXPENDED 2025 UNMET NEEDS FUNDING. McGill, Reusser

THURSTON: Any questions? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries. Thank you Krissy. We are adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Human Services committee it was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors