HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Monday, June 8, 2026 - 10:30 AM

Davina Thurston, Chairperson
Cathleen Reusser, Vice-Chairperson

Chairwoman Thurston called this Human Services Committee to order at 11:25 a.m. with the following Supervisors in attendance: Matthew Brassard, Chris Clark, Timothy Follos, Kenneth Hughes, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, Steve McNally, Clayton Menser, James O'Bryan, Timothy Pierce, Richard Preston, Matthew Stanley, Davina Thurston, Michael Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson and Meg Wood. Cathleen Reusser was excused. Clayton Barber was absent.

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

Also present: William Tansey, Jessica Darney-Buehler, Renee Bruno and Valerie Ainsworth - Homeward Bound Adirondacks.

THURSTON: It is 11:25, we will start Human Services if I can get Angie to come on up. Sorry we are running a little late today for those of you that have been waiting I apologize for that. We do also have a meeting in Lewis so if we can move quickly this morning.

ALLEN: We can actually move quickly. So since in the essence of moving quickly just a quick thank you to those that were able to join me and my team for a quick little tour. I understand that it was cut short I do offer an invitation anytime for DSS and/or meeting with any specific staff members so please don't hesitate to reach out.
Another just quick announcement, on Wednesday we are having our annual thank you DSS staff picnic from 11:30 to about 12:30 then there will be team building so you will see people playing games on the front lawn so you are all welcome. If you get a complaint that DSS staff are playing games on the front lawn yes indeed we are, right. It's a day to celebrate all the hard stuff and have a little fun even Mr. Mascarenas comes out and judges our participation. Human ring toss again which is pool noodles, I have a self-designed scavenger hunt so some of you might see some people running around so please come out and join us. It's a day to let the staff really hang out with each other and enjoy the time.

HUGHES: When is that?

ALLEN: That is Wednesday, this Wednesday. I am cooking so eat up but yeah, you are more than welcome to come so food will be ready and served at 11:30 for those who would like to stop by. If you would like to play or cheer in the Olympics you are more than welcome to as well.
So those are all my announcements I just want to draw attention to the Hey, did you know which is on the back page regarding the municipal training that's coming up and I was made aware that there are some summer youth programs that will not have food this summer so for any of you that do not have a food service program and if there's families that you're concerned about please reach out to us if we have any families in common with those of you are concerned with then our staff can help work with those families, support the budgeting process, the packaging process even purchasing lunch boxes with ice packs so again, if there is any program that does not have food available for their kiddos reach out to us and we will try and support any family that we can. So that's all that I have for you. Any questions.

THURSTON: Questions for Angie? I think we're ready for the joke.

ALLEN: Good. This one is for Mr. Mascarenas. I've been giving him a hard time lately right and so I really thought I could try humoring him by telling one of my jokes over Zoom but it comes out that I'm really not even remotely funny.

MASCARENAS: That actually is pretty funny.

ALLEN: I know. I knew you would like it.

MASCARENAS: I feel like that is one of her better ones. Well done Angie.

THURSTON: Terri.

MORSE: Good morning everyone. I know we are on a limited time basis and I do have a guest so I'm going to be really efficient with my presentation. Wanted to just thank Matt Stanley and the Town of Jay for hosting our fifth annual vivid life run for the suicide prevention coalition. I think it was a success. We had two hours of rain but then at 10 o'clock when the race started there was no rain so it was beautiful. We are going to be taking that around to different communities in Essex County because it's the Essex County suicide prevention vivid life run and we are going to do it again in Jay in 2027 but we've done it in Schroon Lake f or three years, so if that is something you want us to bring to your town let me know.
I have one resolution. A few months ago I brought forth some write-offs that we did for 2023 and before. I have some write-offs for 2024 in the amount of $10,996.96, still is .5% of our entire revenues and so still under the 3% threshold.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO WRITE-OFF $10,996.96, SELF-PAY PATIENT BAD DEBT FOR SERVICES IN 2024. Wood, Hughes

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

MORSE: And then I would like to invite up Ms. Valerie Ainsworth from the Homeward Bound Adirondacks Organization. I want to say something because some of you recognize her from the Mental Health Association today she is going to not talk about the mental health association but at Homeward Bound Adirondacks. You do have in your packet a two-page 2025 overview of some of the wonderful things they've done. She'd like to answer any questions and share with you some more information about the program. By the way, it is funding through New York State Office of Mental Health this is a pass-through funding in the amount of about $105,000 every year. Come on up.

AINSWORTH: Good morning everyone. Thank you for having me here. As Terri stated, I am the Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in Essex County but today I'm wearing the hat of Homeward Bound of the Adirondacks and I'm here to talk to you about the Dwyer funding. The Dwyer program that is in Essex County that Terri was just referencing that is funded through the Office of Mental Health.
So Homeward Bound Adirondacks is a veterans organization so the Dwyer funding is for veterans services. PFC Joseph Dwyer was an army medic in the Iraq war and there's a famous picture and I'm not very high tech but this is the famous picture that everyone recognizes when they see it. This is Sargent Dwyer. I just want to pass it around real quick. He's out on the battlefield

rescuing an Iraqi child and he did not like that picture because he felt like he was just doing his job. There's plenty of other medics that would do the same thing but anyways he was in the Iraqi war when it first started and he came home and it was the classic veteran solider returning home. He had difficulty adjusting to civilian life. He suffered from PTSD. He had a traumatic brain injury. His wife became afraid of him. He went through a divorce. He lost custody and visitation with his children. He got into drugs and alcohol. He isolated himself. He became very despondent. He didn't want anything to do with anybody and no one could help him and he ended up dying from an overdose whether it was suicide or accidental overdose we'll never know but it was a tragic situation. So the Dwyer funding was created for peer to peer services across New York State and so every county in New York State receives the Dwyer funding and the Dwyer funding is intended for peer to peer services with the idea that the VA is wonderful there's plenty of services through the VA there's lots of clinical mental health services, never enough but they are out there but the peer to peer is something veterans really respond to. One Veteran reaching out to another Veteran is very, very powerful.
So, Homeward Bound Adirondacks we are a small grass root organization started in 2010 in Saranac Lake serves pretty much the entire north country region. Gary Trudeau's brainchild. Gary Trudeau was down at Walter Reed Hospital visiting the returning soldiers and saying wouldn't the Adirondacks be a wonderful place for soldiers returning from military life and so that's how that Homeward Bound started. Dwyer is one piece of what we do. Homeward Bound has Dwyer funding in Clinton, Essex and Franklin County. So in Essex County we because of this funding we were able to hire one full time peer he is a Veteran, combat Veteran served in Iraq. He is Army and he is super enthusiastic and is doing a lot of wonderful things in this county. He does a lot of the peer-to-peer things, we do meals, fishing they just did a fishing trip where they went down to New York City and the fishing charter was donated which was wonderful so we just had to pay for the transportation and the lodging of the Airbnb. In Essex County it's hard to do groups but he manages, he does golfing, bowling, meals, craft things, they went to Cooperstown a couple weeks ago, there was an event Memorial Day weekend they are always busy and we are always reaching out. In addition to the activities the peer-to-peer activity we also do a fair amount of crisis work. We get crisis calls. It's kind of stunning to me how many homeless Veterans there are in the North Country and we've dealt with quite a few homeless Veterans in Essex County. We work with Veterans in the jail he runs a resiliency group in the jail and we also work with Veterans that are released from the jail. One night we got a phone call that a Veteran was being released it was 5 o'clock at night, he was in court they didn't know if he was going to be released or not depending on what the Judge said. He ended up being released and at 7 o'clock at night I was calling James asking him if he could find housing for this individual at 7o'clock at night in Essex County and he did. We worked with Jay at the Park Motel. So James is not here today I would really like him to be here and to be able to tell the story on that Veteran. I'm married to a Veteran and I'm not a Veteran but I'm passionate about Veteran services. James is transporting a Veteran to a medical appointment imagine that, transportation is another huge thing that we deal with in Essex County and we deal with a lot of it's sad to say there's a lot of elderly Veterans that don't always take the best care of their health because it is too far for them to go to Albany for the medical services that they need. It's just too hard for them so we ended up taking a lot of trips to Albany and also local transportation. So that's Dwyer in a nutshell. Does anybody have any questions for me?

THURSTON: Any questions? Thank you very much.

MENSER: I know James very well. He lives in Crown Point and he does do a lot of great things in the area.

AINSWORTH: Yes, he's wonderful.

THURSTON: Alright, thank you. Okay, Linda.

MASCARENAS: Jessica, we have Jessica with us.

THURSTON: Welcome Jessica. Short and sweet please.

DARNEY-BEUHLER: I've always been short, I try to be sweet.

THURSTON: Angie's got a run for her money here.

DARNEY-BEUHLER: I think everybody received our report and I can accept any questions anyone might have about that.

THURSTON: Any questions on the report? Okay do you want to move into resolutions?

DARNEY-BEUHLER: The first resolution – do you require me to go in order otherwise I would follow up and just what Valerie was talking about this was our last resolution but in keeping with that we do have an effort underway with Dr. Mack we are requesting $35,000 from the opioid settlement funds and this is again, to work in a peer-to-peer model with Dr. Mack with Mindful Medical Mentor, that's a private venture that she has to work with our emergency rooms to support people in recovery from substance abuse disorder to synchronized patient pathways from the ER discharge to outpatient services and effectively bill the practice workload to tailor local resources.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH MINDFUL MEDICAL MENTOR, LLC, A PHYSICIAN DESIGNED EDUCATION AND WORKFLOW INITIATIVE WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS. Pierce, Preston

THURSTON: Questions, comments, concerns? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries.

DARNEY-BEUHLER: Thank you and then I'll go back in order. The other one that we had was to request permission from the Essex County Board of Health serving as the Board of Supervisors to apply the Senate Bill S7818 effectively and immediately to allow the Commissioner, Dr. McDonald to designate his powers to local public health official as Essex County Public Health Director to remove a barrier that exists with public health responses to overdose deaths and that would allow us to receive the reports and records related to them including but not limited to autopsy reports and toxicology reports.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL S7818 WHICH DESIGNATES THE POWERS OF THE NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH COMMISSIONER TO LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS TO REMOVE A BARRIER THAT EXISTS WITH PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSES TO OVERDOSE DEATHS. Wood, Lamphear

THURSTON: Questions, comments, concerns?

STANLEY: I see that it is currently just a bill and hasn't actually passed the Senate yet so should this be a resolution in support of this Senate bill?

THURSTON: In support of excellent.

MASCARENAS: Yes.

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

DARNEY-BEUHLER: Thank you and then last is to accept the approval of additional members of the public health advisory committee as required under Article 28 and our Professional advisory committee under Article 36 of Public Health Law and those are for proposed members Heather Reynolds, of the University of Vermont Health Network Elizabethtown Community Hospital and Dr. Kristen Mack.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENTS OF HEATHER REYNOLDS, RN OF UVHN ELIZABETHTOWN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL AND DR. KRISTEN MACK TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PHAC) EFFECTIVE JUNE 2026. Pierce, Hughes

THURSTON: Questions, comments, concerns? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries.

HUGHES: Quick question Chairman, what's the term of service for serving on the PHAC?

DARNEY-BEUHLER: I have to double check those for you Ken I think that it is a term of four years and then to be renewed one time.

HUGHES: Okay.

DARNEY-BEUHLER: I will double check and be in full confidence and email you.

HUGHES: That's fine. Thank you very much.

THURSTON: Thank you. Any other questions? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries. One more?

DARNEY-BEUHLER: Two more. The next is a resolution adopting the quarterly reports for the health department including the report of the Director of Patient services plus the policies and procedures of the certified home health agency all of which were approved by the public health advisory committee, professional advisory committee and the medical director on June 2.

RESOLUTION ADOPTING AND APPROVING THE QUARTERLY REPORTS FOR THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCLUDING THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PATIENT SERVICES PLUS THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE CERTIFIED HOME HEALTH AGENCY AND THE QUALITY REPORT FOR THE 2ND QUARTER OF 2026, ALL OF WHICH WERE APPROVED BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PHAC), PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) AND THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR ON JUNE 2, 2026. Hughes, Preston

THURSTON: Questions, comments, concerns? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries. We don't have five.

GARRISON: I combined them together, which we normally do.

DARNEY-BEUHLER: I think there is an error in what you have and there should have been a separate one for the acceptance of the quarterly report of the public health advisory committee

for –

GARRISON: Home health services?

DARNEY-BEUHLER: Yes they have to go in separately so there were two separate resolutions.

MASCARENAS: Go ahead, we can do that now.

DARNEY-BEUHLER: The other would be for the quarterly report of the public health director, public health advisory committee and policies and procedures as submitted and approved by the public health advisory committee and professional advisory committee and approved by the medical director on June 2.

RESOLUTION ADOPTING AND APPROVING THE QUARTERLY REPORTS FOR THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCLUDING THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PATIENT SERVICES PLUS THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT AND THE QUALITY REPORT FOR THE 2ND QUARTER OF 2026, ALL OF WHICH WERE APPROVED BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PHAC), PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) AND THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR ON JUNE 2, 2026. Wood, Hughes

THURSTON: Questions, comments, concerns? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries. And that's it?

DARNEY-BEUHLER: That's it.

THURSTON: Thank you so much. And we have another short and sweet Krissy Leerkes.

LEERKES: So, everybody has my report. I have no resolutions. Just a quick update we will be getting ready for our farmer's market coupon distribution I think I did mention it last month but maybe I didn't that our allotment was drastically cut. Last year the state gave us the ability to distribute two booklets per eligible individual so last year I think we gave out almost a 1000 this year they are giving us 500 so they kind of put us between a rock and a hard place because we set precedence last year that we gave out two booklets now half of those if not more of those individuals are not going to get one booklet unless something changes but we have a webinar tomorrow so that information will be shared with you guys whether it's through myself or my staff will be reaching out to you to set up those distribution sites. We kind of have a plan in place but until I learn more tomorrow that plan will not be shared.

THURSTON: Thank you Krissy. Does anyone have any questions for Krissy?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, that was also true of WIC I believe? In public health where they saw a drastic reduction?

LEERKES: Yes. Besides that we have our DYI gardens that the Master Gardners have that's in Cornell's report those have all been handed out and also mentioned we are finding with Cornell they are doing Garden in a Bucket at our cognate sites very successful so far in I believe Reber and another location but I believe nine total scheduled. That's all I have unless anybody has any questions?

THURSTON: Any questions? Thank you so much. Okay just a reminder to everyone meet us at the Essex County Jail –

CLARK: I have just an announcement on June 27 between 11:00 and 3:00at the Schroon Lake North Hudson Historical Society there will be a ceremony for I don't know exactly the name of the document for a past supervisor of North Hudson, Mildred Dobie. She worked up here forever when I first went to work for the town she was supervisor and they would like anybody interested to stop by. It's very casual. There's no speakers signed up at this point but they would like anybody who would like to stop by, please do.

THURSTON: Okay thank you.

MENSER: I'd also like to make an announcement I meant to bring this up during mental health Terri passed the mic over too soon. June 28th is going to be a suicide prevention mental health walk in Crown Point from 1:00 in the afternoon to 6 pm It's being initiated by an army Veteran with respect to his relative Laura Whitford. Dan Whitford is the one who is actually in charge of the program and the Marine Corp League is sponsoring it to cover for insurance.

THURSTON: Okay anyone have anything else? Okay we are adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Human Services committee it was adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors