HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Monday, August 10, 2026 - 10:30 AM

Davina Thurston, Chairperson
Cathleen Reusser, Vice-Chairperson

Chairwoman Thurston called this Human Services Committee to order at 10:34 a.m. with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, 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 and Michael Tyler. Matthew Brassard was absent. Joe Pete Wilson and Meg Wood were excused.

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

Also present: Renee Bruno and Peyton Leerkes.

THURSTON: I will call this meeting to order, Angie Allen.

ALLEN: Good morning everyone. I just handed to you, I'll do another announcement but the 5K run that Mr. Ike Tyler joined us last year –

TYLER: Has anybody beat my time?

MASCARENAS: Did he win?

ALLEN: He enjoyed the view with a cup of coffee.

TYLER: And donut.

ALLEN: And donut, yes so again, it's for a good cause it's some awareness regarding education that the schools really kind of joined the prevention team so it's a fun time, it's a nice easy walk. I always forget how beautiful Crown Point is on the back end of some of the land they have down by the water so just an invitation I'll send that out for you at a different time.
I do have some resolutions would you guys have any questions for me regarding my report first before I go into resolutions?

THURSTON: Any questions for Angie? Go ahead.

ALLEN: So the first resolution is quite lengthy it is regarding the resolution for a two-year delay in the Federal SNAP administrative benefit cost shifts enacted under the H.R. 1 and calling really, really calling upon different counties to their legislature, to our Board of Supervisors to really kind of join one in advocating for this delay. As you saw in the resolution itself we are looking at a $203,000 cost increase again, this is just, it is more of a loss of revenue so it's not a cost increase I should say. It is something that has been on the agenda at the Federal level for a couple of years now. It is part of the Federal cost shift to the State and this is what the State would be shifting to us so it's a loss of revenue. It also would be piggybacking on the SNAP error rate benefit cost shift so I think just a lot of advocacy and push back of what we can do as a body to really advocate for this delay.

MASCARENAS: This is reaction to the Big Beautiful Bill some of those dates are starting to mature and we're seeing it come to fruition. I think our best estimate Angie is around two-hundred and three thousand cost shift to locals so it's really again, it's not about it's not about getting rid of the mandate and that's people need to understand about these things when they are being politicized at the local media. It's about shifting who pays for it so it's not about changing anything other than the cost share and when the state is going to get hit with billions of dollars in this Federal tax shift their options are limited to figure out how they are going to pay for it and/or pass them down to the localities and the fear is that we're going to lose since we typically do in that scenario and so if this continues we are asking that the State not shift that tax burden to us ours is $200,000 imagine Nassau, imagine the bigger counties in New York State and what that cost shift is looking like. On top of everything else that gets shifted to us this is one of, DSS is one of twenty-four departments and eighteen contract agencies we fund $200,000 is quite a hit when you're looking at a $800,000 tax cap so now we're looking at a $600,000 tax cap and wait and see what else and that kind of happens to us on an annual basis so we're just trying to make people aware of these items being really tax shifts.

STANLEY: Is this one of the items that like New York State pays more to the Federal Government than a lot of other programs and things as opposed to what they get back is this one of the programs that essentially and I'm not going to say save money to the tax payers that never happens but is it a shift that's not going to be as much of an impact to New York State going out as coming in so that State could actually fund this?

ALLEN: So there's a difference two different things I think what you're talking to Mr. Stanley is the FMap and the Medicaid dollars to where we actually pay that so this, so we do have a Medicaid cap of $6.9 million that each well, that's our cap to where we help New York State offset the Federal purchasing of Medicaid services let's say. This is for the food stamps so this is just purely just food stamps so this, amongst the error rate is the other one that you're probably referring to as well this is where there used to be a 50/50 kind of share admin cost with the SNAP program we are looking at a 75 local 25 Federal so that's the shift in the amount of the program and of the payment. So there's the Medicaid burden of payment, this is the SNAP Admin burden of payment and our next burden of payment you'll hear from me in about a month from now is the SNAP error rate so the Federal government used to pay 50/50 for the administrative costs just to run the program. Federal Government is now taking a look at if states have an error rate over 14% they are equating error rates to fraud I can give you the documentation if you'd like error rates and us has nothing to do with fraud it's just pure error rates and of those error rates over 95% are consumer directed nothing we even have control over and it's not based on Essex County it's based on the big eight counties so that other try to save New York money right so the Federal Government says hey, New York you're going to have about an 18 billion dollar hit New York State is now saying hey, counties you need to pay 17% so it is – there's three things I would kind of say to your point being Medicaid, SNAP admin cost shift which we are talking about right now and the SNAP error rate those three things fit under the category that you're talking about if that makes sense to everyone? Maybe not it's a lot, sorry.

MASCARENAS: And just to follow up our error rate is extremely low there is nothing we will change in our practice to improve. It's so low it's insignificant but we are the flea on the flea when it comes to New York State and the overall error rate so we will be penalized by the error rate of others in terms of those Federal dollars being withheld due to that methodology so.

ALLEN: And that's an average of $2000 per month is what we are going to be looking at that we need to have a loss of revenue of that for 2026 and 2027 I'm just putting it out there early because

budget season is upon us now.

THURSTON: Any other questions? I need a motion please. Ms. Reusser, second Mr. Hughes. All in favor aye – any opposed – motion carries.

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A TWO-YEAR DELAY OF THE FEDERAL SNAP ADMINISTRATIVE AND BENEFIT COST SHIFTS ENACTED UNDER H.R. 1 AND CALLING ON NEW YORK STATE TO HOLD COUNTIES HARMLESS IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNEMENT FAILS TO ACT. Reusser, Hughes

ALLEN: Thank you and I'll keep you posted again we are advocating for a two-year delay.
The next resolution authorizing a budget amendment to the Department of Social Services increasing revenues and appropriations in the amount of $18,185.00, it is our insurance recovery. So each year we budget two vehicles into our budget this year we decided to not purchase two vehicles but combine it into one truck because we do a lot of clean ups for families and moving and everything with that money left over we also had a significant car accident so this is monies that we already had kind of within it was just on a different budget line is my understanding.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF $18,185.00, INSURANCE RECOVERY. Lamphear, Pierce

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

ALLEN: Anything else for me this morning?

THURSTON: I think you owe us a joke.

ALLEN: Yes I do. How do you improve the level of high bounces you get in your water bed? How do you make your water beds bounce higher? You use spring water.

THURSTON: Terri.

MORSE: They are so bad and they are so funny. Good morning everyone. I used my opportunity in my report to share with you a lot of the children services that are happening through the community services board providers in Essex County and it's a lot of information so please enjoy reading it when you have the time but what I wanted to share with you today is I don't have a resolution but I do have some good news some really, really good news. We have been able to hire staff the clinical staff so that our waiting list is decreasing and where it was in the three digits last month it's like, sixty-five today compared to eight-five in my report because it's gone down even more since I wrote the report. We have three interns coming on board in September Ish which should help us even more so there is a light at the end of the tunnel and it's not an oncoming truck.

MASCARENAS: That's good news.

MORSE: We are just really thrilled to know that and I think what's happening the need for services isn't going down but what's happened back in Covid when the need for services started to really increase well, I think there were a lot of young people out there that said, what field do I want to go into well, there's this need in mental health and I kind of have an interest in it I will do that. And

it takes six years to get that degree so now we have more interns and more staff available to us in a way that we didn't four, five, six years ago because we are actually turning people away for internships which has never happened before so we're really excited I just wanted to share that good news with you and thank you so much for all the support over the last five years as we really, really struggled to meet the need. Any questions about my report?

HUGHES: Good morning Terri. Congratulations to you and your team on that. What's the receipt for success there? Are you advertising for interns? Are they just hearing about it through word of mouth through their professional networks? A combination of both? What's the being done for them to find us?

MORSE: I appreciate that question Mr. Hughes and I'm doing my best to be humble with the answer. What we are being told by the interns that are especially coming from Plattsburgh State is that our internship program really gives interns an opportunity to experience what it's like to be a clinician. Where in some other cases they are getting treated with more like glorified case managers and I think that word is getting around and so we have people that want to do their internship with us and then they stay so we try to be selected about who we have as interns we're not going to choose somebody that lives in Chazy if we have somebody that lives in Elizabethtown. So the interns that we have coming in September are all local.

HUGHES: Thank you.

THURSTON: Any other questions for Terri? Okay thank you.

MORSE: Oh and we are doing a brief, BRIEF presentation at the ways and means meeting this month.

THURSTON: Thank you. Linda.

BEERS: Good morning. I will say of all three of my colleagues the reason people come is because they do an excellent job and I work with all of them.
So, I have a resolution before you that I was going to ixnay it's in reference to an insurance check but after hearing Angie and talking to Judy I'm going to move it forward the numbers might be a little off but it's only because I'm not 100% positive about the revenue line. We had two fender benders regarding insurance checks and the resolution that I am walking off it just came on Friday, is to take those $3,000 insurance and move them into the right accounts so we can pay for the damages that happened on those cars that's the resolution.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF $3,430.79, INSURANCE RECOVERIES. Stanley, Hughes

THURSTON: Questions, comments?

HUGHES: Why were you going to ixnay?

BEERS: Because the account numbers weren't correct and I didn't know we could change them afterwards, no matter to I realize. Thank you.

HUGHES: Just curious.

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

BEERS: So I'm going to ask permission and after I do one more thing to have my intern, speaking of interns my interns are a little different my interns are from you, my interns are the summer interns and I have two of them this summer and they were both amazing. I had a banner of interns and just I wanted to show a return on investment we have Emily Jesmer and she came as an intern and she stayed, she works full time and she's been here three years getting married in 12 days and lives here in Elizabethtown now so this program works but before I introduce Ms. Peyton Leerkes yes, there might be somebody in the room related and I also wanted to talk about Raegen Thomas who is from Crown Point she's done an amazing job you can read in the notes that she is a sophomore at UAlbany in biochemistry. Was a huge asset and also was new to us was Mike Corey from Minerva and he did one day job shadow on Community Health Worker so again, opening up our programs and creating pipelines are really important.
I note in my report I wanted to just call out because the State has called out on us we've done some really interesting networking with the Amish so it's not an easy thing to bridge and we're really thrilled that our nurses actually were the ones doing it with good feedbacks and coloring books and the Amish are very receptive of rabies vaccines of their animals and that's always a foot in the door to say, if you would vaccinate your dog maybe you would think about Tdap which is tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough which is a common childhood sickness. So we are real thrilled about that. There's lots of really cool stuff if you were at the Ti Street Fest and if you were in Moriah at their Champ Day you would of saw the Essex County Heroin Opioid other coalition there in great force and we used some funding from the Essex County Opioid settlement funds to hire a stilts walker which was great entertainment for everybody there. She did all kinds of events. It was not a huge cost but was really important when she four times that day she brought everybody back to our booth and did like hula-hoop session, a flag session, she made balloons and when everybody was back at the booth and the kids were entertained it gave us the opportunity to talk with adults and during those sessions we gave 29 cans of Narcan out to people that may not have ever come by really it was a tremendous effort and so kudos to my team in doing that and that's my report and if I could give Ms. Leerkes four minutes to read something she would like to say to you.

THURSTON: Yes.

BEERS: Come on up Peyton.

THURSTON: Did anyone have any other questions for Linda? Okay thank you.

P.LEERKES: Good morning Chairman and members of the Board of Supervisors. It is a privilege to be here today to share what being an Essex County student intern has meant to me. This is my second summer with Essex County Health Department certified home health agency or CHHA and I'm incredible grateful for the opportunities and experiences this program has provided.
Over the past two summers I've gained invaluable hands-on experience by accompanying occupational therapists, physical therapists, physical therapist assistances and nurses home care visits throughout Essex County. Through these experiences I've learned proper documentation practices, medical terminology, medication management, anatomy and the process of developing individualized care plans, exercise programs and therapeutic interventions. Just as importantly I've learned that effective health care is about communication understanding that every patient has unique needs and that adapting our approach is essential for helping them succeed. While these technical skills have been invaluable the greatest lesson I've learned is the importance of empathy and gratitude. Working along side these medical professionals has given me greater

appreciation for the every day abilities many of us take for granted. I've witnessed patients courageously advocating surgeries, cancel treatments, chronic illnesses and significant life changes all while struggling to remain independent in their homes. Those experiences have shaped not only my understanding of health care but also my perspective on life. I've also gained a deep appreciation for every member of the CHHA team from the clinicians in the field to our office staff coordinating referrals, scheduling, communication, billing and logistics. I've seen first hand the exceptional patient care depends on collaboration and commitment of the entire team. Their dedication and professionalism and wiliness to go above and beyond for every patient has shown me what true public service looks like. They have demonstrated that leadership is often quiet, consistent and found simply showing each day how to serve others. Beyond CHHA I have been fortunate enough to work along staff in Early Intervention, WIC, ECHO and other public health programs. They welcomed me to community outreach events where I had the opportunity to engage in residents, answer questions and educate the public about many of the valuable services Essex County provides. These experiences have strengthened my communication skills and have given me a greater understanding of the vital role public health plays in our communities. This internship has provided much more than professional experience it has allowed me to build meaningful relationships with county departments, community organizations and local leaders. The connections I developed during last year's internship even helped me organize a successful community mental health fair demonstrating how important opportunities like this can create long lasting benefits beyond the work place. Without question this internship has confirmed my decision to pursue a career as occupational therapist. This fall I will begin my studies at Keuka College and I hope to one day return to Essex County as an occupational therapist either serving CHHA or Early Intervention. It would be incredibly rewarding to give back to the community that has invested so much into my educational direction and growth. I sincerely hope this internship program continues to be available for future students. It offers far more than summer employment it provides meaningful mentorship, hands-on experience, career development and a deeper appreciation for public service. Programs like this help prepare the next generation of health care professionals who are strengthening the future workplace of Essex County. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today, more importantly thank you for your continued support with this internship program and for investing in students like me your commitment has made a long-lasting impact on my education, my career goals, my future and for that I'm very, very thankful.

THURSTON: Thank you so much.

BEERS: I just wanted to say thank you it's been a real great blessing.

THURSTON: Wonderful. Thank you.

STANLEY: I just want to and Linda this isn't for you. Just like Early Intervention is a very positive thing for our community I think you just demonstrated and explained exactly what our internship program is for and about and I want to thank Peyton for actually explaining that to this board because I think it gets lost a lot for the interns that come here and what it really does for them so thank you very much for taking the time.

MCGILL: I just want to say thank you. I look forward to watching your career grow and becoming the next local leader in Willsboro. You are amazing.

HUGHES: Peyton everything you endeavor to participate in you always seem to hit us a home run whether it's on the golf course, whether it is dealing with Section VII leadership at the State

level which I am acutely familiar with or this Essex County is extremely fortunate to have your intellect and your wiliness and your energy to participate in this and best of luck at Keuka they are fortunate to have you and enjoy all there is about therein.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I can promise you I didn't pay Peyton to say those things the amount you just helped me out is just amazing in terms of I give my little subtle speech every April to be able to allow the internship program to continue but hearing directly from you and the impacts that it has on you is more than anything I can say and I'm really glad that you've had a positive experience and I wish we had more opportunities for the young folks to come before this body and explain just what this really does mean to them because there's just a lot of opportunity to look at professional jobs in our region and we are really one of the few places that is a one stop shop for all sorts of service and professional provision long term so congratulations, best of luck and thank you so much. Like I said, what you did for me is priceless.

THURSTON: Thank you. Krissy, okay so we have a certificate here of appreciation for Krissy Leerkes for 20 years of outstanding service and contribution to Essex County Government. Thank you so much.

LEERKES: Thank you. I know Peyton just said how great her experience has been and I'm going to try not get in tears here. I love Essex County. I love everybody sitting back there. The board has been nothing but supportive of our office all of our other department heads. We work absolutely great together unlike many of my other counterparts across the state where when I talk about our connection with our DPW team or other entities that they normally don'[t work with they are just amazed with how great we are in Essex County so thank you guys. Thank you our County Manager and all the leadership for making my life a whole heck of a lot fun at work.
So with that being said, you have my report. At the end of my report you'll see that with our collaboration and contractual relationship with Cornell they have expanded yet again some more additional programming. The amount of individuals that that program and Cornell is reaching of our population is beyond what our expectations could have been. Our numbers are doubling what they were last year. It's just, it speaks volumes to the work that Kate and Sam and Elizabeth and the entire Cornell team puts into that relationship with us. I know I talk about it every month but that's just a great relationship we have and it's really showing the effects on the community.
I spoke in the past about our Farmer's Market coupon program. We had a significant decrease in the number of coupon booklets that we have. We are almost out. I think we are down to ten coupons or ten books of coupons which is good but we're still seeing the need for more individuals so we'll continue to create a waiting list and if those funds are open by the State then we will give out more coupons.
We're gearing up for our open enrollment for Medicare. I feel like it just ended and here it is again. We're unsure what that will look like for us last year for the board members that were present you heard me speak monthly about how many changes our Medicare beneficiaries are experiencing. It was a very trying time for them because it's their health care. So this year we're gearing up for whatever sends our way we'll know more I think the end of the month or early September but we're trying to shift our focus because we have such lack of space in our building for like, confidential meeting spaces I have two offices with four staff in it so if all four staff have somebody with them it's quite loud. We get really creative with Linda is not in the building we can use her office, use my office but we want to actually do more out in the community with open enrollment events. We did this in the past and then they died down nobody wanted to come to them they just wanted to come to the office but we're gearing up for more out in the community so the first one we are going to be looking at is coordinating a joint open enrollment event with Clinton County and Mr. Stanley is opening up his community building for us so we're going to have both counties

available on one specific day where Medicare beneficiaries can come in, we are going to do exactly what we do in the office but we're going to bring the program to them. We are going to look at doing that a little bit more down in Ti, Schroon Lake, Lake Placid all over the area to really meet that need and kind of get a little creative. So stay tuned on that.
The last thing I missed Mr. Mascarenas last week to get his approval but I did just get his approval rest assured on that but we're looking at the everchanging world of our nutrition program. We know how large our county is, we know that we're aging much more rapidly than other counties we just have to really think outside the box of how we're going to meet those needs whether it's now five years, ten years. We have some individuals that sometimes aren't able to receive our home delivered meals for a couple of different reasons it could be because we're not able to accommodate their medically tailored diet, it could be because of their cultural diet that they would like to adhere to we have individuals that won't be home on their specific delivery date because they may have dialysis Monday, Wednesday and Friday and we deliver to that area on Wednesdays so we really need to look outside of what our model currently is. So we would like to go out to RFP for a program it's a drop shipped meal program. We did this a few years ago kind of looked at it really at that point wasn't anything we really wanted to dive into but I'm seeing my counterparts up in this area in the North Country but also across the State really having to compliment that their current program is with a program like this so what would happen is meals would actually be prepared, frozen, packaged in frozen packaging if you will and they are actually drop shipped to the individuals home. So if Mr. Mascarenas was getting home delivered meals and he had standing appointments Monday, Wednesday and Friday and needed to be on a very specific strict medically tailored diet we would be able to accommodate him with these meals and arrange for that delivery to be sent to him on a Tuesday or Thursday when he was actually home. So we're meeting the need of the individual. The other really cool thing about this is many of the different or all of the different companies that deliver drop ship meals you have actually have a menu it could be 62,75 to 100 different menu plans that all meet our state and federal nutrition guidelines so it's a more person-centered approach. So if Mr. Mascarenas only likes breakfast meals he can choose five to seven different breakfast meals drop shipped to him on a weekly basis some companies do on a bi-weekly basis we would just have to accommodate what our older adult was able to accommodate to we want to explore what that looks like, what the cost would look like then we would come back with our county manager and the purchasing team and then deliver an actual proposal for you to look through. This, I already spoke to the New York State Office for the Aging in regard to this. We have unmet need funding so it's no county match. It's really there to meet the unmet need and at this time we have that unmet need so we would be at no specific county cost.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO GO OUT TO RFP FOR A DROP SHIPPED MEAL PROGRAM FOR THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING NUTRITION DEPARTMENT. Stanley, Hughes

THURSTON: Questions, comments?

REUSSER: So this would be not necessarily taking away from the current nutrition program?

LEERKES: It is not. It would be complimenting what we are not able to currently provide also, it could potentially open up the availability for extended service through our current contractor depending on the locations. For instance, Ms. Thurston's constituents already only get delivered one day a week because of length to her. Could we better serve those individuals in her community with a drop shipped meal opening up more time for our current contractor to expand what there is more closer to their home if you will.

THURSTON: Any other questions? I just have a comment. I think this a great idea. It's thinking outside the box and I want to commend you on it. Thank you.

LEERKES: This is definitely I will put Jefferson County out there Jeffereson County kind of had a model just like us and they were seeing that need. They went out to RFP they found an absolutely amazing company that is doing a great job. They are growing so significantly up there that now those drop-ship meals that come are actually starting to employ local delivery individuals to do a delivery three times a week and there are practices already in place. It would be great to see this kind of come to fruition.

THURSTON: Thank you. All in favor aye, any opposed – thank you.

LEERKES: That's all I have.

THURSTON: Any other questions for Krissy? Thank you so much. Do we have anything else to come before this committee today? We are adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Human Services Committee it was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors