

Minutes
Human Services Committee
May 15, 2024, 5:00 p.m., Legislative Chambers
Livestreamed on YouTube
Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Proctor, Pavlock, Gustafson, Parker, Landy

Others: Lee, Chagnon, Swan, Ihrig, Faulk, Makowski, D. Anderson, Martin, Spanos, Geise, McClelland, O'Connor

Complete video of meeting can be viewed on YouTube

Chairman Proctor called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (04/17/24)

MOVED by Legislator Pavlock, SECONDED by Legislator Landy.

Unanimously Carried

Privilege of the Floor

Good evening, my name is Melissa O'Connor. I'm a Jamestown based CPS Supervisor of 22 years. I've attended the last 2 months of committee meetings and I don't want CPS to drop off your radar as our concerns continue. We are still not at the standard 40 hour work week and the Commissioner who is also our Department Head and the HR Director said at the last meeting that we have not formally requested this. For clarification, that is not true. We have requested the standard 40 hour work week option on multiple occasions for at least the last year. The Commissioner, as the Department Head, has the authority, per the contract, to make this change with the approval of the County Executive. As a reminder, 62% of the salary of a CPS titled employee is paid for by New York State as this is a mandated position. So whether the staff is at a 35 or a 40 hour work week, the state percentage remains the same. At this time, we are still currently 35 hour per week employees but have given permission to work up to 40 hours for case work needs. This happened only after supervisor Debinski(?) and myself requested a meeting with the commissioner on April 3rd, and he requested justifications for the reinstatement of the 5 hours of flex time between 35 and 40 hours. I sent this request for Jamestown staff after that meeting which he approved on a provisional basis. To my knowledge, there has been no progress on this outside agency coming in to do a very expensive and lengthy time study as he mentioned last month. The majority of the Jamestown CPS workers utilize these extra hours on a weekly basis because of the demands of their caseloads and inability to control intake. Ultimately this is about time to meaningfully work with families, make appropriate referrals and access safety of children. In addressing the difference between North and South County, during a conference with the Commissioner, he agreed that the Jamestown area is more like the Bronx referring to when he worked in New York City and the Dunkirk area was more like the suburban areas. He agreed that the Jamestown area cases have a higher level of difficulty and complexity due to criminal activities, illicit drug use, violence, mental health factors and poverty associated with a more urban environment and therefore, take more time and logistics to fulfill case worker needs. If you were to offer the 40 hour work week option to CPS, the staff who do not feel it is needed would have the option to remain at the 35 hours. Jamestown CPS specifically has many complex, traumatic and very difficult cases and they deserve the respect to have time to do their work

and input into the process. They continue to feel unheard and dismissed. I personally requested a meeting with the Commissioner on May 1st, and was given a date, 6 weeks out on June 12th. That was the earliest possible opening in his schedule. Staffing and recruitment are still an ongoing problem. After this spring, civil service case worker exam was given, the very short list of candidates was canvassed and only 4 people responded that they were interested in coming in for interviews. We currently have 6 openings in Jamestown CPS and 2 openings in services which is preventive and foster care. 1 of these 4 potential candidates has already dropped out, leaving us only 3 people to interview for 8 positions and the fall exam is not yet scheduled. Jamestown CPS also continues to have 2 people out on extended medical leave and 2 workers who just completed training. Out of a total possible staff of 21 caseworkers in Jamestown, we have 13 workers who can be assigned cases, 2 of whom are brand new and 6 of whom have under 2 years of experience. Additionally, there have been decisions made very recently that directly affects CPS operations and could negatively impact our staffing levels with no input or even awareness of these decisions from the CPS Supervisors and the Director of CPS. To be clear, in 22 years of direct CPS casework and supervision, I have never felt the need to request Legislative oversight in order to be heard. I just don't know what else to do. I don't want to take up anymore of your time explaining how CPS continues to feel undervalued, unappreciated and dismissed. South County staff are very frustrated that these important issues regarding our work, which impact safety of children remain unresolved. Thank you.

Proposed Resolution – Confirm Appointment – Chautauqua County Board of Health – *Presented by Dr. Michael Faulk, Chief Medical Officer for Chautauqua County*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Reallocating Salary Grade for Licensed Practical Nurse II (County Jail), Registered Professional Nurse II (County Jail), Registered Nurse Supervisor I (County Jail) and Registered Nurse Supervisor IV (Public Health) – *Presented by Dr. Michael Faulk, Chief Medical Officer for Chautauqua County*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Setting Salary for Grant Coordinator – *Presented by Trish McClennan, Deputy Director of Mental Hygiene and Social Services and MaryAnn Spanos, Director of Chautauqua County Office for Aging Services*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Setting Salary for Senior Grant Coordinator – *Presented by Trish McClennan, Deputy Director of Mental Hygiene and Social Services and MaryAnn Spanos, Director of Chautauqua County Office for Aging Services*

Unanimously Carried

Discussion – H.H.S. Division of Temporary Assistance – *Presented by Diane Anderson, Director for Temporary Assistance and Katie Geise, Executive Director at Chautauqua Works*

Chairman Proctor would like to hold a special meeting of the Human Services Committee before the next scheduled meeting in June to discuss questions and concerns regarding CPS and resolve ongoing difficulties within the Department. The date and time of the special meeting will be sent out at the earliest convenience.

MOVED by Legislator Pavlock, SECONDED by Legislator Gustafson to adjourn

Unanimously Carried (6:05 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,
Olivia Lee, Clerk of the Legislature/Kristi R. Zink, Deputy Clerk