

Minutes
Human Services Committee
July 18, 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, Makowski, Zafuto, Ihrig, Swan, Martin, Morgan, Wilson, Wuerstle, Wendel, Sheckles, McCoy, Dolce

Complete video of meeting can be viewed on YouTube

Chairman Proctor called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (06/18/24)

MOVED by Legislator Gustafson, SECONDED by Legislator Parker.

Unanimously Carried

Privilege of the Floor

Good Evening, my name is Chad Heim. I am a senior caseworker based out of the Jamestown office and am speaking for the group. I would like to provide some recent updates, as we have had several staff members speak previously at your committee meetings in an effort to show ongoing progress and work toward the concerns we have voiced. The department has hired five new caseworkers, three of them provisionally, as their test is in October. These provisionally hired staff members will finish their training January of next year. The other two caseworkers started state training this week and will complete state training at the end of October. Following the end of the state training, workers will then continue interdepartmental training that started upon hiring which will take several months to accomplish. While the county classifies a worker as experienced after a year, many workers do not feel fully confident in this position until between three to five years. This is due to ongoing regulations and situational experiences. Unfortunately, another vacancy has recently opened in the Jamestown office where a staff member with seven years of experience resigned. There's also an anticipated resignation of a staff member with 4 years of CPS experience and 14 years of experience within social services. This will also be a very large loss for our department. Most staff members continue to work up to forty hours in order to continue closing cases, accepting new cases, filing neglect petitions, and making safety plans. Commissioner Hernandez recently completed a ride along with 2 of our case workers, Amanda Christy and Nichole Kretz in Jamestown. During this time, Commissioner Hernandez was able to see some

of the significant issues in our local community including but not limited to drug usage, domestic violence, law enforcement involvement, housing and homelessness, and mental health issues. Several of the completed visits with Mr. Hernandez required a significant amount of time to address safety concerns directly related to the children in the home. Had these not been immediately addressed, the safety of the children would have been negatively impacted. Back in the day, CPS was a desirable position, where many waited for an opening for a long period of time. Civil service no longer has the perks for employees. The department wants to complete a time study which is a huge expense to the department and also will not give any type of immediate answers. This is not a verifiable process, as there are confidentiality restrictions as well. Additionally, it is our understanding that these concerns that we have posed are the same that were reported in the past when a time study was previously completed. Inevitably, we are always stretched to our limits due to the needs of our families, trying to complete a time study, (*inaudible*) documenting our activities will take away from time we need to spend accessing children safe and providing resources and assistance to our families. If we are not doing our jobs thoroughly, the lives of children in our case loads may be in jeopardy. Several counties are dealing with lawsuits and fatalities related to children connected to their child protective cases. We must do what we need to do to work toward mitigating risk and assisting families with meeting their needs. The recruitment process still needs to be addressed in an effort to recruit and retain staff members. There have been workers who have refused job offers due to less than 40 hours with compensation that is not up to par with what they expect based on the job requirements. We have been told that there was a submission to human resources by Commissioner Hernandez for a grade reallocation but we've not heard any updates on that process. We'd like to thank you for your time, appreciate your diligent efforts and attention to the concerns we've been working toward a resolution on and are fully in support of your ongoing efforts to continue solution-based improvements, thank you.

Chairman Proctor: Anyone else for the privilege of the floor? Seeing no one, I'm going to entertain a motion to enter executive session pursuant to letter F of New York State Public Officers Law to discuss the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of particular person or corporation.

MOVED by Legislator Pavlock, SECONDED by Legislator Gustafson to Enter into Executive Session – Unanimously Carried to Enter into Executive Session

Start: 5:06 p.m.

MOVED by Legislator Gustafson, SECONDED by Legislator Landy to End Executive Session – Unanimously Carried to End Executive Session

End: 5:18 p.m.

RES. NO. 191-24 – Confirming the Formation of a Human Services Sub-Committee to Review the Chautauqua County Child Protective Services Program (*Referred back to Committee by the Full Legislature on June 26, 2024 for further consideration*)

Defeated with Legislators Proctor, Pavlock, Gustafson and Landy Voting “No”

Proposed Resolution – Amend 2024 Budget to Implement the Coroner Vehicle Project, Using Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – *Presented by Dr. Michael Faulk, Chief Medical Officer for Chautauqua County and Anthony Sheckles, Coroner Supervisor*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Amend Chautauqua County Department of Public Health 2024 Budget to Include NYSDOH Public Health Corps Fellowship Program Funding – *Presented by Sam Zafuto, Deputy Director of Finance*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – New York State Department of Health Nurse Family Partnership Grant *Presented by Sam Zafuto, Deputy Director of Finance and Lacey Wilson, Public Health Director*

Unanimously Carried

Late Proposed Resolution – Authorize Grant Application for 2024 Community Development Block Grant Funding through the New York State Office of Community Renewal – Septic and Wells Program – *Presented by Jessica Wuerstle, Director of Environmental Health Services*

Unanimously Carried

Discussion – Safety Net – *Presented by Sam Zafuto, Deputy Director of Finance and Blake Ihrig, Director of Administrative Services with the Department of Finance*

Discussion – CPS Update – *Presented by Laurie Dolce, Director of Certification, Responsible for Child Protection Services*

Other –

MOVED by Legislator Gustafson, SECONDED by Legislator Pavlock to adjourn

Unanimously Carried (6:16 p.m.)

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