

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

September 27, 2006

**OSWEGO COUNTY BUILDING
4th FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

Present:

Legislators

John Proud, Chairman
Dan Chalifoux
Arthur Gearsbeck
Leonard Ponzi
Paul Santore

Staff

Donna Kestner, Director of Veterans' Services
Larry Schmidt, Director Office for the Aging
Kathleen Smith, Director of Public Health
Marlene Jones, Senior Typist, Social Services

Excused:

Barb Brown, Vice Chair
Kimberly Seager
Frances Lanigan, Commissioner of Social Services
Kathleen Fenlon, Director, Youth Bureau

Guests:

Stephen Lyman, County Administrator
Charles McChesney, Post Standard
Steven Yablonski, Oswego Daily News

Chairman Proud called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Proud asked for a motion to approve the August 25, 2006 meeting minutes.

Motion: Legislator Santore moved a motion to approve the August 25, 2006 minutes.

Second: Legislator Chalifoux, however after the fact, Chairman Proud informed committee that Legislator Brown changes be made to the minutes, but the changes are not available at this time.

Changes to the August 25, 2006 minutes will be reviewed at the October meeting.

2. **VETERANS**

VA PARKING SITUATION

Director Kestner checked into the construction work/relocation regarding parking for those with disabilities at the VA Hospital. Construction is for a new spinal cord unit. They are also adding 3 levels to the existing garage and building a new garage. The completion of the unit may not be done until 2009, but they expect the parking to be completed much sooner.

Individuals with disabilities can make arrangements for assistance by calling the VAMC to ask for someone to meet them in the garage with a wheel chair. The request usually goes through the police section.

3. **HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

EEE UPDATE

Director Smith reviewed EEE update with Committee. The four-county central New York area is second only to Massachusetts in EEE and EEE virus activity. No human cases (Massachusetts had 4 or 5 human cases) have been reported, but we have recorded 4 equine cases (Oswego 3 and Oneida 1), and 60 isolations of EEE virus. We may see more equine cases before the season is over. This year represents our fourth consecutive year with EEE virus activity in central New York.

Chairman Proud stated that Legislator Brown wanted him to address her concerns regarding the swamp area in her district. Director Smith reported that the Toad Harbor Swamp and the northern part of Oneida Lake were sprayed based on testing performed by the State Health Department. The Palermo area was not tested this year.

Director Smith also reported that there were no E-Coli cases related to spinach in Oswego County.

FLU SHOT UPDATE

Director Smith informed the Committee that scheduling can be done on the new county flu website. There is no cost for the website. The website should go live within the next week. The public can still call and make appointments. Director Smith expects the flu vaccine to be delivered the end of October.

Legislator Gearsbeck asked Director Smith about her department's 2007 budget. Director Smith stated that the initial 2007 budget request is \$483,000 over the 2006 local share.

4. **SOCIAL SERVICES**

Administrator Lyman submitted two budget modifications for Committee review and approval.

BUDGET MODIFICATION-ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

- Budget modification to accept \$3,249 increase in State Aid for community Alcohol & Substance Abuse Services. Funding is passed to the agency through the County. There is no local share.

Motion: Legislator Santore moved a motion to approve the request.

Second: Legislator Chalifoux.

Vote: Ayes: Chalifoux, Gearsbeck, Ponzi, Proud, Santore. Motion carried.

BUDGET MODIFICATION- HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP)

- Budget modification to accept additional federal administrative funding of \$48,600 for HEAP.

The State Office of Temporary Assistance Programs (OTDA) has allocated an increased amount of Federal HEAP funds to local districts to implement an early processing initiative. There is no local share.

Director Schmidt reported that a printing error in applications sent from the state shaded the area where the client is to put his/her name, which caused client confusion since application specifically states that the client is not supposed to write in the shaded area. The instruction sheet was not mailed with the applications. The errors have created more work for his staff.

Last year OFA approved between 1920-1950 applications and received 400 applications that were not approved.

Administrator Lyman informed the committee that counties in previous years made payments to the HEAP vendors. Earlier this year counties were informed that the state would takeover that process. The state recently informed the counties that they will have to continue to process payments. This will be addressed at the budget review meeting.

Motion: Legislator Chalifoux moved a motion to approve the request.

Second: Legislator Santore

Vote: Ayes: Chalifoux, Gearsbeck, Ponzi, Proud, Santore. Motion carried.

WELFARE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA)

WIA funding has been reduced. Earlier in the year the department was notified to anticipate around a 9% reduction in funding for the 2006-2007-program year. The funding year is from July to June. Plans were to manage the reduction with no anticipated necessity to lay-off staff. In late August, the department was advised that the actual allocation would be a 24% reduction in federal WIA funding. This is 100% federal funding.

Funding is awarded to cover both operational (staffing) and program expenses. In order to operate an effective and relevant WIA program there needs to be a balance in the ratio of administrative costs, program staffing costs and direct program services costs. It is important to maintain balance so funding is available to pay for customer services such as education, training or on the job training (OJT). In order to balance staffing cost with program dollars available for serving jobseekers we are compelled to propose the elimination of two occupied positions.

A Resolution will be going to the Finance and Personnel Committee and to the Legislature on October 12, 2006.

Commissioner Lanigan to provide a detailed accounting of WIA funding at next month's meeting.

Legislator Ponzi commented that there are 30-40 people that moved into the county from other counties. The people are receiving benefits in our county and not working. He doesn't feel we should be supporting these people. Legislator Ponzi wanted to make a motion to change the waiting period from 30 to 120 days. Discussion ensued.

Administrator Lyman informed committee that the eligibility laws/regulations are set by the state and only the state can amend them. There will always be movement from county to county. Oswego County has cheap housing and high vacancy rate, which draws people into the county, even when job opportunities are not there.

Administrator Lyman commented that we must be aggressive about going after fraud and seeing that everyone has to work. Welfare reform of the early 90's has worked. Caseload is 25% of what it was back then. Comment was made that a lot of individuals are receiving SSI. Administrator Lyman commented that SSI is federal money, no local cost. If individual is unable to work while receiving public assistance, it is hard to meet the participation rates.

Discussion ensued on work experience and individuals not showing up. Administrator Lyman commented that this issue could be revisited at goals meeting with Department Head.

There are new work requirements under TANF (Federal Program) and if not met there will be penalties.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion: Legislator Santore moved a motion to move into Executive Session at 10:40 a.m. to discuss Performance Evaluations.

Second: Legislator Ponzi.

Vote: Chalifoux, Gearsbeck, Ponzi, Proud, Santore. Motion carried.

The Committee moved into Executive Session at 10:45 a.m.

The committee returned from Executive Session at 11:30 a.m.

Motion: Legislator Santore made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Legislator Ponzi.

Vote: Ayes: Chalifoux, Gearsbeck, Ponzi, Proud, Santore. Motion carried.