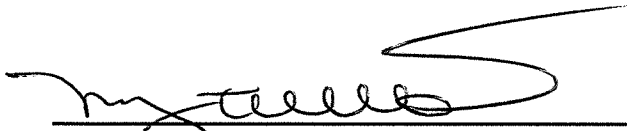



Date: November 7, 2013

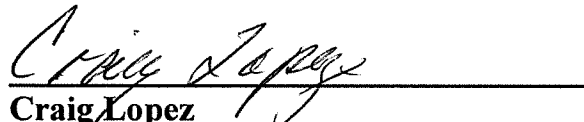
SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE:



Mary Wawro, Chairman

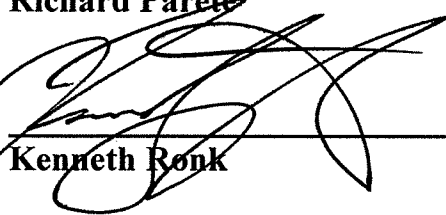


Hector Rodriguez, Deputy Chairman



Craig Lopez

Richard Parete



Kenneth Ronk

Today's Date: December 2, 2013

Social Services Committee

Meeting Minutes

DATE & TIME: November 7, 2013, 6:30 PM
LOCATION: Karen L. Binder Library, 6th Floor, COB, Kingston, NY
PRESIDING OFFICERS: Chairmen Mary Wawro
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Deputy Clerk Krista Barringer
PRESENT: Legislators Craig Lopez, Richard Parete, Hector Rodriguez, and Kenneth Ronk
ABSENT: None
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes
OTHER ATTENDEES: Deputy County Executive Ken Crannell, DSS Commissioner Michael Iapoce, Deputy DSS Commissioner Cynthia Biesel, DSS Director of Finance Peter Carney, Commissioner of Finance Burt Gulnick, Legislator Jeanette Provenzano, and Legislator-elect Chris Allen

Chairmen Wawro called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM.

Motion No. 1 RESOLVED To Approve the Minutes of the Social Services Committee meeting held October 7, 2013

Motion Made By: Legislator Rodriguez
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Ronk
Discussion: None
Roll Call Vote: No
Voting In Favor: Legislators Lopez, Parete, Rodriguez, Ronk and Wawro
Voting Against: None
No. of Votes in Favor: 5
No. of Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Carried

Motion No. 2 Resolution No. 292 – November 19, 2013

Text of Motion: Resolve to Approve Resolution No. 292 - Approving The Execution Of A Contract Amendment In Excess Of \$50,000.00 Entered Into By The County – Department Of Social Services (Astor Services for Children and Families)

Motion Made By: Legislator Parete
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Ronk

Resolution No. 292 Summary: This Resolution reports the Ulster County Legislature has examined the stated contract amendment with Astor Services for Children and Families and approves the contract amendment in the form as filed with the Clerk of the Ulster County Legislature or as modified with the approval of the County Attorney and Legislative Counsel.

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote: No

Voting In Favor: Legislators Lopez, Parete, Rodriguez, Ronk and Wawro

Voting Against: None

No. of Votes in Favor: 5

No. of Votes Against: 0

Disposition: Carried

Motion No. 3 **Resolution No. 299 – November 19, 2013**

Text of Motion: Resolve to Approve Resolution No. 299 - Authorizing The County To Pay For The Cost Of The Safety Net Program Thereby Relieving The Various Municipalities Of Responsibility For Payment

Motion Made By: Legislator Rodriguez

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Lopez

Resolution No. 299 Summary: This Resolution indicates, pursuant to the provisions of Section 72 of the Social Services Law, the County of Ulster hereby agrees to pay sixty-six percent of the local share of the Safety Net Costs effective January 1, 2014. It further indicates effective January 1, 2015, the County of Ulster hereby agrees to pay one hundred percent of the local share of the cost of the Safety Net program. The Resolution states any outstanding charges yet to be paid to the County by any municipality for costs associated with the Safety Net Program shall continue to be due and owing, and shall be paid by the respective municipality. The Resolution authorizes and directs the Clerk of the Ulster County Legislature to send a certified copy of this resolution to each Town Clerk in Ulster County and to the Mayor and Clerk of the City of Kingston within ten days after the adoption of this resolution. In addition, the Resolution authorizes the Commissioner of Social Services and the Commissioner of Finance to take any and all steps necessary to implement this resolution.

Discussion:

Chair Wawro suggested there be an additional resolve that the Resolution be contingent to the sales tax extension approval at the State. Legislator Ronk stated this was in the budget and felt they should not put anything in the Resolution that could cause the State Assemblyman to once again go back on his word. Deputy County Executive Crannell stated there was some concern expressed by some Legislators that they would not be able to bind future Legislatures. He stated that Legislation was very clean and assumes the 2/3^{rds} of the expense for 2014 and then the balance of the costs or 100% for 2015. He stated the authority for the County Legislature to act was invested in Section 72 of Social Services law which allows the Legislature to bind the expense. He stated outside of New York City, there are 57 Counties and 56 of them have already assumed these expenses. He stated no County has ever gone backwards and given the expense back to the Towns or the Cities. He stated the State Law

permits the County to take it over but not to give it back. Deputy County Executive Crannell discussed the history of the Safety Net/Home Relief program.

Roll Call Vote:	No
Voting In Favor:	Legislators Lopez, Parete, Rodriguez, Ronk and Wawro
Voting Against:	None
No. of Votes in Favor:	5
No. of Votes Against:	0
Disposition:	Carried

Old Business (DSS Budget Review):

Deputy County Executive Crannell noted the Department of Social Services Budget is essentially the total budget for the Department is \$117.9 million with an increase of just over 2% annually. He stated major impacts were the implementation of the Ulster Cares proposal from June 2013 which will transfer in 21 staff into a new energy unit and a reconfiguration of staff into a satellite, one-stop office of the Office for the Aging. He noted there would be additional resources to the special investigations/fraud unit, including a new tip line. He noted there was a \$1million increase in Family Assistance and a \$2 million increase in Safety Net which included the additional 1/3rd County takeover of local costs.

Commissioner Iapoce noted the additional staff through the CARES program has been a jolt to the entire operation. He indicated the Department had lost a lot of staff and positions. He discussed the impact of these losses. He stated 65-70% of people receiving benefits, including SNAP, HEAP, Day Care, are working families. He noted he wages that these people are receiving are not enough for them to survive on. He stated through the media coverage on the Safety Net/Sales Tax coverage, there has been a backlash on this population seeking assistance. He noted other Counties are also struggling with an increasing Safety Net population. He noted the Federal TANF program has a 60 month time frame of when an individual can receive benefits and people are cycling off of it. He noted the economy has also not recovered. He stated many people entered the workforce and took the kind of jobs that people on Safety Net would normally have. He stated the impact of casino development in portions of the County has them hopeful that they can see some of their role decrease. He stated they are monitoring the Safety Net population in terms of trying to transition them off of the benefit and into work. He stated they have a lot of employment programs that they work very hard on and they hope that the addition of staff they will have a bigger impact in that area. He stated the New York Public Welfare Association Commissioners sponsored regional employment workshops to share ideas about what other districts are doing with this very serious problem. He noted in some districts, the Safety Net population is greater than their TANF population. He stated transitioning people to employment is a major challenge due to transportation issues. He stated this population also run into issues with substance abuse and mental illness. He noted the other agencies that address these issues are being dismantled, leaving the Department of Social Services are the location of last resort where people dealing with multiple issues arrive that no long can be assisted through the closures at other agencies (i.e. psychiatric facilities, group homes, etc). He stated they work hard to keep people from slipping through the cracks.

Commissioner Iapoce stated they are implementing an initiative to compact welfare fraud and to demonstrate to the residents of Ulster County that there is integrity behind the programs. He stated

they want to ensure the people who are eligible for the programs are having their applications processed and the disclosure is being done appropriately. He noted they want to ensure there is no abuse with respect to the program. He stated they hope the increase of staff will help them in that regard as well.

Legislator Parete stated in full disclosure he owns rental apartments in Ellenville and he noted of his seven tenants, only two tenants have vehicles. He noted a couple of the tenants are on public assistance. He noted their discussions in regards to utilizing public transportation to Kingston. He asked if a mobile services unit, similar to the DMV bus, was a possibility to bring the services to the people. Deputy County Executive Crannell stated the size of the County made this difficult and they have had discussions with the staff. Legislator Rodriguez noted a bus could be a resource. Legislator Parete suggested using the Trudy Farber Government Building location. Deputy County Executive Crannell stated they have established partnerships with some of the Towns and Not-for-Profit organizations in the area and would be willing to look at. Legislator Parete noted the people work in the village and it is a hardship to get to Kingston.

Commissioner Gulnick noted the difficulty the Department of Finance encounters with people trying to pay their taxes with cash and being unable to get to them.

Commissioner Iapocce stated the Department appreciated the support of the Committee. He noted the Department knows it is always going to be a big portion of the budget due to the work that they do. He noted with the transition of more staff will help them to get more productive and will be a huge benefit to the County.

Chair Wawro felt the County needed to put a face on the people receiving Social Services benefits. She discussed the negative communications about people receiving benefits that she heard from people while she was campaigning. She discussed the economic downturn. Deputy County Executive Crannell noted most people do not understand a benefits check is not that large. He discussed the Federal cut to Food Stamps benefits as the supplemental benefit expired on November 1, 2013 resulting in a cut of \$33 per person. He noted the anticipated increase to food pantries and programs like Queens Galley. Chair Wawro noted it was a bad time for this to happen. Deputy County Executive Crannell noted Congress has not yet reauthorized Food Stamps.

Adjournment

Motion Made By: Legislator Rodriguez

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Lopez

No. of Votes in Favor: 5

No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 7:41 PM

Dated the 2nd day of December, 2013

Krista Barringer, Deputy Clerk

Minutes Approved on: