

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
of the ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

DATE: February 14, 2001

TIME: 6:00pm

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: Chairman Alice Tipp, David Donaldson, Vincent Dunn, Brian Hathaway
Barbara Santoro and Robert Wilkins

LEGISLATORS ABSENT: Peter Loughran

OTHERS PRESENT: Kathryn Puglisi, Office for the Aging
Terry Breitenstein, Veterans' Agency
Ellen Greczynski, Office for the Aging

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

Alice welcomed all the members of the committee.

KATHY PUGLISI - Office for the Aging

Kathy began by discussing the new Care-A-Van. The van should be here within the next week. The graphics are now being put on. She said she'd like to have an opening in April with Senator Bonacic and Senator Larkin. She will keep the committee updated.

Kathy advised that Kingston hospital invested approximately \$50,000 toward the cost of the van and will be using the van 2 days per week for Occupational Health and Wellness. Peggy will be driving the van and her schedule has been set to include driving it to the hospital's locations on the days that they need it. There will be medical oversight by Dr. Carol Smith and an R.N.. The Office for the Aging will be using Kingston Hospital's lab as well. They will also be paying a portion of Peggy's salary, for the time she is driving for them. Kathy said they are also considering having agencies such as Alzheimers Assoc., American Cancer Society and ors. perform outreach from the van and possibly work with the Health Dept. for flue clinics next year. One of the baby vans should be ready in 2-3 weeks, Kathy stated. It will be used for medical transportation. They will be sub-contracting with Community Action for the second van so that they can use it to transport people to the nutrition sites. Also, they can use it to deliver meals.

Kathy then discussed Senior Games. Ellen is in the process of planning the games and two people from Mayor Gallo's office are involved in the planning also. In addition, there is a senior committee helping out. Kathy advised that the luncheon will consist of a barbeque held on June 11th at the Town of Ulster Park, and Community Action will be catering it.

The tax counselors are working throughout the county, Kathy told the committee. There is a problem with getting tax counselors in Ellenville and they are thinking of possibly transporting counselors to the Ellenville tax site with the new van.

There will be a HIICAP workshop on February 20th for newly retired people to inform them of Medicare and insurance options Kathy advised. Also, the Governor will be honoring HIICAP counselors this year. HEAP applications have tripled this year, Kathy announced. Everyone is helping out with them.

Discussion followed regarding the STAR program. Alice informed the committee that every senior should check with their Town Assessor when applying.

Kathy informed the committee that they were given additional money from the Junior League which produced a

3rd Blizzard Box which was distributed to home bound seniors.

Alice advised that attendance at the Saugerties Nutrition site has picked up. She has been attending the exercise programs there and is encouraging people to have lunch at the site. She said approximately 50-75% of the people who attend the exercise and yoga programs now stay and eat at the site.

Kathy was dismissed at 6:30pm

TERRY BREITENSTEIN - Veterans Agency

Terry advised that he is very busy mainly with long term care with the elderly. There is a problem with long term care through the VA. Terry stated that it is unacceptable. The two VA hospitals in the area; Albany and Castle point, will take care of people for a maximum of 4 months in a nursing home setting and then they must leave to a private sector. He said he does not advocate people utilizing VA nursing home services. Another problem, Terry stated, is with RESPITE care. There are many cases where the Veteran is elderly, with Alzheimer's, stroke victim, etc. where the spouse has to go into the hospital and the Veteran, who needs to be taken care of, is alone in the home. There is nowhere to place him. RESPITE care in the VA hospital is 14 days. Terry says he has to look for short term admission into the hospital, as a patient, for the Veteran. Terry announced that there is a new Director for the Secretary of the Cabinet in Washington.

Terry informed the committee that Senator Schumer's office contacted him. The Senator now has an office in Red Hook. He informed Terry that he may be called to go to Washington, as a Representative as Terry is the second longest standing accredited rep. in the state. In Washington, a meeting will be held to discuss Veterans affairs.

Terry discussed some of the problems he faces. He discussed the application for a service connected disability. He said he can possibly get it through in 8 months, however, it usually takes about a year. It then can be denied, and then they have to appeal it and it then takes up to 3 years for that to come to fruition. In addition, there is a new system in the Regional office in New York City that he has to deal with on a daily basis. They don't, however, have to deal with the regional office in regard to adaptive housing and adaptive equipment. He has been able to find ways to move some things along more quickly though.

Terry advised that the clinic is doing well. There are administrative problems, as it is not staffed by VA personnel. There has also been a staff cut as well as the company overseeing the clinic claims the enrollment is down. At present, Terry stated, there are 1,600 people enrolled at the clinic.

Discussion followed regarding Dr. Patel. Although well educated and sympathetic to the needs of the Veterans, he is difficult to understand and he does not write prescriptions freely.

Vinny asked about HOSPICE as people have approached him on the subject asking if there are places to go. If the person is utilizing the VA for medical care, he may be able to get them HOSPICE, but if they are not utilizing the VA's medical services, he does have a problem getting them HOSPICE, Terry replied. He can, however, refer them to other sources, he added. Vinny asked how long a HOSPICE patient could stay in a care center. Terry said that HOSPICE programs are invaluable. There are many cases and so have had to cut back. It used to be a year. There is a waiting list and your prognosis determines where you are on the waiting list.

Alice asked the committee to write letters in regard to the Purple Heart. Terry advised that he has a form letter that he will send to each member to sign and send out.

Terry invited all members to the Veterans' office. Dave then asked about the air quality in Terry's office.

Discussion followed regarding this.

Vinny asked about the number of burials they Veterans have had so far this year. Terry said he will bring the figure with him to the next meeting.

Bob made the 1st motion to adjourn, seconded by Brian.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Tipp, Chairman
Community Services Committee

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