

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
of the ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

DATE: August 21, 1997

TIME: 6:00 PM

LOCATION: 300 Flatbush Avenue

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: Chairman Alice Tipp, Robert Aiello, William Calabrese, Joan Feldmann, Alan Lomita, Peter Naccarato, Robert Wilkins

LEGISLATORS EXCUSED: Frank Dart, Richard Gerentine

OTHERS PRESENT: Kathy Puglisi, Office for the Aging
Donna Hildebrandt, Office for the Aging
Sue McCarthy, Youth Bureau
Terry Breitenstein, Veterans Service
Juanita Cinclini, Youth Bureau

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

Kathryn Puglisi, Office for the Aging

- The Director's Report and the OFA budget were distributed.
- Kathy introduced Donna Hilderbrandt from the staff of the Office for the Aging who would explain items from the 1998 budget. Alice took the opportunity to commend Donna for her dedication to the preparation of the budget in spite of personal health problems.
- Kathy pointed out that Phoenicia and Ellenville would be receiving computers through the NYNEX grant. These areas have been determined to be "underserved". The Legislative Initiative from Senator Larkin of \$20,000 will supplement the NYNEX grant and provide a program for a client database to access client's files.
- Kathy continues to review client services in terms of keeping costs down in the areas such as legal services, identification cards, and rural transportation. Considerable savings have been realized through the change in providing transportation to senior citizens. The savings in salary/benefits for the driver and bus maintenance without loss of services demonstrates her vigilance. Problems have been minimized and in some cases services extended since the bus now picks up clients at their doors.
- Getting the Care-A-Van set up in the parking lot at DSS is taking longer than anticipated, however, it will be equipped with a cellular phone and a lap-top computer.

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- Robert Wilkins asked if the computers were helping to make the office more efficient. Kathy assured him that it does. With one central point for input of all information pertaining to each client, the information can be retrieved from each terminal. The client database will make this possible.
- Bill Calabrese asked if the HTE system is now debugged. Donna said the information is inaccurate and she has had dollar amounts inadvertently obliterated. Bill asked if their computer has a backup system. Donna said she operates a second system for assurance. Robert Wilkins expressed his feeling that the system should be failsafe!
- The topic reverted to the Care-A-Van. Joan Feldmann asked where it is now parked. Kathy said it is at the quarry and goes out 2 or 3 days a week. She would like to have it parked in the lot at DSS for 2 days a week. Peggy would be stationed in the van alone. Bill asked if parking was that tight. Kathy responded that the van requires four parking spaces. Bill added that it would need to be moved in case of an emergency. Kathy said she has conferred with Phil Sinagra and expressed her desire to use the van efficiently which includes the time of the RN who is assigned there. It will not operate on Sundays, in fact, there will be no weekend hours without approval. Compensatory time will be limited; time will be used as it is accrued. This is now understood by the parties involved. Joan Feldmann asked how many times a month the van is on the road. Are all areas of the county covered? Kathy explained that the van is at each location once a month. In addition, it goes to picnics and other events where seniors are expected to be. Clerical duties require two days in the office each week which is the time she wants the van in the parking lot.
- Alice presented the resolution to accept the \$10,000 grant from NYNEX. Bill Calabrese made the motion to approve the resolution; it was seconded by Bob Aiello. The motion was voted upon and passed.
- The committee reviewed the budget of the Office for the Aging. Alan Lomita questioned the \$1,000 request for an electric typewriter. Donna Hilderbrandt explained that this was for two typewriters. Pete Naccarato asked if computer terminals hadn't replaced typewriters. Donna replied that the typewriters are necessary for typing on forms, etc. Donna answered questions about the budget posed by the committee. Alice commented that Donna had done a great job putting the budget together and with her presentation.

Bill asked if the committee has any role procedurally in the budget process. Alice explained they did not have a direct role; this review was for information purposes. Robert Wilkins affirmed that the Office for the Aging will be providing the same service in 1998 for less money. Bill asked how the seniors in his district were served. Kathy explained how meals are provided in New Paltz and Gardiner.

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Kathy reiterated that she is committed to changing procedures to make her office more efficient. Alice invited the members of the committee to come to the Office for the Aging. After some discussion, it was decided that the next meeting of the group will be at Kathy's office and Pete Naccarato will bring refreshments!

Sue McCarthy from the Youth Bureau

- distributed her Director's Report and her budget.
- Sue explained that she has been involved in program visits, principally those of the summer recreation programs. She expressed her satisfaction about the programs both for the numbers of young people and the various kinds of activities offered. She was also enthusiastic about the beauty of our county! She was concerned that some of the programs are charging a fee for participation which is opposed by the Division for Youth. However, she will be addressing this issue and is confident that the matter can be resolved.
- As Sue explained, program visits are a preliminary to the funding process. The results of the visits and the self reporting from the agencies are incorporated into the evaluation of programs to determine funding for the coming year. The delay in the passage of the NYS budget has resulted in a delay in the funding process. We now know that funding received from the state for 1998 will remain the same as that for 1997. The Program Committee of the Youth Board will now meet to review the applications and will then present their recommendations to the full Board after which they will be brought to the Community Services Committee.
- The 1998 state budget has established the Office of Children and Family Services which is the merger of the Division for Youth and the Department of Social Services. At this point, the change appears to be in name only as evidenced by telephone calls to DFY facilities. Bill Calabrese asked if DSS was also using the same facilities. Sue did not know. Bill wondered what committee would be responsible for the new agency. Sue was hopeful that the merger would make it possible to improve services and eliminate duplication of effort.
- Alice asked about the youth center for Saugerties which will be operated by the Boys and Girls Club. Sue shared the background of the project which had been delayed during negotiations between the town and village as to their respective contributions. They have now reached an agreement and the Boys and Girls Club is ready to begin operation in the middle of September. Bill asked what is meant by "waive their state service money" from Sue's report. Sue explained that service money is directed toward education, tutoring, counseling and similar activities, not for recreational purposes. If a municipality chooses not to operate a service program, they may waive their service money to another program. Otherwise, the money will go back into the "pot" to be divided among other service programs. Bob Aiello asked who is responsible

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for liability for the program which will be held at the Cahill Elementary School. He felt this should be investigated. Sue assured him that the Boys and Girls Club has adequate insurance; state-funded programs are carefully monitored. Bill Calabrese felt the school wouldn't permit its use without this protection. Bob was concerned. Alice asked Sue to check on the liability. Pete asked if the funding for the new center was adequate. Sue explained how the funding was determined and assured the group that the Boys and Girls Club was an efficient organization.

- Attention turned to the Youth Bureau budget. Alice asked if the amounts had increased or decreased. Sue said basically the budget had remained the same.
- Robert Wilkins asked specifically about the recreation program in the Town of Olive. Sue had been very pleased during her on-site visit and also that the program operates throughout the year. They serve 300 youth annually. Sue invited the members of the committee to feel free to visit any of the programs.

Terry Breitenstein of the Veterans Service Agency

- The first item on Terry's agenda was Indigent Burials. He distributed copies of a letter from Terrance Copeland, Sr., who as a representative of the Ulster County Funeral Director's Association, has requested an increase in the rate for indigent burials to \$1800. The current rate is \$950; the rate has not been increased since 1981. DSS reimburses \$425 of this amount but it is entered into a different line, which depletes the available amount in the Veterans Service Agency budget. Terry explained that if the family is able to provide for the expenses including a burial plot, they will be encouraged to do so, but many simply don't have the money. According to VA regulations, the County can not require cremation and the remains may not be buried in a "Potter's field" or double grave. Bill Calabrese asked if the County could buy plots to be used for indigent veterans as a cost-saving measure. Terry said it may be possible but the family may object to location. Bill responded that if they are not paying for the burial, they are not in a position to object. Terry was unsure whether the law would permit this practice. Bill asked if there was a movement to establish a veterans cemetery in Ulster County. Terry didn't think so. Pete Naccarato suggested that the County should provide burials within our means. If survivors object, they will have to provide the service themselves. In looking over the letter from Mr. Copeland, Bill said he thought the amount was negotiable. Bob Aiello asked if the amount of \$1800 was realistic. What are the actual expenses? Bill asked if we could take a multi-year approach to avoid annual increases. Alan Lomita suggested we check with neighboring counties regarding rates in such instances. Bob said it was not reasonable to ask funerals directors to donate their time and money. Terry added that they are businessmen who must comply with OSHA requirements and other unexpected expenses. Bob Aiello and Bob Wilkins were in

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agreement that an increase was appropriate. Alice Tipp and Alan Lomita were of the opinion that we should check with other counties. Bill asked how many burials are required in an average year, about 25? Terry said it has been as many as 35/36. Alice asked Terry to do research and present his findings. Terry will compile the information and distribute as soon as possible.

- The next topic was the budget which had been forwarded to the County Administrator. Alice asked if the amounts remained the same or if there had been an increase. Terry's response was that the budget had increased due to the additional request for burial expenses and the new position which had been discussed at the previous meeting. Bill Calabrese asked about the new position. Terry said he had changed the request to a part-time, non-benefited Veteran's Service Assistant. Alice asked if salary increases were included. Terry said they were not because negotiations were currently in progress. Pete Naccarato said Terry had done a good job.
- Terry then presented his evaluation. Alice said he is to be complimented. Terry revealed that during the course of the discussion with Bill Darwak about the evaluation, he broached the subject of salary. After 13 years as Director of the Veterans Services Agency, Terry is close to being the lowest paid county director. He feels that his salary has not kept pace with his peers, given the intensity and demands of the job. He asked how he could be granted an increase. Does he need to improve? (He was given the best rating available in the evaluation). How about an incentive to reward those who are deserving? Pete acknowledged that there were inequities in the system. Alan was also sympathetic. Alice added that Terry is responsive to telephone calls. He is often out of the office on necessary visits to funeral homes, etc. Pete said that he felt that Terry deserves to be given an increase in salary for his service to the County. Alice said she had discussed salary increases with Bill Darwak. She added that she had no problems with any of the departments which this committee oversees. Terry elaborated on the salaries that are paid to recently-appointed department heads as compared to what he receives after 13 years of dedicated service. He feels that he is not being given a fair deal and is asking the committee for their assistance/advice. Pete agreed that salary increases should be taken into consideration.

Pete Naccarato then made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Bob Wilkins. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectively Submitted,

Alice Tipp, Chairman
Community Services Committee