

Minutes of Meeting

SOCIAL & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING Department of Social Services

October 22, 2012

Present: John Salka, Town of Brookfield
Lewis Carinci, City of Oneida
Roger Bradstreet, Town of Nelson
Alexander Stepanski, Town of Stockbridge
James Goldstein, Town of Lebanon
Michael Fitzgerald, Commissioner

John started the meeting by ensuring that all members had received and reviewed the meeting minutes from September 24, 2012. On a motion by Roger and seconded by Lewis, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Mike reported that the caseload and expenditures report is still under budgeted amounts. Through three quarters of the year, the department is at roughly 66 percent expenditures. Mike attributed most of that to foster care savings. Roger noted that the number of children in foster care actually looks like it has increased. Mike confirmed that principally due to the early summer bath salts cases, the number of children entering foster care increased dramatically. Mike is hoping that with the ban on sales and possession and the seeming disappearance of the substances, families are addressing their treatment needs and the children are soon reunited with their parents or other appropriate family. Mike commented that in addition to bath salts taxing law enforcement, EMTs, and healthcare providers, the non-illegal substances had a severe impact on Social Services. There is also fear that some of the chronic users are or were pregnant and effects on the future generation of infants are unknown. Mike also cautioned that some of the chronic, untreated abusers are now likely again using meth since DSS has seen an increase in CPS reports regarding that allegation. There were no other significant caseload data to report.

Mike had three resolutions before the committee. The first one was a renewal with Liberty Resources for residential domestic violence services. Mike explained that the \$7,273 federal TANF amount, unchanged from the previous year, is in essence, a pass through. The domestic violence shelter through Liberty Resources basically operates at a loss and this funding helps support the low-income families who might utilize the shelter. In the previous year, 34 individuals were served. On a motion by Jim and seconded by Alex, the resolution passed unanimously.

The second resolution was again another renewal of a contract – this one with Cooperative Extension to provide Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (food stamps) education. The goal of the program, funded at \$44,100 with federal funding, is to educate SNAP recipients on how to better utilize the benefits to improve nutrition. There was discussion regarding the long-term goals of Cooperative Extension to remove itself from any programming not “related to agriculture.” Mike thought that with SNAP being tied to nutrition and the funding coming from the USDA, there was a “good chance” that nutrition education would continue to be supported. There was discussion about other Cooperative Extension programs like RSVP and Head Start that are less likely to be supported since they are not directly linked to agriculture. There was

continued discussion about likely successor agencies should Cooperative Extension not continue to oversee Head Start, with the most likely agency being Community Action Program. With their involvement in Home Visiting, Early Head Start, and other family support programs, they would be well positioned. However, with other funding cuts, Community Action has reduced staff and, at the same time, has other major initiatives either under way or proposed, so taking on a multi-million dollar program with a large infrastructure such as Head Start would be a big project. Discussion continued about “why Cooperative Extension in the first place?” with no definitive answer other than they were here. Questions were asked about school districts or BOCES’ interest with general agreement that schools have focused on Kindergarten and up and only recently started to provide limited opportunities for pre-K programs. Additionally, with a countywide Head Start program and a multitude of school districts and BOCES responsibilities, the “who” would be difficult to sort out. Finally, with government cutting schools and the county in an effort to reduce expenses, there is not likely to be anybody taking this program. On a motion by Jim and seconded by Roger, the resolution passed unanimously.

Finally, Mike had a renewal agreement with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County for child care resource and referral services. Mike explained that the \$33,218 annual program – all from federal sources and no increase over previous years – provides a critical link among child care providers, child care recipients, and DSS. Mike detailed that the onsite specialist makes sure that those who need child care are linked into available slots. This helps to make sure that those transitioning to work are successful. On the other end, child care providers who might want to become certified or improve their programs can work with the specialist for those needs. Mike remarked that this contract and the previous both have the “hold harmless” language that meets the needs of Cooperative Extension. On a motion by Lewis and seconded by Alex, the resolution passed unanimously.

There being no further action for DSS, the Mental Health Department began its presentation.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Fitzgerald
Commissioner

Approved by Committee Chairman: _____ Date: _____