

## Minutes of Meeting

### SOCIAL & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING Department of Social Services

February 25, 2013

Present: John Salka, Town of Brookfield  
Alexander Stepanski, Town of Stockbridge  
Lewis Carinci, City of Oneida  
Eve Ann Shwartz, Town of Hamilton  
James Goldstein, Town of Lebanon  
Michael Fitzgerald, Commissioner  
Mark Scimone, Administrative Assistant to the Chairman  
Eric Faisst, Director of Public Health

The meeting was brought to order by Chairman Salka. The meeting minutes of January 28, 2013, had previously been distributed and on a motion by Alex and seconded by Lewis, the minutes were approved unanimously.

The caseload and expenditures report only covered the first month of 2013, but some warnings were already becoming necessary. Year 2012 had ended with more children in foster care than in the previous years and 2013 is starting in that same fashion. Costs related to foster care placements will need to be carefully monitored throughout the year. Additionally, foster care (and adoption) boarding rates have not increased in many years and Mike stated that he had hoped to budget for some modest increases for 2014. With placements so high, that cost will be higher than previously considered, although still a good idea.

Mike had two resolutions before the committee. The first was to enter into an agreement with Berkshire Farm Center. Mike related that this proposed contract was to put into place the juvenile delinquent (JD) diversion program that DSS applied for and received grant money. Mike reminded the committee that JDs are those children under 16 years of age who have committed crimes and if they were adults, they would be arrested. The JD youths appear at Probation and together with the County Attorney's Office, a decision is made to present the case to the Family Court or not. There are about 80 appearances annually and the vast majority will be eligible for the Berkshire diversion program. The program will run until August 31, 2014, and the county investment will be \$10,385 out of a \$273,286 program. On a motion by Jim and seconded by Alex, the resolution passed unanimously.

The second proposed resolution was to renew an agreement with Dr. Scott Petosa of KAG Consulting. Mike reviewed that this service has been in place for several years working with the Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) children. PINS are those children who are incorrigible, truant, or smoking marijuana. These children can, without interventions, become the next generation of JDs and then adult criminals. Dr. Petosa works one-on-one with the children, focusing on physical fitness as a gateway to better controlling bad behavior and impulses. He has an extensive background in coaching and has, with parental consent, been successful with neurofeedback (teaching the brain to control impulses). On a motion by Jim and seconded by Eve Ann, the resolution passed unanimously.

Mike updated the committee that the Medicaid enrollment center (Maximus) would be in tomorrow (February 26) to do a presentation to staff about the processes going forward. Mike invited any committee members to attend, if interested. He felt it might be too detailed for people outside of DSS, but it would likely be the only opportunity to meet with the Maximus

staff before the redeterminations in March go through them. Mike also felt that his staff might start to recognize more fully the impacts of this change. Mike stated that it was his intent to be down “around three positions” by the end of 2013 through attrition and/or retirements. However, already this year, DSS has lost two Examiners. Going forward, the balance to continue to get the work done while not unnecessarily filling positions will be difficult. There might come a time when DSS will request to backfill a position, recognizing that the “last in, first out” will place any new employees in precarious positions.

Mike also updated the committee that the county agencies and school superintendents meeting is scheduled for March 13 at 1:00 p.m. at DSS. Shortly after the tragic shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, there was a thought about collaborating with the schools on an “antiviolence” campaign. John Salka will follow up with Mike.

Jim asked about implications of the recently passed NYSAFE Act on DSS. After conferring with Sheriff Riley after the meeting, it was the Sheriff’s opinion that the act did not change responsibilities for DSS. Guns can be removed via a court order under the same circumstances as previous to the law. If guns are present in the home and required to be registered as a handgun (current law) or the new category of assault weapons, then we can refer the case to his office. Otherwise, unless the weapon is used during the incident that caused a CPS report to be made, there is no change. Sheriff Riley stated that he believed changes would be offered and adopted to the NYSAFE Act and that once it is in a “final” state, he would be offering opportunities to learn more. However, at this time, with so many unknowns, it was better to assume nothing has changed.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Fitzgerald  
Commissioner

Approved by Committee Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_