

Health & Human Services Committee
March 24, 2009
Minutes

Members Present: Committee Chair James Nabywaniec, Legislators Michael Docteur, Allen Drake, Michael Behling, James St.Croix, Chairman of the Board Kenneth Blankenbush

Others Present: Legislators Bob Thomas, Phil Reed, and Gino Zando, County Administrator Bob Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Mike Kaskan, County Attorney David Paulsen, Conf. Asst. for Fiscal Affairs Greg Hudson, Community Services Director Roger Ambrose, Public Health Director Jean Bilow, Social Services Commissioner Laura Cerow, Watertown Daily Times Reporter Jude Seymour. Confidential Secretary Jill Jones

Chairman Nabywaniec called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He declared the minutes of the February meeting approved as written in the absence of objection or correction.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution authorizing an agreement with Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Jefferson County relative to a Community Mental Health Educator Project and amending the 2009 County Budget in relation thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Behling seconded by Legislator Docteur and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution appointing members to the Public Health Service Health Services Advisory Board and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Docteur seconded by Legislator Behling and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution appointing members to Public Health Service Professional Advisory Committee and entertained a motion for consideration. Such motion was made by Legislator St Croix seconded by Legislator Behling and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution amending the 2009 County Budget relative to the Community AL Corporation and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Docteur seconded by Legislator St Croix and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec advised that Laura Cerow has an update for the Committee regarding fingerprinting/background checks for DSS utilized taxi cabs which has been an ongoing project the last few years. He said abuse of an individual by a taxi cab employee was initially brought to the Board's attention by citizen Nancy Kall and the issue has since been closely followed by Legislator Reed.

Laura Cerow acknowledged that John Shelmidine did most of leg work on the project, and said Social Services has worked with Yellow Cab as a Medicaid transportation provider for years and the company has also provided transportation for services cases. She said this has been a long process to get Yellow Cab to agree to have background checks for their drivers but they are 100% behind it now and 37 drivers have been fingerprinted with only a few more yet to be done. She commended Sheriff Burns for reserving three days especially for Yellow Cab employees to be fingerprinted by Sheriff's Department staff. She advised the next step is to send the fingerprints into the FBI for background checks. Ms. Cerow stated that when the clearances are returned and if someone doesn't clear it doesn't necessarily mean they are a risk but at that point Social Services employees will meet internally with Yellow Cab to discuss specifics (the same process that is used with foster parent background checks). She cautioned that background checks do not guarantee that there will be no incidents but will give us knowledge to help us protect citizens. She related that Social Services is paying for this initial group of background checks to make sure they go through. As to other cab companies in the area providing service for DSS, she said one declined to speak to them about this process and Freedom Cab who have a very small group of drivers have been very cooperative, have done some clearances on their own, and are willing to work with DSS on this but have not gotten drivers over to get fingerprinted yet. She advised that she is very happy to have this service in place for the community and the people her department serves.

Legislator Reed thanked Laura Cerow for her department's diligence and work on this matter and said it demonstrates various County Departments (DSS, Sheriff, County Attorney, Administration) coming together to help resolve a problem. He said it is very unfortunate that we have to do this but we need to take steps to protect our most vulnerable population, and while it will not protect everyone 100% of the time it will go a long way to that end. He suggested that State officials should take a look at this issue because it is not a problem that is limited to our area.

Nancy Kall related that the matter has taken a long time to resolve as she first expressed her concerns to the Board in July, 2004, and she thanked Laura Cerow, John Shelmidine, Legislator Reed and Chairman Blankenbush for all their work. She was impressed that a citizen like her could bring an issue to the Board and have it so successfully resolved, and she hoped everyone knows which cab companies are cooperating and which ones are not. She said this action is a big step forward and again thanked everyone for their hard work.

Public Health Director Bilow advised that if the Best Bones Forever grant application they will be submitting to Hager Sharp is successful she will be coming back to Committee to accept the funding and allocate it in her budget, and that her department did not receive the ACHIEVE grant that the Committee was briefed on last month.

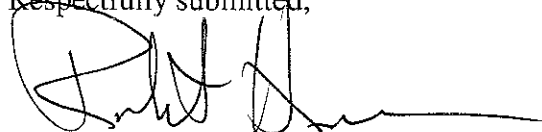
Ms. Bilow reported that NYS DOH Commissioner Danes will be visiting the Jefferson County Public Health Department on Thursday, April 9, 2009 to look at activities that are being accomplished in health promotion services. She said they are presently putting a program together and will send out invitations.

Laura Cerow reported that her department will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Fort Drum officials to share some investigations with them, specifically two Child Protective Services workers will be located on post to better coordinate investigations and services for military families. She said negotiations on the MOU between federal attorneys and state attorneys began in 1987 and she is excited to finally put this into practice

Roger Ambrose reported that his department has now moved to the 5th Floor of the County Office Building.

There being no further business of the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Behling seconded by Legislator Docteur and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert F. Hagemann, III', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board