

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

February 12, 2008

Committee Members

In Attendance: Lois Bronz, Chair, William Burton, Judy Myers, Kenneth Jenkins, Vito Pinto, Jose Alvarado, and Lyndon Williams.

In Attendance: CEO: Bill Randolph; DSS: Kevin Mahon, Diane Atkins BOL: Rick Pezzullo, Louise Gantress and Melanie Montalto; Visitors

Items Discussed: Kevin Mahon, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services gave an update on the department.

Minutes

Chairwoman Bronz called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m.

Commissioner Mahon discussed how the proposed state budget will affect the Department of Social Services budget. With the proposed increase of the counties share of Family Assistance and Safety Net by 2% the county will be forced to spend millions more, which will ultimately cause an increase in property taxes.

Commissioner Mahon discussed the organization of the Department and the changes in his deputy commissioners. An organizational chart is on file and available for review.

Commissioner Mahon stated that there continues to be an increase in CPS reports, and with the Yonkers school district implementing a new reporting system, CPS received over 100 cases over two days in January. This is overwhelming for the staff and the cases will be fielded through April.

Commissioner Mahon discussed how they are attacking 4 areas in child welfare which include: adequate staff resources, more comprehensive and uniform training, allow staff to spend more time with their case families, and implement strategies to hold the staff accountable for reporting on their families.

Chairwoman Bronz stated that it has been interesting to see such a change in staff in the Department. Commissioner Mahon said he thinks it is in part due to him. He thinks that he hit a certain age and length of stay where his senior staff was not sure what he was going to do, so if they saw another opportunity they took it. He also said that working for ten years in this business is a long time and it takes a toll on a person so sometimes people seek a change.

Legislator Williams asked about the homeless population and how the Department assesses them, serves them, and how the shelter system works. Commissioner Mahon explained how the Department registers and assesses a homeless individual and places them when openings are

available. He stated that he is willing to come over to discuss the entire process with the Committee.

Legislator Jenkins asked that when he comes back to discuss the homeless if he could please provide the number of beds that are available per community. Commissioner Mahon said they will provide an entire breakdown of the facilities.

Chairwoman Bronz asked the Commissioner to discuss agenda item #5, a child fatality review. Commissioner Mahon stated that each case is different and some are complicated and he is not able to discuss specific details of the case in question, however he would like to come back with the Departments child welfare experts and provide a lesson on the child welfare system and what the County is and is not able to do.

Legislator Burton asked about the additional funding in 2007 to increase the staff and what the results of that have been. Commissioner Mahon discussed the need for the growth in staff and how it has helped with the workload of the Department.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Williams the minutes of the February 2, 2008 Community Services meeting were approved 7-0.

Moved by Legislator Burton and seconded by Legislator Pinto the Committee on Community Services adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

A complete audio recording of the meeting is available for review upon request.