

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES MINUTES: March 16, 2010

COMMUNITY SERVICES

COMMITTEE: Alfreda Williams, Chair, Judy Myers, William Burton, John Testa

In Attendance: CE: Katy Delgado DSS: Kevin Mahon, Diane Atkins, Donald Wiede, John Befus BOL: Olivia Rhodes, Mary Jackson, Larry Goldstein, Melanie Montalto Guests: Christine Fecko, David O'Hara, Kelly Darrow, James Kaufman, Nancy Ment, Susan Klayne, Ernest Prince, Karen Blumenthal, Megan Flynn, Cora Greenberg, Mel Burruss, Barbara Finkelstein

MINUTES:

Chairwoman Williams called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

With a motion by Legislator Myers seconded by Legislator Burton the minutes of the February 23, 2010 Committee meeting were approved with a vote of 3-0.

Kevin Mahon, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services explained the proposed \$6 million in savings to the Department's budget. A copy of the proposal is on file and available for review. Commissioner Mahon stated that there are no service cuts to our kids in care.

Commissioner Mahon explained that the cuts to foster care are cuts to contracts with large residential agencies due to the decrease in children in foster care at this time. He continued to explain that the cuts to the COPS (Community Optional Preventive Services) grant, which go to low to moderate risk kids in foster care, the Department is reducing the funding by \$41,000 by negotiating the contracts going forward back to the dollar amount that was spent in 2009.

First Deputy Commissioner of Social Services Diane Atkins explained that they are asking the contract agencies to look for other resources, consolidation, and streamlining of services in order to makeup for the COPS decrease.

Commissioner Mahon stated that the decrease in daycare funding is \$1.5 million. We are budgeted at \$33 million dollars for child care, but we are mandated by the state to spend \$24 million. We are increasing the parent share of those receiving Title XX subsidy from 15%-20%, and we are freezing all new Title XX applications as of April 1st, so no new applicants will be accepted to the program after this date for 2010. This will save the County \$1 million and the Department is going to discontinue the Westchester County Child Care Scholarship, saving the \$500,000 that was budgeted for the program this year.

Legislator Myers expressed her disapproval and concern about these cuts to childcare and the long term affects on the children as well as the survival of the child care agencies.

Chairwoman Williams asked about the proposed second increase to the parent share contribution to 25% in October. Commissioner Mahon stated that he does not anticipate that will be necessary, but if we do not make our projected savings we will need to increase the parent share again.

Commissioner Mahon and First Deputy Commissioner Atkins discussed the domestic violence contract cut. They explained that they will not renew a contract with My Sister's Place because they feel that Child Protective Services can provide the service in house, as DSS already provides the domestic violence training. Commissioner Mahon stated that this is programmatic decision, not a monetary decision.

Commissioner Mahon stated that there are also cuts in housing, which are also programmatic changes that would have taken place this year anyway without needing a budget cut. He stated that the County has its lowest number of homeless people, especially given the economy, and they are considering closing another shelter. There is some hesitation because once a shelter is closed it is not easy to find a location and open another one.

A discussion ensued regarding the Westhelp shelter in Mount Vernon and the proposed state budget cuts. Commissioner Mahon stated that the state is proposing to cut the summer work program for teenagers, which is a great concern for the County, because that program provides a lot of jobs for eligible teenagers during the summer months when school is off. He stated there are a lot of kids who count on that funding for the summer.

Chairwoman Williams stated that she wants an update at the end of April on the progression of the cuts listed on the chart that was handed out.

With a motion by Legislator Burton seconded by Legislator Testa the Committee on Community Services adjourned with a vote of 4-0 at 4:17 p.m.

AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE FOR REVIEW UPON REQUEST