

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MARCH 17, 2009

**Community Services
Members**

In Attendance: Lois Bronz, Chair, Ken Jenkins, Vito Pinto, Jose Alvarado, Bill Burton, Judy Myers.

In Attendance: CE: Bill Randolph DSS: Iris Jenkins, Katherine Waluschka BOL: Mary Jackson and Melanie Montalto Guests: Kathy McBride, Kathy Halas

Items Discussed: Food Stamps Program & Child Care Scholarship.

Minutes

Chairwoman Bronz called the Community Services Committee meeting to order at 3:13 P.M.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Burton the minutes of April 14, 2008 and January 26 & 27, 2009 passed with a vote of 5-0.

Iris Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner of Social Services, discussed the Federal and County Food Stamp Program. Ms. Jenkins stated that the Food Stamp Program has changed its name to SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Ms. Jenkins told the Committee that there are currently 32 million individuals on food stamps, which is approximately 10% of the population, and this number has probably gone up because people are now applying in droves. Ms. Jenkins told the Committee that as of April 1st of this year, the amount given will increase from the average \$226.

Ms. Jenkins stated that the County will be taking SNAP applications online starting this summer. She told the Committee that Westchester applications have risen 160% since 2000. In 2000, the county received 5,400 applications; in 2008, 14,000 applications were received. For this year, the County received 2,700 applications in January and February. Today have 49,300 individuals, or 21,000 households in Westchester receiving food stamps.

Legislator Pinto asked for a breakdown of individuals receiving Food Stamps in Westchester by zip code.

Legislator Alvarado asked what the direct cost to the county is. Ms. Jenkins stated that even though it is a federally funded program, there are some administrative costs to the county.

Ms. Jenkins explained the application process to the Committee. She stated that it is all done via computer. She also stated that only legal immigrants are able to receive food stamps. She said that New York has 37,000 retailers in the state who accept food stamps, including Stop and

Shop, Shop Rite, and Pathmark. Whole Foods in White Plains also accepts Food Stamps, and Sam's Club wants to take them.

Katherine Waluschka of the Department of Social Services discussed eligibility for Food Stamps with the Committee. She stated that they are trying to encourage people to apply to ensure that they get the nutrition that they need. She said the Department is not trying to stigmatize or emphasize penalties.

Ms. Waluschka stated that as of April 1st the income level will be increased to 200% of poverty level, so more people will qualify for the program. Seniors receive further deductions for medical costs and transportation to medical appointments. Eligibility requirements were reviewed based on household size, income, and age. All of the materials discussed are on file and available for review.

Moved by Legislator Jenkins and seconded by Legislator Alvarado agenda items 5, 27, 28, 31, 33, 38, and 39 were received and filed with a vote of 5-0.

Kathy Halas, Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Westchester and Kathy McBride of the Child Care Council gave an update on the Westchester County Child Care Scholarship and the planned changes for 2009. The program has seen an increase in declinations due to parents getting laid off and no longer needing child care. The program will continue with two rounds throughout the year, but will add 35 awards this year. Also, some funding will be put aside for a round 3, an emergency award, for families who have become unemployed and are looking for work. This will provide assistance that will allow their children to stay in day care for up to two months. The materials provided are on file and available for review.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Burton the Committee on Community Services adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

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