

Health & Human Services Committee
July 28, 2020
Minutes

Members Present: Committee Chair John Peck, Legislators Allen Drake, James Nabywaniec, Jeremiah Maxon, Robert Ferris, Corey Grant, Board Chairman Scott Gray

Others Present: Legislators William Johnson, Michael Montigelli, Patrick Jareo, and Frances Calarco, County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Sarah Baldwin, County Attorney David Paulsen, Conf. Asst. for Fiscal Affairs and Information Technology Director Gregory Hudson, Insurance Director Lisa Jock, County Treasurer Karen Christie, Watertown Daily Times Reporter Alex Gault, Confidential Secretary Jill Jones

Chairman Peck called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and offered privilege of the floor, however no one present wished to address the Committee.

Public Health Director Ginger Hall updated the Committee concerning her department's response to the pandemic. She said this event has been very different from any other event they have handled to date as it has affected every aspect of our world. They continue to investigate cases and do contact tracing and track the health of every individual who tests positive (daily checks, etc.) through personal or text contact, as well as tracing individuals in quarantine, or isolation because of exposure. She said new software was developed in the middle of the pandemic that communicates with the NYS Health Commerce System and allows all contact tracers in Jefferson and each county to now interface and transfer cases when needed.

Director Hall said the Governor's newest Travel Advisory directive of June 25th has added a layer or work for Public Health. It started with a few restricted states and has now increased to many. Anyone entering New York from those restricted states has to fill out a health form and quarantine for 14 days. It started with direct flights in and now includes anyone using any means to travel into the State, has to fill out a health form for contact purposes and can be fined if they don't fill it out. Those traveling outside the State then returning can fill out a form online that is fed through the Commcare system. She said as of today there are 741 domestic travelers in the County, and Public Health started working with the New York State Department of Health virtual contact tracers for these individuals. Those tracers can access Commcare and Director Hall can transfer or assign these cases to them so they can do the investigation and contact tracing and send it back to the local department if there are issues; Public Health does not lose control of those patients. The virtual contact tracers can hire additional people for their teams to handle this workload. She said Covid-19 testing is widely available in the County and is mostly by appointment. Nursing home, assisted living employees and any home care workers that go into the assisted living facilities are still mandated to be tested weekly. Public Health's message to everyone continues to be: wear your mask, maintain social distancing, wash hands often in soap and water for at least 20 seconds. They are encouraging individuals to seek health care and not put off screening to get the care that they need.

Last week Public Health worked with the School Superintendents as they have a Reopening Plan due this Friday to the State that is quite detailed; for part of it they need to work with County Administration and Public Health for collaborative discussions and implementation of those plans, the CEOs of hospitals were also present. Schools are also required to have alternate plans in case someone is positive. Director Hall said her Department's future planning for the pandemic includes when a vaccine becomes available and the various scenarios: will they get a full shipment, will it go to providers or to local health departments, buying supplies for administering vaccine, etc. so they can start vaccinating as soon as the vaccination becomes available. They also continue to be a resource to the community.

Director Hall said they are receiving phone calls from people who are not happy about the travel advisory requirements and feel contact tracing is becoming contact tracking as they move around. She said contract tracing of these individuals is required and will continue. Director Hall answered questions of legislators. Administrator Hagemann gave kudos to the Public Health employees, Ginger Hall and Faith Lustik in particular as they have stayed on top of every outbreak, as well as been on top of the requirements for schools in putting their plans together and any other issue that has cropped up with the pandemic.

The Committee approved the minutes of the June meeting, as written.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Appointing/Reappointing Members to the Community Services Board and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Nabywaniec. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending 2020 County Budget Relative to Additional Revenue from the Redlich Horwitz Foundation for Family First Readiness Funding and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Naywaniec and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending 2020 County Budget Relative to State Charge Social Service Administration Account and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Ferris and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Legislator Montigelli complimented the Director of Public Health for her diligence, effort and time that she has put into managing this pandemic. He said he can't imagine the intensity of her job right now and thanked her and the employees for all they are doing.

Chairman Peck said Public Health staff have been full bore since March with this unprecedented event which will hopefully come to an end and our lives can return to some normalcy. He thanked Director Hall, Faith Lustick and the rest of the staff at Public Health for the important work they are doing.

There being no further business of the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Ferris and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert F. Hagemann, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "H".

Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board