

Health & Human Services Committee
May 26, 2020
Minutes

Members Present: Committee Chair John Peck, Legislators Allen Drake, Jeremiah Maxon, Robert Ferris, Corey Grant, Anthony Doldo, and Board Chair Scott Gray

Others Present: Legislators Robert Cantwell, William Johnson, Philip Reed, Michael Montigelli, Patrick Jareo and Frances Calarco, County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Sarah Baldwin, County Attorney David Paulsen, Community Services Director Tim Ruetten, Conf. Asst. for Fiscal Affairs and I.T. Director Gregory Hudson, I.T. Deputy Director Sean Vincent, Secretary Torri Richmire, Confidential Secretary Jill Jones

Chairman Peck called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and noted that the meeting is being conducted under the extraordinary circumstance of a public health emergency (COVID-19), and under Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 202.1; without permitting public in-person access to the meeting, authorizing the meeting to be held partially or completely with members appearing by remote conference call or similar service, and the meeting is being live streamed via the web and recorded, including the participation of the members appearing by remote link.

The Committee approved the minutes of the last (February) meeting, as written.

Community Services Director Tim Ruetten briefly updated the Committee concerning recent overdose issues experienced in Jefferson County, and the services provided by telemedicine during the COVID-19 pandemic. He prefaced his remarks by saying that the numbers he will talk about are only the reported cases through the ODMAP software system that first responders use and through the Medical Examiner's Office. They know that there are more overdoses than are reported, and they know that there are a lot more Narcan or Naloxone administrations than are reported, but they go with what they have.

Mr. Ruetten said there have already been fifteen overdose fatalities in Jefferson County in 2020, and to put that in perspective - there were twenty four fatalities in total for 2019. He said it puts us on track for thirty to thirty three overdose deaths this year if the trend continues. The County has had one hundred eleven suspected overdoses reported with seventy four Naloxone administrations or reversals. Most of the overdose deaths have been fentanyl, and April and May saw the most overdoses with 27 and 28, respectively; from May 9 to 15 in particular there were ten suspected overdoses with two fatalities; eight were fentanyl. It has been determined by the OD Mapping Committee that four overdoses in a 24 hour period trigger a public service announcement about an opiate overdose spike, but that criteria was not met during the May time period. Mr. Ruetten said the service providers have done an amazing job adapting to the new way of doing business during the pandemic and all agencies have moved to teleservices almost exclusively, so they are providing therapy and counseling sessions by phone and through video chat. They also continue to provide Naloxone to the public, and trainings to administer it are done by phone or through video. The main focus is to keep people alive, then get them into

treatment. The positives from this situation are that the no-show rates have decreased dramatically throughout the behavioral health realm, it has addressed the transportation issue that is prevalent in Jefferson and most rural counties, and they have been able to engage with clients they have never engaged with before. He said face to face counseling is still the gold standard, but teleservices has allowed them to continue to provide services and they have met the demand as a whole.

In response to questions he said the Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors have discussed at length how much of the good parts of providing telemedicine can be kept and make it secure after we go back to more normal types of service provision. The State has done a fantastic job to loosen up the regulations in order to allow this to happen, it had been almost prohibitive in the past because of the amount of regulations that go with teleservices. The local therapists, counselors and case managers have gone above and beyond to provide services but as things progress we will need to ask questions about billing procedures and reimbursement rates, which are a little bit less than face to face, and cuts in State funding also need to be discussed. Mr. Ruetten advised that seven of the eleven recent fatalities were outside of the City of Watertown, and four were in the City. ODMAP software system is fairly new to Jefferson County, is widely used, and not only tracks overdoses here but also allows us to see trends in communities that are close by that often signal it will be coming to our area.

Mr. Hagemann noted that a roll call vote of Committee members for all of the resolutions will be done after each resolution has been introduced and discussed.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Accepting Funding from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act and Amending the 2020 County Budget in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Doldo seconded by Legislator Ferris and there was no discussion.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement with NYS Department of Education Approved Agencies for the Provision of Special Education Services for Preschool Children with Disabilities and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Doldo seconded by Legislator Drake and there was no discussion.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreements and Establishing Rates for Provision of Related Services in Connection with the Program for Preschool Children with Disabilities and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Doldo seconded by Legislator Drake and there was no discussion.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending the 2020 County Budget Relative to DSRIP Funding for Community Services Department and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Drake seconded by Legislator Ferris and there was no discussion.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending the 2020 County Budget to Allocate

Additional State Aid for Community Services and Mental Health Programs and Authorizing Amended Agreements in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Doldo and seconded by Legislator Drake. Mr. Hagemann noted that even though we have received the official notice of these funds, that may change given the COVID-19 situation and State funding reductions.

Chairman Peck introduced a resolution Amending Resolution No. 277 of 2019 Regarding Agreement for Provision of Certain Professional Services to the Medical Examiner's Office and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris seconded by Legislator Grant and there was no discussion.

Roll Call Vote: All six resolutions before the Committee

Ayes: Drake, Grant, Ferris, Doldo, Peck, Maxon

Absent: Nabywaniec

Resolutions passed.

There being no further business before the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Ferris seconded by Legislator Grant and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board