

Public Health & Social Services Committee Regular Meeting Minutes

DATE & TIME: November 30, 2020 – 5:00 PM
LOCATION: Powered by Zoom Meeting by Dialing (646) 558-8656,
Meeting ID: 948 1171 3840
PRESIDING OFFICER: Chair Craig Lopez
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Jay Mahler, Nettie Tomshaw, Laurie Lichtenstein
PRESENT: Legislators Criswell, Bruno, Petit, Uchitelle
ABSENT: None
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Deputy County Executive Marc Rider

Chair Lopez called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

Motion No. 1: Moved to Approve Minutes & Transcript of the November 2, 2020 meeting
Motion By: Legislator Petit
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Uchitelle
Discussion: None
Voting In Favor: Legislators Lopez, Criswell, Bruno, Petit, Uchitelle
Voting Against: None
Votes in Favor: 5
Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Minutes/Transcript APPROVED

Resolutions for the December 15, 2020 Session of the Legislature

Resolution No. 457: Approving The Execution Of A Contract For \$140,400.00 Entered Into By The County - Resource Center For Accessible Living, Inc. – Department Of Social Services

Resolution Summary: This resolution approves the execution of a contract for \$140.4K with the Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCAL) for day to day living expenses and other needs of adults with developmental disabilities – representative payee services. 36% Federal, 29% State, 35% County. 3/1/2021 – 2/28/2024.

Motion No. 2 Moved to Discuss and Adopt Resolution No. 457
Motion Made By: Legislator Petit
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Criswell

Discussion: See attached transcript.

Voting In Favor: Legislators Lopez, Criswell, Bruno, Petit, Uchitelle
Voting Against: None
Votes in Favor: 5
Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Resolution adopted.

Resolution No. 441: Amending The 2020 Budget To Accept Allocation Award From Office Of Victim Services For Victims Of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim And Witness Assistance Grant Program – Department Of Social Services

Resolution Summary: This resolution amends the 2020 budget to accept an allocation award from the Office of Victim Services for the Victims of Crime Act, Victim and Witness Assistance grant program. This award funds the family and children’s advocacy center FCAC, which is a combination of both social workers and law enforcement agencies to work on cases of domestic violence, child victims of sexual abuse and serious physical abuse. \$126.2K Federal, revenue.

Motion No. 3 **Moved to Adopt Resolution No. 441**
Motion Made By: Legislator Criswell
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Lopez

Discussion: See attached transcript.

Voting In Favor: Legislators Lopez, Criswell, Bruno, Petit, Uchitelle
Voting Against: None
Votes in Favor: 5
Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Resolution adopted.

New/Old Business:

- COVID-19 Update & Director COVID Operations Position:
Deputy Executive Marc Rider (see transcript)

Chair Lopez asked if there was any other business, and hearing none;

Adjournment

Motion Made By: Legislator Criswell
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Uchitelle

No. of Votes in Favor: 4

No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 5:34 PM

Respectfully submitted: Nettie Tomshaw, Legislative Staff

Minutes Approved: February 1, 2021

Ulster County Legislature
Public Health and Social Services Committee

Meeting Transcript

November 30, 2020

Chairman Lopez

Very good. I hope everybody's doing well. It's kind of getting a little scary out there again. The numbers seem to be going through the roof. But um, I guess it's something that we anticipated. I wasn't sure if it's going to come to fruition, but it looks like it's been transpiring in front of us, so just...

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Maybe this is new business, but I'd love to update the committee on that. And so, I can wait until then.

Chairman Lopez

Absolutely. Now that That sounds good. Okay. All right. Um, well, we will start with approving the minutes from our last committee meeting.

Legislator Petit

I'll make a motion to approve the minutes.

Legislator Uchitelle

Second.

Chairman Lopez

Second Okay. Any discussion? All in favor? Aye. Aye. (5-0) Okay.

Chairman Lopez

We will move into the first of our two resolutions and start with Resolution 457 approving the execution of a contract for \$140,400. With the Resource Center for Accessible living. Move for discussion?

Legislator Petit

I'll move it.

Chairman Lopez

Second?

Legislator Criswell

Sure.

Chairman Lopez

All right. Um, this is for their organizational representative payee program. This, I don't know if anybody's familiar with is this. This is why RCAL is such a hidden gem. And I think, why do people have questions when we had another resolution in front of us? Yeah. Yeah, a few months ago. And just what they provide for the community is really it. It's priceless in the people that work there and are, are an asset. And this is one of the programs that I'm particularly fond of. So, Marc, you want me to talk a little bit about it? Or you want me to add or do you want to give a rundown.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

I'll do a brief summary. And if you think I missed anything? Yeah, sure. So, we put this out to RFP every couple of years. And and basically, these individuals oversee the day to day living expenses and other needs of adults with developmental disabilities and other things. You know, they have a caseload that they work through, and it could be a minor child or someone that is deemed by adult services, not to be able to take care of their own daily needs. And so, when DSS provides a payment, whether it be social security or anything else like that, the money goes to RCAL, and then RCAL determines the needs of the individual and make those payments.

Chairman Lopez

Yep, yeah, no, that's pretty much the program in a nutshell, unless anybody has any other questions about it. No. Yeah, like I said, it's a good one. And they're really good over there. So, all right, if there's no other questions then.

Chairman Lopez

All in favor, Ayes (5-0). Very good.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. We will move on to Resolution 441.

Chairman Lopez

I don't. One second let me bring this up. One second bear with me I lost my place here. Oh, it's to receive a grant, right about federal grant, if I remember correctly. For the, it's victim related. Let me say I lost it in my notes here. If you can bear with me. Unless somebody wants to...

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Right. It's amending the 2020 budget to accept allocation award from the Office of victim services for victims of crime act (VOCO), victim and Witness Assistance grant program Department of Social Services. This is a this partially funds our family and children Advocacy Center FCAC, which is a combination of both social workers and law enforcement agencies. That that we combine to work on cases of again domestic violence, child victims of sexual abuse and serious physical abuse.

Legislator Criswell

What why would say why would we say no to this? Yeah.

Chairman Lopez

Right. Well, yeah, it's just part of the processes. Again, no, no, definitely. Yeah. So um, okay, now I appreciate that. Now I lost my notes for a second time. Is there anything else on that? Any questions? Comments? No?

Chairman Lopez

Hearing none. All in favor? Ayes. (5-0)

Chairman Lopez

Very good. Alrighty, well, that's it for resolutions.

Chairman Lopez

Marc had mentioned, maybe you want to give us an update under new business? What's going on?

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Yeah, I think it's probably appropriate to start reporting out monthly on kind of COVID, and where we're at with this committee, since this is the committee that oversees health.

Chairman Lopez

Sure.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

So, we're at a point right now where we have more active cases than we've had since April. There's a little bit of something that distorts that, and that's back in April. We were not good at recovering individuals. So, it was not a priority to us. Basically, it wasn't as streamlined by the state then. Now, in order to be considered recovered, you have to go through isolation for 10 days. And your most recent 72 hours have to be symptom free without the use of like Tylenol, Advil, anything like that. And if you, you know, tell a public health nurse that who is monitoring you every day, then they consider you recovered. And you can come out of isolation. Back in March, April, and May people were going on an active case for months at a time and because we just did not have the staffing power to focus on that recovery piece. So, while back then at the peak we may have had 1000 individuals who were active, our numbers on a daily case by case basis are actually higher now, on a on a 14-day to a 30-day average than they were back then. So, I almost think that we're near our peak, essentially or not near a peak, we're, we're near our past peak, but we're just continuing to rise. What that means when we have 40, to 50 to 60 cases a day is that, you know, we're bringing in seven contract nurses still, from the ACCU Care nursing a contract agency. We are trying to fill the three positions that are state funded, and I believe we'll have one filled and we're working on the other two. But we've had an issue of finding, frankly, qualified individuals. In order to be a public health nurse, you have to have a Bachelor of Nursing. So, we're trying to fill those with a fill as which would be an LPN, which is a little bit cheaper and can still do the work of case investigations. A day in the life of a public health nurse is really making phone calls to new positives, informing them that they are positive. And it's about an hour-long case investigation to both gather contacts so that contact tracers can then reach out and we can contain the

spread of the virus. But also identifying what their needs are from a healthcare perspective. What their symptoms are and gathering all their other personal information. Like I said, each case takes the case investigator about an hour to both be on the phone and then enter into the system, all these other all the other information, including the contacts, who then state contact, tracers will call and quarantine. So, as we work through that process, you can see that as the numbers continue to go up, it's harder and harder for us to stay on top of that even bringing in you know, having our seven or eight health nurses, hopefully three others that'll that are by the system, and then continuing to bring on the contract nurses. It's a short way of saying that I don't think we're going to be getting out of that, that contract nursing contract anytime soon. As these numbers continue to rise, I think we're gonna continue to see a need. And we're nearing the threshold that we were last time we came to you. And it's likely that in the near future, we'll be coming back to you to increase that threshold.

Chairman Lopez

Al you had something, yep.

Legislator Bruno

Yeah. Marc is there a relationship right now to the number that we're getting these positives which are incredibly high right now. For the number of the amount of testing we're doing now versus the testing you're doing back in April.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

So that's part of it. I mean, I think that there were hidden positives back in April right. Where back then and we still don't have the full testing capacity that we that we really need to have to ensure that anybody can get a test. We have the one drive thru site that we work in partnership with Westchester Medical. The Tech City sites been closed now for quite some time. Nuvance had wanted to move indoors into their Urgent Care up by the mall. And finding another partner to do a large-scale testing site that's drive thru in the winter is, has been pretty difficult. Like when we started that in April, it was pretty windy and cold. Trying to maintain that through December, January, February, is difficult. So even the Grand St. site, we're trying to bring indoors a little bit more. We're going to be providing some offices that are like convex boxes that have heat where the nurses can be and there will be some car ports so that the nursing staff is mostly indoors except for when they come out and do the tests and then they go back in. And that's coming soon.

Legislator Bruno

That is not exactly what I was asking. Just to be straight up. What I was thinking, what I was getting at is back in April, we were the county was administering X number of tests per day. Okay, I just read recently where I believe was SUNY New Paltz was testing 3000 a day. And that was like last week. We were nowhere near that number back in April. And that's just one school. So, what I'm getting at is these numbers are elevated, but are they actually elevated? Because the disease has gotten worse? Or is it actually elevated? Because now we're right, we're realizing the actual number of people who are infected? Yeah. Am I making sense?

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Yes. So, I think sorry, and I was just a little long-winded way of getting around to answering your question. I do think that the more you test the more cases you identify. But there are still people who are ending up - we're back to larger numbers in the hospitals than we were, you know, on average, seven to ten. Whereas back in the summer it was one or two. In both hospitals, we got as high as thirteen or fourteen. As we come out of that Thanksgiving holiday, I think we're going to see the hospitalizations continue to rise. And so, hospitalization is a number that it doesn't matter how many you test if your hospitalization and they're seeing it all through the state. The Governor just announced today that he's canceling elective surgeries in Erie County, which is one of the worst areas in the state right now highest positivity rate. And the rest of the state is probably I'm not gonna say not far behind, but he was signaling that it needs to be something that we're paying attention to. So, hospitalizations are up, and we are doing a lot more tests. But what also some of that number is we're testing you know, healthy people, the staff of the long-term care facilities have to be tested on a regular basis. Personal care services have to be tested on a regular basis. The students have to be tested on a regular basis. So, I think if you looked at the positivity rate of those who just go in because they have symptoms, it's more relative to what we saw back in May. But we are testing a lot more healthy people as well, which drives those testing numbers way up.

Legislator Bruno

Gotcha.

Legislator Criswell

I have a quick question.

Chairman Lopez

Sure.

Legislator Criswell

Um, I don't know where it's at right now, but I've been hearing about home testing. And I think it's Pfizer or one of the big pharma's doing a lot of work on home test. Have you thought about how if home testing becomes kind of more the norm? How will the county deal with numbers for home testing?

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Yes. So, when it's really just where the specimen is obtained because those home tests still have to get packaged up and mailed to a lab. And those labs still have to report those tests to the state. So, it's like the difference between whether you were swabbed at Rite Aid or swabbed in a hospital or an urgent care.

Legislator Criswell

Thank you.

Legislator Bruno

I have one more question.

Chairman Lopez

Yeah. Um, and it's more of a question or slash observation and it may be totally erroneous, but from my own personal experience, walking around being around out in the public and stuff and at work and I work at a hospital. My numbers are just arbitrary, but I'm thinking it seems like right now, it's like, the vast majority of the population in our area specifically seems to be utilizing masks. They seem to be using hand sanitizer and maintaining that social distancing. Yes, they have, there are those few, whatever term you want to put on rebels or whatever, but the vast majority of the people are, in fact, doing what's right. So, my question is, and this might be something for Dr. Smith. If masks and sanitizer and social distancing are the answer, why is the number still going up? When do we have like a 90% or 95% of people follow the rules?

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Sure, I mean, masks help. Right, and they definitely help stop the spread of the disease, but it's not 100% protection. So, I mean I've seen a bunch of different illustrations that, and you've probably seen these Legislator Bruno where, like, if you're wearing the mask, it's like 30% of you getting it. And then if the person who's sick is wearing a mask adds an additional layer. So, nothing is perfect. And especially, you know, cloth masks and other things. You know, some people do a better job of washing them every day, and all these other things. And so, um, it definitely helps stop the spread, but it's not 100%.

Legislator Bruno

Right, but for the for the numbers to increase exponentially like they are, it almost seems as if nobody is wearing a mask.

Chairman Lopez

Why I think a lot of that too is not what we see, it's what we don't see and what's going on in people's homes. And you know, it because look at your, you have to wear a mask to go to our local Hannaford. You have to wear a mask to go to certain public places. And you don't have a choice to do that or else they are going to turn you away. What people are doing in their homes and the gatherings that they're having. And, you know, the kids that are getting together. You know, I think that they're probably adding, a lot are, you know, padding these numbers. Um, yeah, like I said, it's most likely what we don't see is why it's spreading the way it is.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

It's the social gatherings. It's also the group homes where people really can't wear masks as much or not... I mean it spreads in those facilities, in the skilled nursing centers. We had one that went from, you know, basically no cases that we knew about to 28 to 46 residents recently. So, it really, it's like, in those kind of congregate care facilities, it's like throwing a spark on kindling and can just get out of control there pretty quickly. A lot of staff work at other facilities. So, if one person gets infected at one facility, they may go work at another. But the spike we're seeing now is Halloween and Halloween parties at people's houses. I get sent the pictures from concerned residents that are almost like whistleblowers saying, my kid goes to high school at this high school. And this is pictures of a Halloween party. And it's 30 kids without masks on.

Chairman Lopez

Yeah, that's what we had in Pine Bush. Yeah, there were a number of them. And as of recently, my goodness, we had a school board member that had a party, you know, somebody who you think would not only know better, but, you know, be held to a different level and be a little more responsible. And, yet they had a house full of kids. And that led to the numbers, I think in Shawangunk, and in this surrounding area, you know, throughout Pine Bush. And it's crossing over into Orange County and Sullivan County. I live right in the Tri County area. So, it affected a lot of people.

Chairman Lopez

Yep. Laura.

Legislator Petit

I have a money question. Because, you know, obviously the millions that were spent were unanticipated the beginning of this year. What about the upcoming year? I mean, you have three nursing positions that are in the budget, even though one is going to be transferred and be filled by the coordinator? No.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

No, No. So those three will be - we are taking up a supervising public health nurse that we had from in retirement and transferring it. But as far as the fully funded state funding, or actually it was, I think CARES Act funded positions from HRI, we will have those up and running by the beginning of the year. And that'll be for two years fully funding two LPN's and a supervising public health nurse. But again, originally, we were trying for public health nurses. And that requires a bachelor's, and we weren't finding people for the salary. While it is going to be anticipated going into 2021, you know, I anticipate that like the AccuCare contract, it will still be 90% funded from FEMA.

Legislator Petit

It will be, okay. Thank you.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

We've hit the threshold to go from 25% to now 10% local shares. So, while it's not a good thing, because we're in the situation we're in, it's a good thing funding wise.

Legislator Petit

Thank you, Marc.

Chairman Lopez

I have a question for the committee. Now, who here is willing to take the vaccine when it becomes available?

Legislator Bruno

I may not have a choice.

Chairman Lopez

Right. Yeah, I mean you're working on...

Legislator Criswell

I have a question for Marc if I may. Can you give us a little bit of your vision for this position of the COVID coordinator, or what's the actual title?

21:05

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Yeah, Director of COVID Operations. And so, he's in it right now. He's doing it but on paper. He is my Deputy Director of IS. It was a position that was open. He has the qualifications for that position too. He did IS work for Lockheed Martin. And in the military, he stood up VoIP and other systems. So operationally, he is very proficient in doing information services infrastructure. He was also a former Navy SEAL and a Navy medic. And so, he really understands the world of what this response is, which is essentially an emergency response and incident command structure. And so, he is our Director of COVID Operations. Technically, I mean, you know, not on paper, but he has been doing the work all year. We meant to include it in the budget. However, we weren't sure if we needed it back in August and September. And now as the cases started to rise and rise, it's pretty clear that COVID is not going anywhere. So, we asked Legislator Ronk to carry it. This person oversees our nursing operations and our contact tracers. He oversees our Recovery Service Center, which is our COVID hotline. He works with our school districts and is our single point of contact for health personnel in the districts. He creates reports for them. He will have somewhat of a role in vaccine distribution, although I think that's a little much to add to his plate. So, it'll be an ancillary role. We really will have a major role as the local health department in vaccine distribution. In the first round it'll be healthcare providers. So, the hospitals will really take on much of the work early on. But as we start to get through the different phases that the state has put out with the essential workers and other things. Just like any other vaccine, our public health department has been training with (PODS), point of distribution system, and it's basically standing up. You know, when we had a mumps outbreak a few years ago, I think they did like 1500 vaccinations in two days. This is a much larger scale, and it'll be a much larger operation. But uh, working with other partners, like the community health providers, and hopefully pharmacies and the hospitals. But we're going to be the main kind of distribution to get it out to them and do our own PODS. And then they will also provide those services in their own facilities. But um, I don't know if I answered your questions.

Legislator Criswell

Yeah. You know, I've been hearing different sides of the benefits of this position and I wanted to hear what you had to say about it.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

It's an integral position. Um, honestly, like if it didn't pass, I would need to probably retain him as you know, the Deputy Director of IS. But that again, that's another crucial position and we're losing others from that department that I really - one of the reasons for this amendment is so that I can shift and get some leadership back in that IS department.

Legislator Criswell

Okay. Thank you, Marc.

Chairman Lopez

Hey Marc, what's the earliest you anticipate the vaccination being available here in Ulster.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

So, by the end of this month, early January we will have potentially our first round for, once again, that will be for the health care workers. And this is the way it's set up by the state is there's different phases. Realistically to where we have critical mass and it's available to you know, the greater population we're probably looking at six months before, it's kind of fully rolled out. We'll be going through phases. So, it's Phase One; is the health care workers, the long-term care workers and those who are at most vulnerable residents of long-term care facilities, that's phase one. Phase Two; is EMS and other first responders, and I think other vulnerable populations. Phase Three is essential workers and continuing on with vulnerable populations. And then you start to get Phase Four; is more general population.

Chairman Lopez

Al.

Legislator Bruno

Yeah. With that, Marc, thanks a lot. You right now – you're an encyclopedia of information about the vaccine and COVID. Thanks. But with that, is there any protocols that are being worked on or put in place like once people are vaccinated? Is it this may be coming from Albany for all I know. But let's say for example, since I'm a health care worker, I work at Vassar and I get vaccinated. And I'm technically according to what I hear, the Pfizer vaccine is 90 or 95% 94% effective. Does that say okay, I no longer have to wear a mask?

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Yeah, so I think some of those facilities will make their own determinations. The one thing I'll say is that all of the early vaccine companies that are kind of in the running for the first couple so, Moderna, Pfizer, they both require a booster. I think Moderna is 23 days later, and I think Pfizer's 28 days later. So, you'll need two doses. Um, you know, I don't know if the hospitals will say, go ahead.

Legislator Bruno

Whatever. Let's say, I get the two doses I get I'm technically vaccinated against it, just like I'd be vaccinated, vaccinated against the measles, chickenpox or anything else. That makes me essentially immune to it. And that reduces my ability to spread it to someone else. Am I therefore at that point? I'm just trying to look forward, okay. For the light at the end of the tunnel for the people.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

I would think until it's critical mass, there's not going to be - we're not going to see a relief from the mask requirements of the governor. Because how do I know if I'm a law enforcement agency or public health? We have our environmental folks, the environmental services sanitarians going out to businesses, when we receive complaints, and they're following up? How do they walk in and if you are a cook at a pizza kitchen, where it's notoriously hot, and they have a hard time wearing masks because of the heat? How do we know that you've been vaccinated? Are you going to carry a card? So...

Legislator Bruno

So that's exactly my point.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

I think that you'll still see masked mandates until we start to see a critical mass. And then once you know the majority of people who want it have been vaccinated, then you'll see those being relaxed.

Chairman Lopez

Definitely. And I think Dr. Fauci had mentioned that even subsequent to the vaccination that, they would encourage, if not, you know, continue certain mandates in areas for both mask wearing and social distancing. So, it'll probably go on for some time. But another thing that a lot of people aren't, measured on, what I haven't heard a lot is that although it's going to be between 90 and 95%, effective, it's 100% effective in reducing the severity of the virus when and if somebody contracts it. So that's a good thing.

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Does anybody have any other questions on that director. Because I probably won't get a chance to speak you all prior to the eighth. Does anybody have any other questions on that Director of COVID operations? I'm happy to answer anything. I just, I want to reiterate that I think of it as a useful position.

Legislator Bruno

It's a necessary evil in the times we are living.

Legislator Uchitelle

Yeah, I have a question. What's the reporting structure for that position? Like above them, and who would report to them?

Deputy County Exec. Rider

Yep. So um, that position reports directly to Dr. Smith, Commissioner of Health. And underneath them are supervising public health nurses, and then the public health nurses, which, again, is about nine or ten staff between those. And then they're also overseeing our contract nurses, which on any given day is somewhere between seven and five on the weekends. We have a state school liaison, that person directly reports to that director position. We also have a three person data team that puts together all of our- when we get positives, the way that we're able to report out towns into the dashboard, that's about a five hour process every morning, they start at 7am. Because there's a lot of duplicate tests, there's a lot of things in order to get our numbers where we believe they're accurate. Anyway, there's three people that work on the data team that report directly to that person. And the Recovery Service Center has a manager RF Khan, who also reports directly to Dan. They are truly are fully operations and anything that has to do with COVID is a direct report to Dan. We have another position, which is director of it was director of patient services and it's now director of nursing anyway. That person is going to be point on vaccine distribution. And then, as soon as you know, we're through this code, this director of COVID operations is one year. We're only funding it for 2021. And at that point, Dan and I have already talked in if there's another place in the county that needs a leader then and he qualifies for that position, I would look at him for another position. Otherwise, he goes back to consulting work.

And the director of patient services would oversee the nurses etc. I mean, communicable disease is something we have always had. We've just never had to, to do it to this extent, especially over an eight-month period. Nine months so...

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Anybody have anything else to bring before the good of the committee? No. Motion to adjourn.

Legislator Bruno

I'll make that motion.

Chairman Lopez

Second.

Legislator Uchitelle

Second.

Chairman Lopez

All in favor?

Committee Members

Ayes.

Chairman Lopez & Members

Very good. Okay. Well, thanks, everybody. Stay well.