

## Public Health & Social Services Committee Regular Meeting Minutes

**DATE & TIME:** April 30, 2018 – 5:30 PM  
**LOCATION:** COB, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Legislative Chairman's Office  
**PRESIDING OFFICER:** Chairman Craig Lopez  
**LEGISLATIVE STAFF:** Nettie Tomshaw  
**PRESENT:** Legislators Nolan, Petit, Wawro  
**ABSENT:** Legislator Joseph Maloney  
**QUORUM PRESENT:** Yes

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** Legislator Bartels, Carol Smith MD MPH Commissioner DOH/MH, Michael Iapocce Esq. Commissioner DSS, Cindy Beisel Deputy Commissioner of Admin. DSS, Tom Kagen League of Women Voters, Kenneth Crannell Deputy County Executive

Chairman Craig Lopez welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

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**Motion No. 1:**                   **Moved to Approve the Minutes of the April 2, 2018 meeting**

**Motion By:** Legislator Nolan  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Wawro  
**Discussion:** None  
**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Lopez, Nolan, Petit, Wawro  
**Voting Against:** None  
**Votes in Favor:** 4  
**Votes Against:** 0  
**Disposition:**               **Minutes APPROVED**

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### Resolutions for the May 15, 2018 Session of the Legislature

**Resolution No. 156:**       Adopting Proposed Local Law No. 7 Of 2018, A Local Law To Reduce Addiction To Tobacco Products By Raising The Minimum Age For Their Purchase to 21

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution establishes Proposed Local Law No. 7 of 2018 to reduce addiction to tobacco products by raising the minimum age for their purchase to 21.

**Motion No. 2:**                   **Moved for DISCUSSION**  
**Motion By:** Legislator Petit  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Wawro

**Discussion:**

Legislator Nolan and Bartels fielded concerns after the public hearing thus amending Section 1. C: Almost one in ~~five~~ **three** high school seniors ~~is a current cigarette smoker in Ulster County report having tried cigarettes.~~ The changed is based on our local Ulster County's 2016-2017 student survey. Legislator Bartels noted this amendment is a non-substantive change that does not warrant a second public hearing.

**Motion No. 3:**                   **Moved to AMEND Resolution No. 156**  
**Motion By:**                   Legislator Nolan  
**Motion Seconded By:**       Legislator Wawro

**Voting In Favor:**           Legislators Lopez, Nolan, Petit, Wawro  
**Voting Against:**           None  
**Votes in Favor:**           4  
**Votes Against:**           0  
**Disposition:**             **Resolution AMENDED**

**Motion No. 4:**                   **Moved to ADOPT Resolution No. 156 as AMENDED**  
**Motion By:**                   Legislator Nolan  
**Motion Seconded By:**       Legislator Wawro

**Voting In Favor:**           Legislators Lopez, Nolan, Petit, Wawro  
**Voting Against:**           None  
**Votes in Favor:**           4  
**Votes Against:**           0  
**Disposition:**             **Resolution ADOPTED as AMENDED**

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**Resolution No. 158:** Confirming Reappointment Of Carol M. Smith, MD, MPH As Commissioner Of Health And Commissioner Of Mental Health

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution confirms the reappointment of Dr. Carol Smith as Commissioner of Ulster County Health and Mental Health.

**Motion No. 5:**                   **Moved for Adopt Resolution No. 158**  
**Motion By:**                   Legislator Nolan  
**Motion Seconded By:**       Legislator Wawro

**Discussion:**

Legislator Nolan for the record expressed how fortunate we are to be able to reconfirm Dr. Smith. The committee thanked Dr. Smith for her continued excellence serving Ulster County.

**Voting In Favor:**           Legislators Lopez, Nolan, Petit, Wawro  
**Voting Against:**           None  
**Votes in Favor:**           4  
**Votes Against:**           0  
**Disposition:**             **Resolution ADOPTED**

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**Resolution No. 171:** Creating Three Full-Time Caseworker Positions And Amending The 2018 Ulster County Budget-Department Of Social Services

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution amends the 2018 UC budget by creating three full time foster care services unit - caseworker positions in the Department of Social Services

**Motion No. 6:** Moved to Adopt Resolution No. 171

**Motion By:** Legislator Nolan

**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Petit

**Discussion:**

Deputy County Exec. Kenneth Crannell explained the creation of three full time positions will be budget neutral using weekly Medicaid payment funding. The County will be able to absorb and sustain the modest impact for next year's budget using dollars currently in the Social Services budget.

Commissioner Iapocce shared statistical information and the impact of the growing opioid epidemic affecting his department's case load. With the mid-year addition of three caseworker trainees, the department will be better prepared to address the readiness of new caseworkers and balance the staffing needs associated with emerging caseload trends. The additional staff will result in manageable caseloads, assist the department in meeting mandates, ease employee turnover due to escalating caseloads, ensure quality service and avoid potential liability. Statistical information / justification information was discussed by committee. Commissioner Iapocce provided an overview of his many programs such as Celebrating Families – the ground breaking highly successful 12 week program through family treatment drug court, (MAP) Foster Care Families – Home Finders program, Elder Abuse Prevention, and Safe Harbor a 5-year grant program for sex and labor youth trafficking – currently in our 4<sup>th</sup> year. Although significant strides have been made over the recent years the county can always use more certified foster families. The number of children in County care and custody has risen 29% to 167 and continues to grow. DSS continues to pursue grant funding for all programs via private and other government programs at the state and federal level. Our county has strong community support with non-profit agencies, mobile outreach, screenings, etc. Committee discussion ensued.

Legislators Bartels and Nolan expressed their support to increase services if needed – even on short notice.

Legislator Nolan suggested celebrating and recognizing foster parents at Session with a Pride of Ulster County Award to raise awareness – with a full presentation.

Ulster County pays an annual fixed amount of \$37+ million Medicaid dollars with no escalator, known as the “Medicaid Cap” – which is much easier to budget from year to year.

Ken Crannell invited the committee to visit the Social Services Department.

Legislator Petit remarked, "social services was intended to be a temporary service and asked if home visits may put an end to generational assistance through education and outreach."

Legislator Wawro is interested in a program that would assist and empower people to become self-sufficient.

Chairman Lopez thanked everyone for their time and information.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Lopez, Nolan, Petit, Wawro

**Voting Against:** None

**Votes in Favor:** 4

**Votes Against:** 0

**Disposition:** Resolution ADOPTED

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### **New/Old Business**

Legislator Nolan and committee sent their very best wishes to all the intending births to fellow committee members and their families.

Legislator Petit sent a letter to Counsel – Chris Ragucci asking if they remove TNR from the proposed local law would it substantially change it, as this is where most of the push back is coming from. The legislation is supposed to be a notification law only.

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

### **Adjournment**

**Motion Made By:** Legislator Wawro

**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Nolan

**No. of Votes in Favor:** 4

**No. of Votes Against:** 0

**TIME:** 6:31 PM

Respectfully submitted: Nettie Tomshaw, Legislative Staff

Minutes Approved: June 4, 2018

## **Need for additional caseworker positions at the Ulster County Department of Social Service—May 2018**

The child welfare system across the United States is under extreme pressure due to the growing impact of opioid addiction, and Ulster County is not immune from the effects of this national public health crisis. Currently, there is a critical need to amend the 2018 Ulster County Budget to authorize three additional caseworker trainee positions at the Ulster County Department of Social Services in order to address the increasing workload in the Foster Care and Preventive Services Units.

It is to be noted that the number of child protective services investigations continues to grow and this has resulted in a significant number of children being removed to out of home placement. For comparison, in 2014 the CPS Unit had 52 removals and in 2017, the unit had 61 removals. Most notably, of the 61 cases in 2017, 48 removals resulted from parental drug use. Thus far in 2018, there have been 28 removals involving 43 children, and 23 of the 28 removals are a result of parental drug/alcohol misuse.

Historically, the Ulster County Department of Social Services has 125 to 130 children in foster care (2014—119 children in care, 2015—126 children in care), but due to the rising impact of heroin and other addictive opiates, the number of children in our care and custody has risen approximately 29% to 167, and continues to grow. Additionally, the Department's Permanency Unit, which deals with children who could not remain safely in their home and who have been placed on a neglect petition with relatives, has also experienced a serious increase of 25% from 2017 to 2018.

In 2017, an additional four (4) caseworker trainee positions were added to the CPS Unit to manage the emerging caseload growth trend. The high number of removals, combined with the severity of the issues involved and the need for court ordered services, has understandably resulted in a significant increase in the number of families requiring preventive services. In the last year, the number of children receiving preventive services has grown by almost 28%, from 226 children to 309.

Escalating turnover has exacerbated the problem of escalating caseloads. In 2016 the Services Division lost five (5) workers. In 2017, six (6) workers left, but in the first four months of 2018, seven (7) workers have already left their positions due to retirements, resignations and unsuccessful probationary periods. Compounding this situation is the lengthy mandated training and the fact that trainees are not able to assume a full caseload for 9-12 months. All of these factors have resulted in a staffing crunch that must be addressed during the current fiscal year. .

With the mid-year addition of 3 caseworker trainees, the Department will be better prepared to address the readiness of new caseworkers and balance the staffing needs associated with emerging caseload trends. This additional staff will result in manageable caseloads, assist the Department in meeting mandates, ensure quality service and avoid potential liability.