

**Ways &
Means Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes**

DATE & TIME: October 22, 2020 – 5:00
LOCATION: Powered by Zoom Meeting by dialing 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID 992 1050 8954
PRESIDING OFFICER: Lynn Archer, Chairwoman
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Natalie Kelder, and Amber Feaster
PRESENT: Legislators Kenneth J. Ronk, Jr. (arrived at 5:06 PM), John Gavaris, Heidi Haynes, and Eve Walter (out at 6:02 PM)
ABSENT: Legislator Mary Beth Maio
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes
OTHER ATTENDEES: Legislators Bruno, and Cahill; Minority Counsel Nick Pascale; Donna Ramlow, Dispute Resolution Center; Greg Howard, Ulster County Community Action; Michael Berg, Family of Woodstock; Jared Brono, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County; Kara Lustiber, Mid-Hudson Library System; Stuart Auchincloss, Mid-Hudson Library System; Margie Menard, Mid-Hudson Library System; Suze Hinchey, Ulster County Community Action; Christine Hein, People’s Place; Marie Shultis, Awareness, Inc.; David Hoffman, Sawkill Fire; Adam Doan, Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District; Chris Silva, UPAC/Bardavon

- **Chairwoman Archer called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM**

Christine Hein spoke on behalf of People’s Place from 5:05 PM to 5:23 PM providing an overview of what the Organization does, how many people it generally serves, what other revenue sources the Organization has, and how COVID has affected the Organization’s revenues and expenditures in the current year. Legislator Bartels expressed desire to support a single program rather than a generic pool for the Organization to draw down.

Greg Howard spoke on behalf of Community Action of Ulster County from 5:23 PM to 5:31 PM explaining some of the programs the Organization delivers and what changes to programming they’ve incurred since COVID. Suze Hinchey explained how revenues have been impacted, expressing need for funding for the rental and utility program. Legislator Gavaris expressed support for the program, emphasizing the impact the Organization’s programs have had on Ellenville Regional Hospital and the Ellenville community.

Chris Silva spoke on behalf of UPAC/Bardavon from 5:31 PM to 5:40 PM providing a brief history of Bardavon and the programs that the Organization offers, as well as an explanation of how COVID has impacted the Organization. Further, Mr. Silva urged the Committee to approve

“full funding” for 2021, noting that the UPAC theatre has been closed due to COVID but that utility expenditures have not changed drastically and have already exceeded the County’s historic funding level for the year 2020.

Adam Doan spoke on behalf of Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District from 5:40 PM to 5:53 PM providing an explanation of the Conservation District’s programs, it’s achievements over the past year, it’s partnerships with the County, and a brief summary of what they hope to achieve in the upcoming year. Mr. Doan agreed to provide the Committee with the Plan of Work submitted to the State annually for the current year and the upcoming year.

Jared Buono spoke on behalf of Cornell Cooperative Extension from 5:54 PM to 6:03 PM explaining that the County’s appropriation is matched 1:1 by the State and therefore has a double impact on the Organization. Further, Mr. Buono explained some of the Organization’s new research, how the County’s investment in them was utilized in 2020, and how COVID has impacted the Organization, stating that CCE facilitated connections between the community and available food sources and sanitizer, and developed a farm-worker health and safety program to meet local needs. Moreover, Mr. Buono provided an explanation of the demand for services and how this relates to the Organization’s revenue gap, emphasizing the uncertainty of State and Federal funding and the economic return on investment.

Donna Ramlow spoke on behalf of Dispute Resolution Center from 6:04 PM to 6:08 PM providing an overview of the Organization’s Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, explaining how the program has made adjustments to continue throughout COVID, how many participants the program typically fields, and how it is volunteer operated.

Michael Berg spoke on behalf of Family of Woodstock from 6:09 PM to 6:22 PM. Mr. Berg asked why the Supervised Visitation contract, as a mandated service, is part of the Non-County contract agency process. Legislator Bartels explained some of the history between the decision to house the program under the Legislature, agreeing that it should be redirected to the correct department during this budget cycle. Mr. Berg explained that due to an issue that took place, they have created a new requirement to have two staff on site, rather than just one, further emphasizing the need for County funding. Legislator Bartels asked if there are situations where this service is charged to the non-custodial parent. Mr. Berg answered that Family of Woodstock does not charge for this service and would not charge for it if there were no County funding. Discussion pursued as to whether there is a legal mandate for the County to provide this service.

Marie Shultis spoke on behalf of Awareness, Inc. from 6:22 PM to 6:40 PM to read a program member’s recommendation for the program, to provide an overview of the Organization and its many programs, and to emphasize its effects on youth, how it’s different from other available programming, and how COVID has affected the Organization. Legislator Bartels asked if going virtual has reduced the Organization’s expenditures. Ms. Shultis answered that expenditures have shifted to meet virtual demands. Further, Ms. Shultis explained some of the Organization’s virtual challenges.

Margie Menard spoke on behalf of the Mid-Hudson Library System from 6:40 PM to 6:55

PM providing a brief history of the Library's shared system, how the Library Association has changed its services over time, how online content has changed during COVID, and how the library has responded to meet the changes in public needs. Ms. Menard further explained the Association's flexibility to shift funding to support public demand for certain platforms. Legislator Bartels noted the need to increase public access to computers, emphasizing support for the Library and the services it offers while expressing interest in enhancing outreach to the community.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Chairwoman Archer asked the members if there was any other business, and hearing none;

Adjournment

Motion Made By: Legislator Gavaris

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Ronk

No. of Votes in Favor: 5

No. of Votes Against: 0

Time: 6:59 PM

Respectfully submitted: Amber Feaster

Minutes Approved: November 10, 2020

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System; Margie Menard, Mid-Hudson Library System;
Suze Hinchey, Ulster County Community Action; Christine
Hein, People’s Place; Marie Shultis, Awareness, Inc.; David
Hoffman, Sawkill Fire; Adam Doan, Ulster County Soil and
Water Conservation District; Chris Silva, UPAC/Bardavon

- **Chairwoman Archer called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM**

Chairwoman Archer: I’d like to call this meeting to order this day, Thursday, October 22. Can you call attendance please, Natalie?

Natalie Kelder: Archer.

Chairwoman Archer: Here.

Natalie Kelder: Ronk.

Natalie Kelder: Bartels. She was here.

Legislator Archer: I still see her name.

Natalie Kelder: Yeah. Gavaris.

Legislator Gavaris: Present.

Natalie Kelder: And Haynes.

Legislator Haynes: Here.

Natalie Kelder: Maio. And Walter.

Legislator Walter: Here.

Natalie Kelder: Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer 00:47

Great. All right. Thank you all for joining us today. I know there's been some confusion out there since we had such a late start in 2020 with all the budget concerns, and some of you are still sorting out contract details. What we're here to talk about tonight are your applications for 2021, and I think Natalie prepared you to speak for about five minutes and then be prepared for questions. So I just wanted to acknowledge some of the things going on with the contract. The other is, it's been a really unusual year for everyone and I'm sure your agencies has, have experienced a lot of things. And so I'm hoping you can share some of that with us tonight and in your talk, talk about how your organization supports the community, what you're looking for for 2021 funding and what it's going to be used for, and any data or statistics that you can share would be very helpful as well. So, I think we have an, an order here and I believe People's Place, Christine Hein goes first. You're on mute Christine.

Christine Hein: I know, I just had to unmute. I'm sorry. I was like trying to figure it out. So, thank you for taking the time and allowing me to speak about People's Place. People's Place is located in Kingston, but it does serve all of Ulster County and we are in our 48th year of operation. I think what we're most well known for is the food pantry, and that has been super crazy busy. It's been trending higher, but with COVID it, it really, really exploded in, in the end of March, April, May, June, July. I have to say, I am phenomenally proud of my volunteers and the very small staff that we have. No one ever stopped coming because of COVID. Nobody ever said I, I can't do it. We did have to tell volunteers finally that were over 70 because of the Matilda Law, that they couldn't come any longer and, and some of them have started to come back now, but we have given out, increase, increase of over 300% in April, May, June, and then 100% in July and now it's kind of leveled off to the same amount of folks, but we also are one of the organizations that help distribute groceries to home-bound individuals in households, and we work with Kingston Emergency Food Collaboration with that. And we never closed from-, ever since COVID started. We have maintained our normal daily operations and continue to help individuals within all of Ulster County for help.

We have a long history of, of helping individuals and families in all avenues of need, not just food, but we do Project Santa, which is a gigantic toy distribution. And sometimes people go, "Oh, who needs toys?", but you know, I mean, toys are important. It's, it's going back to school, it's talking to their friends and saying yes, Santa's came to them. We have a Birthday Booth, which helps provide birthday gifts, birthday cake, candles, what I call birthday swag, to children when they have their birthday. And that came about from talking to different teachers within the

Kingston school district. That they know, you know, some kids don't even know it's their birthday because the parents don't tell them because they can't afford to provide them with a birthday cake. So, you know we have a, numerous different programs. We have a pet pantry. None of those programs ceased during the COVID pandemic. We're still open.

We have instituted very strict COVID guidelines. No one is allowed on our property without a mask. They have to sign in in order to come into the thrift store. We take their name, their phone number in case we have to do tracing, which is another, I actually hired a part-time person to do that, because I couldn't find a volunteer that would come every single day that we were open to do it. We emphasize this for everybody who comes in, so we really practice in all of the guidelines that are set up by the New York State Health Department to make sure that people stay safe but still get the services that they need.

So, the help that the County can provide to us will help us continue to operate. It just helps us breathe a little easier. It helps us provide numerous services. So, it all goes into a big pool and, you know, just to help us continue providing the services. Just as an FYI, so far this year, we've helped them handle out over what would equate to over 800,000 meals. It's over three quarters of a million meals, just out of our location. And there are other not-for-profits in our area and in the Kingston area that are helping feed individuals, also. So, you know, it's a huge problem in our area bled to you from all across the Country. Hunger is not specific to Ulster County. It's, it's all across our nation. And the fact that we have helped, or provided over 800,000 meals just in 2020, that's a huge increase from last year and we still have all of November, which is, has our Thanksgiving program, we have all of December, which has bag holiday hunger in it.

You know, when COVID started, one of the things that I'm most proud about my staff and my volunteers are that school closed on a Thursday. On Monday morning, we were handing out bags of breakfast, lunch, and snack foods to households that have school-aged children. We did not miss a beat. And we just provided the food and said, you know, it'll come. And we did that for 26 weeks straight.

Chairwoman Archer: Great. Okay, any questions? No questions. Okay. I have one. Can you, do you have, do you break it down by...

Legislator Walter: I had my hand up.

Chairwoman Archer: I see, I see your hand up now. Thank you. Do you break it down? You say you serve all of Ulster County, do you have a breakdown of, you know, where the meals were served and, you know, what percentage, you know, each town made up of that 800,000 meals?

Christine Hein: I, I really don't. I mean, we could pull it and we could try to figure out. Our computer program just puts everybody into one computer system and just for our statistics, we don't pull that. We could probably try to figure that out. I would say a large portion of them come from what I call the Kingston area: the City of Kingston, Lake Katrine, the surrounding areas. Also Ellenville. And we have worked very closely with Ellenville Central School District to provide meals to the students out in Ellenville. There actually are people who come from

Ellenville School District and come, and they pick up and they do this all year, since COVID started, all summer long, and they've done this for last couple of years, and picked up the bags, Student Hunger Bags. They also come and pick up the Thanksgiving program that we do. And they also come in pick up Project Santa and Bag Student Hunger. So, I can tell you, I know that that's about 300-330 families in Ellenville that we help. And the only reason I know that for a fact is we're dealing with them now and they're, they're sending us their registrations for the holidays.

Chairwoman Archer: Great. Legislator Walter.

Legislator Walter: Thanks. And Legislator Haynes also had her hand up. Yeah, I guess, part..., one of my questions related to that, of just sort of knowing how much, how many people are being served really outside of Kingston, as well, it'd be good to have a sense of that information. I also was wondering if you could talk about two things: one of what other sources of funding you have, and then second one is, could you give us an idea of like, what 10,000 dollars buys you? You know, maybe in the number of meals you can provide with it, or just so I have, have a better sense of what that amount of money sort of gets to the people who are in need.

Christine Hein: Sure. So, okay, so as far as the number of people served, that live outside of Kingston, like I said, our program doesn't do that, but I will say we are doing delivery still and a portion of those folks do not live in Kingston. They live in the Town of Ulster. They live in Lake Katrine. They live in Woodstock. And, and I just know those because every week we pack those bags, so I see all of the addresses. We have people in Highland. We have people in Esopus. So, those are, are true, easily validated addresses. We also work with somebody down in Marlborough that has about- which we only just started- about 100 households that we're helping out down in the Marlborough area, and they come, and they pick up, and they'll be bringing them down there. You ask, oh, 10,000 dollars. It, our money kind of goes into a pool and then we- a pool, you know, into the, into the bookkeeper, and then she divides it out but I can tell you that I would say 10,000 dollars is easily, easily, over 10,000 meals because our meals average-, don't average a dollar a meal. And there was another part of the question which I forgot, I'm sorry.

Legislator Walter: That's okay. Just what, what other sources of funding do you have?

Christine Hein: Sure. So, we do fundraisers. This year was a little hard because of COVID, obviously, but the City of Kingston did give us funding because of COVID and that was the first time we've gotten funding for operational costs through the City of Kingston, so that was a, that was a nice extra for this year. I don't expect it for 2021, because it's not something that is, you know, historically, something that we get. I apply for any grant that I can possibly, possibly find. So, I apply for grants through the Community Foundation. I apply for grants through, through Key Bank. You know, anytime there's a bit of some kind of funding out there, we put an application out. We don't get it all the time. And sometimes we do get some.

Legislator Walter: Ballpark, on average, how much other funding you do get a year?

Christine Hein: How much other funding we get a year? Prior to 2020, because of COVID, because we have gotten COVID money, I mean, it's all on the record. We've gotten 60,000 dollars from the City of Kingston, for COVID and prior to that, we usually get, I'm going to say about 150,000-180,000 of funding through grants, prior to 2020.

Legislator Walter: Thank you.

Christine Hein: Yeah. And then of course, like I just mentioned previously, we did get the 60,000 dollars for COVID from the City of Kingston, and we applied for a Community Development Block Grant, which we're granted, but we haven't gotten that money yet.

Chairwoman Archer: Legislator Haynes.

Legislator Haynes: Yes, Christine. Hi, it's good to see you, even though it's virtually. It's been a, it's been a bit. Nonetheless, I'd like to start by saying I am a bit familiar with your organization, so thank you for the hard work that you do. My answer has, my question has been answered a little bit, but I just want to clarify further. There's no residency requirement and if anyone came to the People's Place for help, I believe there's two parts, there's no residency requirement and I know for your Fresh Farmers Market, there's also no income guideline, is that correct? You don't ask for any documentation for that?

Christine Hein: Right. So here's how we operate. We have certain programs that are just out like you said, the farmers market, anybody could technically come to that. We give food... we, we like to say that we serve anybody in Ulster County. That being said, I will tell you, and I know you're the Ulster County Legislators, but if somebody from out of the County comes to us and says they need food, we're not going to turn them away. We're not going to say "I'm sorry, you don't live in Ulster County, we're not going to provide you food". So, but it's anyone who lives in Ulster County, so it doesn't have to be Kingston or the greater Kingston area. And I will say where the confusion comes is when I started at People's Place eight and a half years ago, it used to just be the Kingston, and the greater Kingston area and we changed that, as a board directive, probably a year and a half after I was there. So, for at least a solid six and a half years, we have been serving all of Ulster County.

When people come in, we don't ask for any financial documentation, but we do ask for proof of residency in order to use the Food Pantry. And, and in some of the other programs that we do- the Thanksgiving Program, Bag Summer Hunger- we ask if they have a SNAP card or a benefit card. And the reason we do that is... and that is, that doesn't mean that they can't get services. We have people who only have a driver's license or only have some other form of ID, but because we are a member of the Food Bank, we have to have a certain percentage of folks who are living within a certain economic level.

Chairwoman Walter: Legislator Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: Thank you. I know, I know, you said that, and in the application, it also speaks to, that the money, if you receive money from the County, that it'll go to whatever-, wherever there's the most need. And you talk about your bookkeeper just sort of directing the

money. I just want to say that, and I think I've said this before, but not as it relates to your organization, I feel much more comfortable, as a Legislator, if we are funding a specific program. Some of the, the listings, and, and we had this with another organization where we had a discussion related to something similar to what you call Project Santa, just being specific to one religion. I know Santa has become maybe not so religious, but but it's, it's arguably in one religion. And so...

Legislator Ronk: For the record, Santa is not religious.

Legislator Bartels: I personally would feel much more comfortable if we knew which program we would actually be funding and I'm not asking you to make a distinction right now, but it's something that I'd, if you came back to us, you could say, this is where this money is going to go, it's going to fund this, it's going to bolster, it's going to bolster this, and it's going to have this effect, it's going to, it's going to, you know...

Christine Hein: We have 22 programs that we do that help folks that are financially, you know, neighbors who are struggling financially. So, that would not be a difficult thing to place that, those funds to a certain program.

Legislator Bartels: So, again, it's something you could come back to us with but...

Chairwoman Archer: Yeah, we'll go ahead, Natalie, if you can annotate that and then we'll have her come back to you and we'll get the information specifically.

Natalie Kelder: Yeah, I also just wanted to mention, her 2020 contract was written in a way that it had nothing to do with Christmas, it was only written to fund the food items.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay. And, and that's what this is? Was, is this targeting that as well? No, at this targets, multiple programs. So, let's be more specific, and we'll follow back up with you for your feedback. Legislator Gavaris.

Legislator Gavaris: You mentioned difficulties in fundraising, but then you also mentioned the money you had received from City of Kingston. Do you know where you are in your net budget year-to-date, where you are in that budget?

Christine Hein: We're flat.

Legislator Gavaris: Okay. So, the 60,000 didn't really help much because you lost about that you're saying in fundraising?

Christine Hein: Right. We were, we had a four fundraisers, five fundraisers, scheduled and we were able to do one, and then we did do a virtual one. But you know, virtual is virtual.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, great. Any other questions? Okay, thank you so much. Thank you. We appreciate it.

Christine Hein: Oh, thank you. Thanks.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay. And next, we have Community Action and I believe that's Suze Hinchey. Is that right? Or Greg?

Greg Howard: Greg and Suze.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay.

Greg Howard: I'm going to talk for a little bit about our agency.

Chairwoman Archer: Great.

Greg Howard: We've, we've been in the community for 55 years. It's our 55th year this August. We too, like, like Christine was saying, COVID has really stepped up everybody. Being part of Kingston Resilience, being a part of everything that's going on, to continue to serve the needs of the people in our community is paramount. Our services at Community Action entail the Head Start and Early Headstart Programs for Ulster County, outreach services for the entire county, and Sullivan County, and weatherization and then power services. So our funding is coming from the State and Federal governments. We also received a COVID grant that is meant for people that are in COVID pandemic stress and we can help up to 200% of poverty level people for that. Our normal CSPG poverty level is 125% of poverty or less. And Headstart is usually 100% of poverty or less. And with people that are homeless or incarcerated, those children get higher up on the list to get entered into the program. Of course, Headstart and Early Headstart, like all the other schools, are not as full as it's supposed to be right now due to COVID. But it's starting to climb in our Ellenville, and Plattekill, and Saugerties, and Kingston sites. We did have to close for a temporary moment two classrooms in Rondout due to, you know, a lot of our clients have older students that are in the school district and their home and they've chosen not to send their kids into a Headstart program at this time. But a lot of stuff is being done also virtually.

Weatherization, of course, shut down in March, and then power services through NYSEERDA, and so, we were not allowed to get back into people's homes until the, about the beginning of July, just after the Fourth of July. And that's been a slow creep.

As for outreach services, we've been open most of the time. We did have to curtail our services during the heavy time of COVID, where we were open instead of five days a week, I want to say it was three and a half or two and a half days, maybe three and a half days that we were open during the week at all of our sites in Highland, Kingston, and Ellenville. And also our Sullivan site was also open during that time. We've had to do a lot of curtailing of people coming into our Lindsley Avenue office, which is our Kingston site. We haven't allowed people in. We've curtailed a lot of volunteer efforts. But during all that time, we still did, we figured out how to do food distributions and mass distributions and drive throughs where we have as little contact with the people in the car as possible. And of course, we put over 200,000 pounds of food in a couple months with the help of the food pantry, the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley and the Regional Food Bank. We also were heavy into the grocery bag delivery program with

Saugerties, Ellenville, and Kingston for a time when that was going on, along with People's Place and other, others in that process. So, we've, we've really hyped up a lot of work that we're doing.

As it relates to, to 2021 funding, all the funding that we've asked the Legislature for is to help people with rentals and utilities, additional people. In 2019, I think we were able to help 12 families: six with rentals, six with utilities, that totaled 9,000 dollars. And this request..., for 2020 we requested, obviously more and it was cut in half, and that was publicized in all the papers, and I guess we're waiting for our paperwork and all that stuff to come through. But in 2021, we're asking for the original request, request, I believe of 28,007 50. That goes to help 18,831 dollars to rentals and utility assistance that we hope to help between 24 and 30 families, depending on what that is. And why this is important to us, also, is we can use the program service support money from that to help our staff work with people that are outside of the COVID range. If it's not a COVID related event, this money helps us help them. Because we do have strict COVID laws with some of the monies we got from the CARES Act. So, we're looking forward to the support of the Legislature.

Suze, do you have anything you want to add?

Suze Hinchey: Well, I just want to say, like during the COVID time, we saw a large increase of the people needing food. Through our CARES Act, we were able to purchase two vans. So, we're going to be delivering hot meals to people that are in need. Our goal is to try to stay open, if the second wave comes, Monday through Friday, full-time, full-time staff for outreach, and get the food to the people that, that really that need it.

We've seen a big increase in the rental and utility, and like Greg said, if it's COVID related, which so far, that's what it's been, we're able to use the CARES Act, but we have some people coming in that have needs for rental that has nothing to do with COVID. And unfortunately, because of the Department of State guidelines, we're not able to assist them. So, we do have a little bit of funding that we can use, that we did over the years through fundraising, that we can use some of that money to help with their utility shutoffs or rentals. But because of COVID we weren't able to do our fundraising. We usually do a basket bingo, where we raise anywhere from 5 to 8 thousand dollars, and I just feel like there's going to be such a great need for the rental and utility. It seems to be two of the major things in Ulster County that the people need.

Greg Howard: Any questions?

Legislator Archer: Great. Thank you. Any questions out there? Legislator Gavaris.

Legislator Gavaris: This is just more of a statement. I can tell you that the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley, the program that we have, I actually work for Ellenville Hospital, we have the pharmacy, which is, that we are in. That program shut down 209 a few weeks back for about an hour. There was so much need that the, we had to set up as a drive thru, and the traffic was literally backed up on 209. If you know Ellenville, almost a mile long with people going to get the fresh vegetables. So, very good program, very well utilized, so...

Greg Howard: We're very happy that Ellenville Regional has partnered with us in Ellenville to be able to assist more people. We also during COVID made several meals to the senior center that's over there. I want to say we delivered about three times to the, the seniors there throughout the COVID time, and then also the local pantries through partnerships. We were able to help supply United Methodist Church, Catholic Charities- Family of Woodstock helped out. We had a lot of great partnerships that really has made COVID-19 manageable, is by everyone coming together and figuring out how we serve the community better.

Suze Hinchey: And what's so great is having the Regional Hospital do the pharmacy. They target, I believe you guys are four to seven, or five to seven. So it's after our hours. So, the working families that aren't able to get to our three outreach locations can go right to Ellenville Regional Hospital on those Thursdays and get fresh fruits and vegetables. So, it's like a great partnership we have with them.

Legislator Gavaris: It's going on right now as we speak, about maybe 60 feet from my office door.

Greg Howard: Great.

Suze Hinchey: They opened the doors a little while ago.

Greg Howard: It's working. It's working.

Chairwoman Archer: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you for all your hard work this year. We appreciate your time today.

Suze Hinchey: Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Next, we have Chris. The Bardavon.

Chris Silva: Thanks, Lynn. Thank you everybody for inviting me to join you at this meeting. I do recognize the struggle the County is facing, and really everybody in the world, to make ends meet.

A brief history. I started at the Bardavon in, as Executive Director in 1994. The theater's been there since 1869. In 1999, we, we took over the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, the region's only professional Symphony Orchestra, saving it from bankruptcy, and we've been running it ever since. In 2006, the Bardavon was approached by the UPAC board to take over that theater because it was, too was going bankrupt. We did an engineering study of the building and recognized that it needed millions in repair and renovation, but we also saw the benefits to the community to having a working theater in Midtown. So, despite the challenges we, we did take it over. We've raised and spent over 10 million dollars restoring and preserving UPAC. Not one dime came from the County. We increased attendance at the venue from under 10,000 people year to over 60,000, including 10,000 children, mostly from low income families. UPAC serves everybody: city folks, rural people, tourists. We're not a rich organization or luxury item, but we are an anchor and an economic, economic engine for Ulster County. We have 21 full-time

people, 15 of whom are currently furloughed and working one to three days a week to maintain our operations, the two theaters, and their health insurance premiums.

Our pre-COVID 3.6 million dollar annual budget is comprised of approximately 50% box office earned in-, income and revenue and 50% from very hard to find annual donations. We see just under 200,000 a year from approximately 1,800 member households. That accounts for about 10% of our, of our donations.

Our annual economic impact in Ulster County is nearly 3 million dollars and that does not include artists fees, or staff payroll, or box office income. That 3 million is a result of filling every restaurant in Kingston 50 times a year, hotel stays, trips to gas stations even, bars. UPAC co-founded the Mid-Hu-, Mid-town Arts District MAD which is actively helping to transform the perception and reality of Midtown Kingston. UPAC has ongoing collaborations with the City of Kingston, the school district, several school districts really, throughout Ulster County, the Kingston Library, Radio Kingston, the Woodstock Film Festival, Ulster BOICES, Kingston Kids, Harambee Kingston, the Center for Creative Education, O+ Festival, and last year we began an intern program with the County's Restorative Justice Center. We annually admit thousands of low income families for free to all of our events and we also send artists from all genres into schools for free... to all, I'm sorry, for powerful empowering residencies. They're transformative to these kids and since COVID, we have so far adapted two of our arts and education programs into virtual performances, one dealing with racism in America, the other an exploration of Mexico's Day of the Dead. We're offering these performances free to every school district in the-, two counties, and every member of our community. We already have thousands of reservations and are actively creating additional virtual education Programs for 2021, including hip hop theater, world of dance, and Big Band jazz. As a result of COVID, we've been closed since March 13. We project a nearly 2 million dollar budget revenue shortfall in 2020, and another million or more in 2021. At the County's request, from the beginning, the 25,000 dollar annual grant we receive has always gone towards helping to pay the 50,000 dollar annual UPAC utility expense, gas, and electric. That annual utility expense continues, despite the COVID closing UPAC and that 25,000 is actually the second largest direct grant we get directly for UPAC. So, County... cutting County support for UPAC puts us in danger, along with all of our collaborators, and all benefit economically, educationally, artistically, from what we do. We do not have a reserve fund. We are hoping to begin outdoor performances in late spring and summer 21 and the hope is to reopen UPAC in the fall. But you know, nobody knows.

I do urge you to budget us in full 21, with the contingency that if the County does not receive State or Federal stimulus support, which I know you desperately need, might again be cut by 50%. The hope is that when the county does finally, totally reopen, we want to have UPAC there, strong ready to continue. Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, any questions? Legislator Gavaris.

Legislator Gavaris: So, I'm, I'm struggling to understand, if the theater is closed, how do you have the same expense for utilities as you would on a normal year? If 50,000 is that number.

Chris Silva: Because it's a huge building that has to be heated, in particular the winter. But yeah, the bill... you know, it's, it's a good question for Central Hudson, but no, our bills don't really dramatically change, to be honest with you. When we're full up, you know, on a weekend, we're perhaps putting, you know, 100 lights up, but for only for a couple of hours. So, the normal day to day, I mean, we're still operating, you know, we still go to the office, we still operate, we still actually have to run all of our systems on a regular basis, from plumbing to air conditioning to, you know everything, because we can't let it sit. So, on a regular basis, we're, we're running our systems. Not as much, obviously, as if we had a show, but, but still, those are the bills. I can show those to you guys if you'd like. I mean, I think I submitted those in May, yeah, for the last go round in this past spring or summer, but yeah, I can, I can resubmit.

Chairwoman Archer: Legislator...

Chris Silva: It's a huge structure. So you know, it takes a lot.

Chairwoman Archer: How many square feet, Chris?

Chris Silva: Oh, I don't know, it's, you know, 50,000, 60,000, at least for the theater, and then, you know, there's other office space. Like I said, I mean, we do have to, you know, I, there have been stories of people going back into office buildings, etc. that weren't, that they weren't maintaining their systems and that's, you know, that's how Legionnaires disease develops. It's a, it's a scary thing. So, yeah, plus we have a brand-new system there, so, which is a good thing, but it still needs to be run.

Legislator Archer: Legislator Haynes.

Chris Silva: The HVAC.

Chairwoman Archer: Yep. Thank you.

Legislator Haynes: So, at least a portion of this funding, if not all, will be going towards utilities?

Greg Howard: Yep.

Legislator Haynes: Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Any other questions? Okay. Thank you, Chris.

Chris Silva: Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Next...

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: Lynn.

Chairwoman Archer: Yes.

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: There's one phone number I want to get.

Chairwoman Archer: Oh, sure.

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: The caller that's 845-706-0602, can you please identify your name for the record? Caller from 845-706-0602. You are on mute though.

Deputy Clerk of the Legislature, Finance Feaster: Was it star-six to unmute?

Chairwoman Archer: Star-six. There.

Legislator Wawro: I'm sorry. It's Mary Wawro.

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: Oh, hi, Mary.

Chairwoman Archer: Oh, Mary!

Legislator Wawro: Hello.

Chairwoman Archer: Welcome. Okay, good.

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Next we have Soil and Water, Adam.

Adam Doan: Hey, thanks for having us. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with everyone. Let me see here. So, for anybody unaware, the Soil and Water District was created in 1965 by an act of the Legislature, then the Board of Supervisors and we're also a political subdivision, so, of County government, so, we're a little bit different in terms of our organizational structure. And we were created to really help with agriculture and water, water issues within the County, especially, you know, in the post, Dustbowl, AIRism, and whatnot. So, the main strength really of the Soil Water District that separates us a little bit from other County agencies, or entities, is that we can work on private property with public dollars, whether it's Federal or State funds, or even local dollars. So, if you think of somebody like Department of Public Works, we may be restricted to a right away. Soil Water Districts traditionally can work outside of those areas, which is why we do a lot of work on farms, or within waterways that may affect the public or private infrastructure.

Our main areas of operation, and I'll try to keep this short, are really agriculture, water resources, mostly surface water, but certainly some of the programming and projects will have a positive benefit on groundwater, and then technical assistance. And I'll expand on each of these a little bit and provide some examples of the, the work that we do currently.

So, on the agricultural front, we are partnered and co-housed with Natural Resource Conservation Service, which is the Federal agency under US Department of Ag, to do

agricultural work within the County. We also work closely with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster who you'll be hearing from later, and coordinate with them pretty regularly in terms of our programming, making sure we're not duplicating services, things like that. One of the benefits that we provide to the producers of the County is that we do have on staff certified crop advisors so they can provide recommendations that increase crop yields. We also work with nutrient management planning, which helps farms dial in their nutrient needs to optimize yield, but reduce potential runoff, and potentially harm, you know, aquatic resources at the County. A lot of that work is completed and falls under what we call the AEM framework, which is just Agriculture Environmental-, Environmental Management and this is a framework that helps farmers and producers make common sense, cost effective, and science based decisions to help meet business objectives while protecting and conserving the State's natural resources. So, farmers work with local AEM resource professionals at soil water district to kind of plan, implement, and evaluate these conservation practices and systems that can address environmental risks on the farm. It's completely voluntary. We're not, you know, a regulatory entity in any, any aspect. We look for farms to come to us that have an interest. We do walkthroughs on the farms. We identify any potential area where we might be able help them, and then we potentially implement a project. So, one of those that we're currently working on, and in the process of implementing in the next couple of weeks, is an on farm secondary containment facility, which is essentially a fancy way of saying fuel storage. Some farms use a lot of diesel. We're working with this particular orchard to create, really the Cadillac of farm refueling sites that could potentially contain any spills, given that they're on some pretty sandy soil that is well drained, they're sitting up on a hill that drains down to a wetland. So, we're providing in this sense, 80% of the funds for that project, with the farm bringing the remaining 20%, so we offer a really good kind of return on a farms investment through the programming that we, we can tap into through the State or Federal level, and then sometimes local.

In the water resources realm, we are well versed and do a lot of work in terms of diagnosing stream instability, and then providing recommendations at no cost, to help mitigate issues and achieve essentially a balance within a stream channel. So, you might think of it in terms of like if we see an eroding site, what are the causes of that erosion and what can be done to mitigate that erosion? What are the threats, whether it be to a bridge or properties or somebody's property? In order to do this, we also have on staff certified professionals in erosion and sediment control. There are sometimes actually the trainers who put on these trainings so that other entities and individuals within the County can maintain their certification, so that's a program that we typically offer annually. A little bit more complicated under the age of COVID, since it's oftentimes in person, but we're looking at ways that we could deliver that training and maintain this credentialing online. So, on the water resource side, we're also partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension, and NYSDEP for the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program, which some of you are aware of. That's in a northwest corner of Ulster County and deals with the Upper Esopus Creek. So, in that, in that work, and in our capacity, as Soil Water District, has implemented large scale stream restoration projects that have a water quality benefit and we've started to quantify and assess that benefit through partnerships with US Geologic Surveys, been able to monitor our projects, and show in fact that we are having a positive impact on water quality, in terms of reducing things like sediment and water quality issues within the Upper Esopus Watershed.

We also participate in assessments and monitoring. So, that's actually Soil and Water staff out walking every linear foot of the streams, addressing any issues that they see, creating geo-databases of geospatial information so that it can be used in the planning processes, and then distilling all that down into accessible management plans that the landowners that are streamside landowners, or even the municipalities can use, to either pursue funding from us or other entities that may be offering funding, that could help with any of their issues.

The other program that we run is a Riparian Buffer Program, which is implemented several miles of stream restoration projects to improve riparian buffers within the Esopus Creek watershed. And really the, I think the takeaway from the work that we've done, that's so kind of confined to the Upper Esopus, in the talks that, you know, Jared, and the Department of Environment, and us have been having, is how can we take some of these lessons and expand it out of the watershed and apply it in the rest of the County? That's really what we've been looking at in these next couple of years is how can we do that? How can we get that knowledge outside of the watershed and use that effectively?

The other area that we're really involved in is what I call technical assistance and that breaks down into two programs: MAP, which is a Municipal Assistance Program, and LAP, which is a Landowner Assistance Program. Very catchy names there.

So, an example of the MAP, or the Municipal Assistance Program, which is at no cost to the municipality, is, is we were contacted by Department of Public Works for a bridge that they'd applied to design funding for Cornell through their Split Program up in the Ashokan Watershed. They received the funding from us but then there's this question as to whether or not the bridge designer was adequately addressing sediment issues. So, Soil and Water staff were able to go out and collect sediment data, run an analysis, and look at the ability of the stream and that bridge that's being proposed to actually have a positive impact on sediment dynamics through that reach and we did that working in partnership with Department of Public Works. Oftentimes, Soil and Water can be complimentary to the existing entities or the existing County departments. We work really closely on the Municipal Assistance side with the local highway departments as well, whether it's addressing any road stream-crossing issues, stream instability, flood issues, those type of things.

The other program that I mentioned is the Landowner Assistance Program, which really is just technical assistance to landowners. It might have to do with invasive species on their property, it could have to do with bank erosion, it could be water quality, pond site investigations, a whole host of things that might have to do with water resources that we get reached out to on a daily or weekly basis and we provide this technical expertise and recommendations to them at no cost.

So, in terms of, of the funding that the County's provided to us over the years, that amounts to about a third of our operational funding. We get the rest either through our contract with DEP for the Stream Program, and then also through the State. So, those are the three entities that are really the main funders for the Soil and Water District. When I go back and I've looked at what that return on investment has been for the County, it's varied from about 20:1 to 30:1 depending on the year. So, really, it was a really compelling and good bang for the buck in terms of the County dollars that have been allocated to the Districts in the past and that, that

really pays off in terms of: one, these Technical Assistance Programs that we can provide; but also the implementation projects that we're able to able to undertake, which in some years is amounted to, you know, multi-million dollars of work, whether it's through city and Federal funding. So, that's really what I have in terms of my spiel and I'm happy to answer any questions that y'all might have about what we do, and what we're looking to do, and why this funding is so important to us to kind of keep the lights on and keep the staff happy.

Chairwoman Archer: Legislator, Walter. Thank you.

Legislator Walter: Thanks. I'm trying to wrap my head around what my question is. I guess, so, you've, you've presented us with a, an amount that is more reflective of, of what are reduced amounts, as opposed to reflective of what you've originally asked for and asked for for many years.

Adam Doan: Yeah.

Legislator Walter: And I guess I'm just wondering if you could talk about... I imagine you're not hitting... or maybe you are... like, are you helping as many farms as you want to be helping? Are you dealing with as many streams as you are dealing with? And the sort of reasoning behind reducing what you're ask is. Was it because you just managed to identify with other sources, you can actually do what you're doing? Or are you actually going to be doing less in our County as a result of the reduced amount?

Adam Doan: Yeah, thanks. We acknowledge the situation that's facing the County and that's really where that number came from. You know, listening to the Ways and Means meetings over the past several months, and participating in a couple of them, we know how dire the outlook had been and that's really just a reflection of that. We don't plan to reduce or reduce any of our services, and we haven't done that this year. What we would be doing is kind of operating at a loss this year, knowing that we have some fund balances that we can tap into that would help us get through that. So, I think if, if I remember correctly, on the budget that, that was submitted to y'all, it shows about 50,000 dollars that we'd be operating kind of in the red over the next year and that's really just a reflection of saying, you know, like, we understand where the County's at and we're willing to, you know, sacrifice a little bit on our end, in the hopes that once we get through this period, we'll be able to, to, to ask for our full funding back because really, we require that funding to not only support the, the current staff, but if we want to do some of the things that we've talked about and actually be able to bring in additional dollars, you know, it would be good to increase the staffing, at least by another staff member who could help tap into some even additional grant opportunities and whatnot, and bring in more money for the County or, or for the County's producers. So, so, that's kind of the long term picture, you know, we're willing to get by this year and 2021 with a little bit less, in antic-, in anticipation for hopefully getting back to normal later on.

Legislator Walter: Thanks. Can I just ask, maybe not now, but if you can eventually get to us, I'd like to have a sense of like, how many farms you help and, and how many streams you work on, just so that we have some sense of what the impacts of those dollars really is. Thank you.

Adam Doan: Yeah, we can do that. So, we've gone through the similar dialogue with Energy and Environment last year and what we had decided would be a good way to maybe address some of those concerns was for the State, we actually submit an annual Plan At Work that looks ahead at what type of projects, and where we're going to be involved on an annual basis. It's, it's a big document that probably provides more detailed than's really needed by either of those committees. So, I kind of distilled that down and I would just say that that's probably a good place to start and I would just start submitting that with our annual requests, because we typically, I think that's due up to the State by the end of the month, actually so the timing seems to correspond well to, to this process. And...

Chairwoman Archer: So, Adam, that sounds great. Could you provide it for this year and for what you're planning for next year?

Adam Doan: Yeah, I can do that. So, I don't...

Chairwoman Archer: Is it...

Adam Doan: I'm still wrapping up what would be for next year, but I'll get that to you as soon as possible. I can get you the current year's plan. Yeah, as soon as you know, later this evening, so...

Chairwoman Archer: Great. Great. Any other questions? Okay, thank you very much, Adam. We appreciate it.

Adam Doan: Yep. Thank you. Appreciate it, all.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, next we have Jared, Cornell cooperative.

Jared Buono: Hello, everybody. Adam was gracious enough to spend a lot of time on the Ashokan Stream Management Program so, I'll spend more time on the value of agriculture in Ulster County. Hi, everybody. Jared Buono, Executive Director at Cornell Cooperative Extension. I'm going to go all the way back to Lincoln when he started the land grant system. Essentially States gave land to universities in exchange for those universities to give back to the communities and what that means is Cornell does some of the cutting-edge research on the planet for agriculture and other things and we extend that research to communities. At the same time, we inform the future research at Cornell. We're really lucky to have I think the premier land grant institution on the planet, unique to New York in terms of the Cooperative Extension System, is also that every County has its own Association, overseen by a local board of farmers, and business people, and stakeholders. We... so, the Cooperative part of Cooperative Extension describes the investment by Federal, State, and County resources, so your appropriation to us gets matched by State and Federal funds, pretty much 1:1 depending on how we count the fringe and the different components that come in and then we write grants to add value to those to the tune of about 8:1 in terms of your appropriation. Specifically, you fund Specialists' salaries in agriculture and 4H youth development. The first extension agents came to Ulster County in 1913. That was an ag agent and shortly thereafter, there was a specialist for home economics and 4H youth development and that stays what you fund today. Now, we have 30 staff and

almost 300 enrolled volunteers. We work across, all of the research components that Cornell does for New York: agriculture, environment, health, and youth development. Extension professionals have evolved since 1913. Now in the age of information, our agents are much more specialized, and are doing applied research in Ulster County. For example, our Agricultural Team Lead is the, one of New York State's grain experts. So they work on trials for finding what grains can be grown back in the Hudson Valley, because we don't grow very many grains anymore, to support sustainable food systems, and for brewers and bakers all over the County to get local grains. Also, we have some of the New York State's, maybe the Northeast's, most advanced apple, grape, and hemp research happening right here at the Highland Research Lab, which is composed of Cornell faculty, and CCE extension specialists.

Your investment in us paid off in 2020. We, in March, we move quickly to online services, as well as providing some safe in person consultations. Many of our staff were exempt from stay at home orders because we work in the food systems. So back when all the store shelves empty, people turn to local trusted sources of food, and we helped facilitate a lot of those connections with the food systems and farms, and then answered a lot of that uncertainty that was happening then. So, our specialists actually developed the guidelines for the U-pick operations that are now used across New York State. We have distributed over 2,000 gallons of hand sanitizer and 3,000 masks to 150 local farms and we continue to do so. We worked with our State and County partners to develop a farm worker health program to keep migrant labor safe and healthy, and the Cornell Institute for Food Safety was the source of information in the spring when everybody was trying to figure this out. They were the ones using the Extension System and the research to put it together to tell us how we keep our food safe and our farmers healthy. So, we were one of the early agencies to bring back in-person programming. We have held over 40 events in terms of environment with over 650 participants. We've worked with 50 plus municipal officials this year on things like flood risk, stream management, climate resilience. I'm happy to say that across all of our programs, we've had no COVID transmissions and that includes across CCE New York State. With all the 4H summer camps this summer that were held across the State, we've been able to do it without transmitting any COVID.

Demand for our services has increased exponentially. At least in terms of agriculture alone, we're getting 50% more calls and requests for information than we ever did before. So, we've always provided support for economic development in terms of large commercial apple growers, farm brewery, small farms. Our new farmer classes were always at capacity but now it's... it's, it's, the demand is through the roof. We held online course for backyard chicken growing and we had 300 registrants and had to close it down. Backyard pigs was at like 600 registrants. This year alone our ag team conducted 528 field visits, fielded 2,500 phone calls and over 19,000 emails. These are from farmers, existing farmers, and new potential farmers about starting businesses and growing food here. Everybody wants to grow food in the Hudson Valley. Everybody wants local food now. And it's lovely to see. We need to maintain that and keep it going. We've held 100 events with 5,000 plus people just in terms of agriculture, and demand for 4H is also at a high. We held an outreach event in Saugerties last month and 45 families showed up over the course of an afternoon because parents are in need of alternative education for the kids.

So, with all the changes that you guys are seeing, we see that farms are a part of, are a larger part of our recreation and our food system. Honestly, we're struggling to meet the demand. I've mostly overcome 100,000 dollar revenue gap this year, but I face about a 95,000 dollar gap for 2021. So, I'm asking you to invest in agriculture, in us, and in Soil and Water, honestly. We're your ag line for the County. At the 2020 level, because, because we, we have huge demand and my State and Federal sources of funding are very uncertain. Right now I'm looking at one layoff. One major program is closing now. But I'm able to keep a lot of it going because we've reduced costs by about 90,000 dollars this year. We'll continue to do that next year, and also Cornell has stepped up and is channeling Federal funds into some of the Associations but it's not enough. I really need the County appropriation.

Just to wrap it up, the value of agriculture in Ulster County is 55 dollars million a year. That's farm gate produce. That's not value add. That's not anything that's processed. That's not agri-tourism or agri-entertainment. So we know that the economic impact is many, many times that, so I would ask that you invest in CCE and Soil and Water so that we can continue to keep the farm and food systems going with all the support that we give.

I would invite this committee, along with Adam, we would like to invite you out to see some of the programs. The Legislative Programs Committee would always hold one of their meetings annually at our office or one of our programs. Last year we were down at the Hudson Valley Research Lab in Highland which is doing cutting edge work to keep our, our apple growers in business. So, I'm sure we can find a way to socially distance, or remote, or otherwise, and then you can see where... you know, you meet the staff, you meet the farmers, you can meet the future farmers, who you support through your appropriation.

Chairwoman Archer: Thank you, Jared. Do we have any questions? Well, I have...I, oh, Legislator Gavaris, please.

Legislator Gavaris: I just more because I'm inquisitive and I have a curiosity. Why does Ulster County not grow grain anymore? Especially looking at Legislator Cahill's screenshot there. He's got the seal, which has grain on our seal, I just... curiosity.

Jared Buono: Well, I mean, we used to... the food system used to be local. It went global and we didn't do that anymore. The economics didn't make sense.

Legislator Gavaris: Okay.

Jared Buono: Now it makes sense to go back because things like New York Grown Certified mandate, that in a few years, if you want to say you're a New York State certified producer of beer, or whatever it happens to be, you have to get up to 80% of your product in New York. Those grains weren't growing. We were importing from Canada and other places. We're getting back to that seal, now.

Legislator Gavaris: I didn't know it was an environmental issue, that it's not conducive to growing grain if that was the reason. That's why, sort of why I was asking.

Chairwoman Archer: So, you said that you've been doing a lot more virtual online seminars and classes and, and the volume has, has, you've seen an uptick. Do you have a sense of, you know, what percentage increase in activity, requests, programming, that type of stuff you're doing currently?

Jared Buono: Yep. So we're, we're working on the, the report for 2020 now but I just talked to the ag team today, and they were saying at least a 50% increase in all channels across, you know, whatever messaging we get on social media, the calls, and the emails. At least 50 percent. In terms of our online registration for classes, it's hard to tell. They're orders of magnitude larger than the in-person classes we were doing.

Chairwoman Archer: So, you're getting more people coming online than you were?

Jared Buono: Yes, and some of them are at SUNY, some of those are surrounding counties. We, we always prioritize Ulster residents, but we don't turn anybody away. If you come from Orange, we share across all the Associations and we are a statewide system. But yes, 600 people want to know how to do pigs through our small farms course. That's amazing.

Chairwoman Archer: It sure is. Any other questions? Okay, Jared. Thank you so much. Appreciate your time today. Okay, now we have the Dispute Resolution Center and I believe that's Donna. There you are.

Donna Ramlow: Yeah.

Chairwoman Archer: Hi, Donna.

Donna Ramlow: Hi, thank you for having me and to be able to talk about the program. I'm with the Dispute Resolution Center, which houses the CASA Program, which is Court Appointed Special Advocates and what we do is we monitor children that are in foster care. And it's monitored by volunteers. And what they do is they take care of one family. They follow everything that's been court ordered for them, make sure that they're doing their parenting classes, they're seeing their therapists, they're, you know, doing their drug treatment. Anything that the Court has said that they have to do in order to, to have their children returned to them. And they can do all that because, as with caseworkers with the department, they may have 15 to 20 cases, our volunteers have one case that they monitor. And we've been able to develop a really good relationships with Family Treatment Court. And so, that is where really the need is, because especially with COVID, drug addiction has skyrocketed so children are being removed. So, you know, that's what the program is. We've been in existence in Orange County since 1982. I recently took Ulster County. I've had it now for like three or four years, and we're working on developing the volunteer, you know, group of volunteers. We had our training all scheduled in our nice new training room and COVID hit. So, we are in the process of now doing it virtually, which is the first time ever to be doing the CASA training virtually, but they visit their families through Zoom and so we've continued to do what we needed to do through COVID. But it is a, it is a challenge, as we all know. But CASA is in three counties, but we are, we're housed for Ulster County in Kingston and we take care of any family throughout Ulster County. Monitoring them, you know, doing whatever we need to do.

A lot of times, you know, the families are struggling, really struggling with, you know, they have to be here, they have to be there. So, a volunteer can help them organize their, their schedule. Sometimes they don't even know how to do that because, you know, the family's dysfunctional to begin with, they've had their children removed. So, the volunteer is the constant in the child's life because caseworkers change, therapists change, teachers change. Everybody's changing. Sometimes they're in foster... two or three different foster homes. The counselor follows the case right to the end, until there's, you know, either they're returned to family, or they're put up for adoption. So, they follow through permanency. So, I think that's the most important role that our CASA volunteers have and that is our program.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, any questions? So Donna, I have one. How many families in a given year are, are, are part of your program?

Donna Ramlow: Ulster, right now, it's kind of low, because a lot of them, the case is closed and the courts have not been, you know, in full swing. But we can usually handle 10 to 15 cases, which is a family. Some may have, you know, I have a case in Sullivan County that has six children. So you know, so it could be it could be just about anything.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, any other questions? Okay, Donna, thank you so much for your time. Appreciate it.

Donna Ramlow: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, next we have Family Of Woodstock: Michael Berg.

Michael Berg: Hello, everybody.

Chairwoman Archer: Hello.

Michael Berg: Thank you for your time. I'm a little bit confused because normally this would only be a discussion about one contract. That, the agency does not receive a contract from the County for its services globally. It has a large number of contracts, many with various departments: Mental Health, DSS, Probation. This contract relates to a service that we provide which is authorized and mandated by the Family Court, so I'm not quite sure why it's a Legislative item, as opposed to an item that the County pays for as part of its normal paying for services that the County is responsible for. It doesn't matter. I mean, as long as we can get enough money to provide the service, but it just doesn't seem to be consistent with the other contracts that have been discussed tonight.

Chairwoman Archer: Oh, that's an excellent point.

Michael Berg: Representative Bartels brought this up in previous years.

Chairwoman Archer: And have we gone back to, I mean, where else would this program sit?

Michael Berg: Wherever the Family Court, it could be DSS. It could be... I would not be the most expert on the County's structure, but it's definitely, it's definitely part of the same services that are provided largely by the DSS.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay. Legislator, Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: Yeah, well, when this subject, when I raised this issue during the last budget cycle, I had a subsequent conversation with Commissioner Iapoce and I think he might have even come to committee briefly. But in my conversation with him, he expressed concern potentially about the possibility of it sitting in Social Services because of the nature of the services, and the nature of the impression of a social, social worker, a Social Services intervention. But I think that there was a certain amount of agreement that it needs to... it needs to live somewhere else in the County, not in Legislative Programs. I mean, it doesn't, doesn't strike me as a Legislative Program at all. So, I don't know. It's, I'm confused why we're here again, because I feel like we should try to, we should talk to the Executive to determine where this should go and to make sure that they're having the correct conversations. Because and maybe, maybe Michael, you could talk a little bit, my understanding is the services, services are mandated, so we're going to... the County's going to cover them, they're going to do them regardless, but the... maybe Family of Woodstock's portion of the services first came about in a budget cycle, where we weren't funding Family to do it, we were doing it in house.

Michael Berg: It could be.

Legislator Bartels: And there was a request for, to fund Family because Family, the work that you're doing, particularly as it relates to this, is with a specialized community and affording the opportunity for people not to, to be in a more comfortable environment in the situation that they're in versus having to go somewhere else in the County. Whereas if the if the County were doing it, if the County and County workers were doing it, there might be more disruption to people's lives. That's, there's, I'm oversimplifying, but either way, yeah, either way, I feel like this is this isn't something that should be running through the Legislature. I mean, we it's not even something that we could, we can evaluate against what else is happening in the County. So, I think we should find the correct place to have this conversation in this budget cycle because it's a valuable service that you provide, absolutely.

Michael Berg: Thank you.

Legislator Bartels: It's just, we're not... it shouldn't, it shouldn't also, it shouldn't be at an annual risk of Legislative will. Certainly, the entire budget is an annual risk of the Legislative will, because we can vote any line item up or down as we're approving the budget. But, I don't, I think that this, this needs to be redirected to the correct department after a conversation with the Executive and Executive's Office.

Chairwoman Archer: So why don't we schedule that and then we'll come back to Michael with the outcome of that meeting. So that...

Michael Berg: I will share that one of the things that I think, Tracey you're sort of referring to is we'll do these meetings on Sunday, we'll do them over the weekend. A lot of times parents travel a long distance, we'll give extended hours because of parents not going to be able to see their non-custodial child and the non-custodial parent is not going to see their child for six or eight weeks in some cases, because of COVID. There was a real loss of connection and this is really important stuff. I mean, even though it's the non-custodial parent, it's still the parent of that child. And so, we're very committed to the service and we're doing it out of the hodge center because it allows us more resources, and to work on the weekends as well. We did have a situation where a non-custodial parent would not leave and so, we'd made it a rule that we have two staff on site to protect the individuals involved. But other than that, the program is run very well and we're very committed to it.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay. All right. So, Legislator Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: Can I just ask, ask a question just because you're, this is jogging my memory from the, from last year's conversation. In a normal circumstance, or if, if it weren't through the County and Family of Woodstock, would the non-custodial parent normally have to pay for this supervision or...?

Michael Berg: We don't charge.

Legislator Bartels: No, I know you don't charge but I'm saying...

Michael Berg: Nobody is putting that, that that financial burden on, on the non-custodial parent. The one thing I would say, though, is that this relationship is a very important one and I would hate to see a parent not be able to see their child because they couldn't pay.

Legislator Bartels: Right.

Michael Berg: Some of the people we serve a very poor, but still they're the parents of the children.

Legislator Bartels: No, I'm not, I'm not I'm not asking that and I'm not making a judgment about that. I'm asking that, in a norm... in... if, if Fam-, if the County weren't providing the coverage for this service, would the non-custodial parent be billed?

Michael Berg: Oh, I don't think we would, we would bill them. I don't know how we would provide the service. We're doing an incredible amount of fundraising to keep the services that we have open and now with the cuts that we've taken, it's going to be even more. But we do not generally charge people for the kind of service that we provide and I, I just don't see us doing that. The County is not investing a very large amount of money in this service. It's only this year going to be \$20,000. I think we try to keep it as... I mean, we're only charging for staff time. We want to keep it as low as cost so that people can see their children.

Legislator Bartels: And can... I'm sorry if I can just ask one more. And can you remind me how many that 20,000 covers about how, many non-custodial visits?

Michael Berg: It's been over 90 sessions, we've had 22 families with 33 kids. It was closed for about two and a half months, starting in March, but it's operating fully now. I expect that in a normal year, we would serve probably 160 sessions, 180 sessions. It, It, it got cut some this year. And, and I have to say, there is resistance on the part of some of the, of the custodial parents to have the visits. You know, they're using COVID as an issue and it may well be for some, but it's also a way of resisting the non-custodial parent being allowed to see the child.

Chairwoman Archer: Legislator Gavaris.

Legislator Gavaris: So, I have two questions. One is just to sort of ask what Legislator Bartels had asked. So, let me ask it a little differently. If the County didn't put up the money and Family of Woodstock didn't exist, what would then happen for a non-custodial parent? Would they have to pay for a service?

Michael Berg: I think that the County is obligated to provide this service.

Legislator Gavaris: Okay.

Michael Berg: I don't know whether the County could say we will only provide it if you pay the cost of it. I am not expert on that. I don't know.

Legislator Gavaris: Okay, so that was my second question because you said in the beginning were mandated or required, and I forget which term you used, to offer the service. So, I was going ask if you could elaborate on what the requirement is and where we go with that because...

Michael Berg: If the court judge authorizes the visit, we will have to provide that visit, we will try and provide enough visits so that there is, continues to be a relationship between the non-custodial parent and the child.

Legislator Gavaris: But that's the services you offer. My question is what is the legal requirement for the County to perform it? And, and I'm not arguing that we shouldn't be doing. I'm just asking the question because, I agree with Legislator Bartels, this probably should have been resolved last year and put into this year's budget because if this is not a discretionary expense, then it needs to be part of the regular budget and it's not something we're doing because we feel, as the Legislature, we want to offer to the County residents. So, where... how... do you know if there is an actual legal requirement to offer this service?

Michael Berg: I believe that it is the requirement of the Family Court to provide access to children for non-custodial parents. I don't know whether you can charge for that service but I believe that the service is a mandated service.

Legislator Gavaris: Okay.

Chairwoman Archer: Legislator Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: Yeah, I think we'll have to revisit that with Commissioner Iopoce because I recall, and I mean, I could be wrong, but I recall that having the conversation, as it related to the non-custodial parent, having to pay in the, in the circumstance... the way that you posed the question more accurately than I did, Legislator Gavaris... in the absence of Family of Woodstock, or County funding, for those, there are absolutely cases where a family has means and provides for the supervision. And I recall Commissioner Iopoce telling me that sometimes it's just resolved internally, where they agree that the supervision is going to be provided by an extended family member or someone else. It doesn't have to be a court... an appointed person or a third party, it's someone that's agreed upon. But there are some very contentious situations, where they can't agree, where the two parents cannot reach any consensus about who's going to supervise and then you have to go outside and typically, you would have to pay for that service. And there are families with means and those without. So, I recall that it, that it really does come down to an issue of deciding whether or not this is something to spend the money on. And I... it sounds like a very valuable service to me. I mean, I think we're serving people who couldn't otherwise necessarily afford to provide for that and I would hate to know that even one child didn't get to see their non-custodial parent because that parent couldn't afford a supervision in a, in a custodial dispute with another parent. I mean, it becomes very, very complicated, I suppose. But I would like to have a conversation again with Commissioner Iapoce, and then with the Executive's Office to figure out where this, where this makes most sense. I mean, this is now a service that we, the County, have been providing through Family of Woodstock for a number of years. It's become something I think that that is relied upon, to a certain degree. So, we certainly should, I think we need to avail ourselves of the information and then make some decisions.

Michael Berg: I would just acknowledge that in a lot of the circumstances where we provide this service, there is a significant tension between the two parents. Sometimes there's a history of domestic violence, but even when there's not, it's an effort to get them to collaborate and coordinate.

Legislator Bartels: Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Thanks. Okay. Any other questions? Okay, thank you very much.

Michael Berg: Thank you. Have a good night. Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Thank you. Next, we have Awareness: Marie Shultis.

Marie Shultis: Yes, hi, how are you?

Legislator Archer: Fine. How are you?

Marie Shultis: Okay. Thank you all for all the time you take to do this. It doesn't go unnoticed. So, I'm wondering, I put together some quotes from participants in the past that have written letters and I thought that the time may be better taken if I could just screen share, I did send it to the Ways and Means Committee members so you would have it in your email but I can certainly share it here, and let you kind of hear from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

Legislator Archer: Okay, Natalie, are you...

Natalie Kelder: Give me one second, Marie. I was not prepared, and I will bring that up.

Marie Shultis: Oh, if you want to just hit screen share, I can share it on mine, whichever is easier. But you just have to give me permission to share the screen. So, you can let me know when you're ready but I will say that it's had the opposite effect with the COVID with our organization. Because it's opened up an opportunity for more people to be able to get help and for more past volunteers to help. So, if you guys want to start reading and then let me know when you....

Natalie Kelder: This was distributed to everyone's emails, just so you know that.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, why don't.... instead of having us read this, if we already have it, we can take a look at it, Marie. So, if you could just help us by kind of telling us what you've learned through COVID this year, how it's impacted your program, how many folks you've delivered the program to... that could be real helpful because I want to use our time productively here. Everybody can go back and read this. But if you could just kind of give us an overview that would be helpful.

Marie Shultis: Okay, I just kind of feel everybody's so busy. I don't know how much time everyone is going to have to read. So if you don't mind, I'll just read the first one just to kind of give you an idea and then I'll go into the rest if that's all right.

Chairwoman Archer: Great.

Marie Shultis: Okay. "So in high school, you usually have your blinders on, like a horse attached to a stagecoach. You feel so alone, but little do you know, there's someone standing right there next to you. Marie took my blinders off. Therapists, psychiatrists, doctors, I've been to them all. Stop drinking. Take your meds. Don't smoke. Hold it together. Marie was different. The booklets we'd fill out at every meeting reflected all of my decisions, laid them out in front of me, and let me examine them. She didn't shove demands in my ears and looked surprised when I didn't listen. She handed me my mistakes with open ears and let me make the next move. I began to see week to week how terribly often I was drinking. Marie's program allowed for the only person who could actually change me to do just that. And I changed me. I'm over a year sober. And that wouldn't have happened without her. She didn't try to counsel me or persuade me, she made me realize how badly out of hand I was and let me fix things myself. Teenagers hate being told what to do, which is why this program works. She didn't sit me down and try to force me to stop drinking, she made me realize I had an issue and gave me the resources to fix it and I hope just opportunity to help more kids." So I tried to select different situations so that through their words, you could see the different aspects of what Awareness does, because I feel like it's a really hard thing for people to wrap their head around because even the kids who come they don't expect that. They expect you know that they're going to be talked to in the same way they are and in this non-judgmental atmosphere, it really gives them the opportunity to self-reflect and change their own behaviors. And that's what we say. So, at the

bottom of that, I've outlined what the Awareness program does. So, did you want to ask me specific questions? Or do you want me to just...

Chairwoman Archer: Well, I think it's important for you to share how you know, what your program does, how it reaches these kids, how many kids you're servicing across the County. So, we understand how the money is used to support individuals in Ulster County.

Marie Shultis: I did include a spreadsheet that broke down 2019 and 2020 so far with the different events, how many contacts were made. Would you want to have her put that on the screen?

Chairwoman Archer: Well, we have it, we have it in our OneDrive. We have all that information.

Marie Shultis: Okay, so last year, between all of the programs that we did, we reached 2,141 contacts and so far this year, we have 875, we were able to not miss a beat as well when COVID hit because we immediately started online. So, we've had an online program going. Started out two times a week since last March and now we're up to like three, sometimes four meetings a week. We are, as I said, able to reach a lot more kids and for instance, [barking dog] I'm sorry. Stop. For instance, I have a 27-year-old that that now lives in Oregon who came to us when he was 17 and then he stayed and volunteered with us for a number of years and now he's back helping lead meetings, virtually. As well as, we have a 25-year-old that completed the program two years ago, he is now back helping. I mean, there's like a countless list. So, it's been incredible for us in that respect. The court actually requested that we stay online because so many times people will say they can't come to the program because it's the physical having to get to the site and the only thing that we are trying to work out that's a challenge is when participants usually come they have a program guide and the peer leaders have a leader guide. So, trying to figure that out digitally is the challenge right now because at this point, the courts were closed, so, we didn't get the referrals that we usually would have but we are working with several new people and one of the things that I was really happy to see was that even after the first meeting, when we were signing out the, for the person that was on the meeting that had just come for the first time through the virtual, said he had never opened up like that before with the other peers that were on the call so, it shows me that we can get that same connection that we had in person, even without pizza, in you know, in the virtual.

Chairwoman Archer: So you said you're getting referrals from the courts. Who else? But now you're getting others. Who else are you getting referrals from now?

Marie Shultis: Well, we had to finish a bunch of them that were already in the program, like live through the virtual, but so, I didn't really have a way to see if it would work. So, I get attorneys... from lawyers, from different people that have been in the program, will refer other people when they think they need help. So, basically that's what the people that we're helping right now.

Chairwoman Archer: Great. Legislator Bartels

Legislator Bartels: So I was just going to ask, I mean, because you're virtual now, then I assume your expenses, because there's no pizza, have you seen an overall reduction in your expenses?

Marie Shultis: Yes. In that respect, but the, the other tricky part is the, with the virtual, for instance, if you're going to put youth in breakout rooms, like, if I'm in a room and I have several leaders leading, and I'm there to visual, to go around and, you know, make sure, see what's going on. So, here I put them in breakout rooms. So, I need a different computer to have on each breakout room, to be able to watch the rooms. So, right now, we haven't been inundated with referrals because of the courts being closed. So, that's one of my challenges that I'm trying to figure out how to do that, as well as I'm going have to figure out how I can, instead of them having the book to write in, how can I get the data and keep track of it. Right now I'm typing it all out but I wouldn't be able to do that, obviously, if we had, you know, a large amount of people. So I've been doing a lot of investigating into what that's going to look like. So it is hard right now to say, if we were to stay online due to COVID, how much, you know, we would need?

Legislator Bartels: Can I just ask a follow up?

Chairwoman Archer: Please.

Legislator Bartels: Are you in terms of when you talk about the breakout rooms, are you talking about in Zoom, in Zoom you're doing breakout rooms?

Marie Shultis: Yes.

Legislator Bartels: But are you, are the, the kids, the leaders in a physical space with you when you say you're you're looking at them, are you at, you are in a physical space with the leaders and the leaders each have a computer or you're, it's all virtual?

Marie Shultis: No, we're all, everybody's virtual. So like we are right now, right now...

Legislator Bartels: Right.

Marie Shultis: ...we're all in the same place. But in the moving forward, what we have happened since we have an eight week program, and not everybody's start, not everybody, you know, you don't get like 10 people realistically that are going to come every single week and be on the same week. So in the past, somebody misses a week, then they're on week two, while someone else is on week three. So we've been able to have a leader work with each person in each week. So that's why if you had three people and they were in different weeks, you would need to put them in different breakout rooms and be able to monitor what's going on.

Legislator Bartels: And in your, in your frontline page, in the presentation, in the backup materials, in, it said that your program materials were 4,800. What is that attributed to?

Marie Shultis: Program materials are our guides, both the leader and the participant have a guide that they fill out. So that was what that was attributing to. Not knowing if, you know, if we

have to stay on line, I'm gonna have to figure out how I can provide that and be able to get the data. And I don't know what that could cost.

Legislator Bartels: But when you say, when you say, so the guides cost 4800? I'm just confused. What is the 4800 for?

Marie Shultis: Well between the materials that they use, which are, they have a leader and a program guide. So that could be like 2,000 dollars for 100. And also, we've been running a prevention group. We've been running a group after school in New Paltz, which we did provide the eight week program when it was needed, but it hasn't been needed this year. So we actually have three different groups that are working on, we have a middle school program, if you look at the end of, the end of the email that I sent, we have a online school wellness promotion and social skill building for after school, for the high school group. We just started up, we paired up with the Sandy Hook and we're doing a Start With Hello. So we've just reached out and our, we had had a connection activity we were planning to do which consisted of beads where the kids would make their own name or a hobby with, an, with peers in a way that they could all get to know each other. So one of the high school students suggested that we could reach out through, like the middle school is having an open house, and, to get the materials so that they could all then come on zoom and do that in a breakout room together. And make it kind of like where you see pen pals of the past, it would kind of be like a social media pal where they could reach out each day and say something kind and stay connected with those kids. And also this Start With Hello is just such a simple concept of teaching kids empathy and how to reach out whether it's virtual or in person on how to care about each other and really make a difference in their lives right now. Also, we have the, we're looking to schedule, we would have already had two health classes in Ellenville, and New Paltz for two days each, where we would have went in and spoke with peers on recovery and our Licensed Mental Health Counselor but due to COVID, we had to stop that and we're in the middle of trying to set it up virtually for the second part of the year. We've been doing a lot of online creative arts and wellness activities, videos, and art projects. We did a Black Lives Matter video.

Chairwoman Archer: So Marie, may I ask a question regarding the guides? I get that there's a leader guide and then there's an individual guide. Is, is the guide for the program participant, is it a guide that poses questions and it's almost like a diary that they have to enter information into. I'm, I'm trying to understand what the guide is and...

Marie Shultis: The guide is...

Chairwoman Archer: Could it not be automated just like, you know, online? Do they not have online access?

Marie Shultis: Well, that's what we're working on. It's just a matter of being able to fill it out online. And it's conf-, it's confidential information like it's for them and it's used as a talking point, if they want to share as a group, like we'll talk about peer pressure. And we'll talk about like I, I and you statements, like different things, but it's, you know,

Chairwoman Archer: But it's their thoughts. It's almost like, it's almost like a personal diary.

Marie Shultis: It's like a worksheet. It's like worksheets that initiate discussion. So it's not really a diary. We're not like asking them to go into writing about their deepest feelings. It's more.

Chairwoman Archer: Alright. Trace.

Legislator Bartels: Well, John can go first, if you want because I already went.

Chairwoman Archer: I'm sorry. I didn't see you, John. Legislative Gavaris.

Legislator Gavaris: So two things: In terms of online access for the, the booklet, I think not knowing what the, what your needs are, Google Docs would be the free way to put that up there. It's only shareable with those who you allow them to share it. So would be confidential. You send, you know, you set the security settings that it's only those who share the link with and it's still fillable, and then you can view it where you are, and they would view it on there and then any changes made would be seen by both. So that's one option, I would say is a free way to get away with doing the booklet. The other thing you mentioned about the multiple, and I'm assuming what you're saying is you need to be able to monitor multiple zoom meetings at the same time, because they're in different workshops. Correct?

Marie Shultis: Correct.

Legislator Gavaris: So I'm no IT expert, but I know some little bit of it stuff. What if you have somebody who does know it fairly well, it's called a virtual computer, essentially, it creates a computer within a computer. And you can view multiple zoom accounts, because essentially, you turn your computer into exponentially more computers.

Marie Shultis: Interesting.

Legislator Gavaris: So I don't know how that set up. I don't know how that works. But I know it has that capability. It's called a virtual machine or a virtual computer.

Marie Shultis: Yeah, I've been doing research and I have some people that work at colleges researching. So I am just in that gathering stage on all this while trying to keep up with everything else.

Chairwoman Archer: All right. Any other questions? Legislator Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: I just, in looking at, I just got, you sent this to us today. But the spreadsheet, one of the discrepancies in terms of the number of connections that you've made, one of the significant discrepancies is you have listed in 19, Highland entire school 592 connections, and then that's TBD, and 20 and I'm assuming that's because of COVID, but what, so what were those 592 connections? Was that just one presentation to the school?

Marie Shultis: We went, we went into the school for two days, and they brought every classroom into either the library or the, I can't think of the name, where they have, you know, the stage.

Legislator Bartels: Auditorium?

Marie Shultis: Yes. So depending on how big the group was, and we had about between, probably six, seven youth speakers in each session. So...

Legislator Bartels: And that was the middle or the high school?

Marie Shultis: No, the high school. Two full days, we saw every single grade level.

Legislator Bartels: Wow. Okay.

Marie Shultis: Yeah. It was incredible.

Chairwoman Archer: All right. Any other questions? All right. Marie, thank you so much for your time today. Appreciate it.

Marie Shultis: Thank you all. I really appreciate your time as well and I hope you have a good weekend after.

Chairwoman Archer: Thank you. You too. Okay, Mid-Hudson Library Association, and it's now Ulster County Library Association.

Margie Menard: Yes, thank you. I'm Margie Menard, and I'm here speaking on behalf of the Ulster County Library Association. The Ulster County Library Association is the consortium of the 21 public libraries that serve Ulster County. We have the privilege of offering the full range of library services to the 180,000 residents of Ulster County of all ages all walks of life. A few decades ago, my my Ulster County Library forebears decided that a very effective and efficient way for us to serve the residents of Ulster County was to create this association and to provide a basic level of core services resulting from shared funding and the Ulster County Legislature has generally supported those core services ever since. The shared services have been evolved over the years. You know, they began with sort of a core collection of books that every library had to, so that every person in the county had access to the same information, the same materials. About 10 or 12 years ago, it evolved into what it is now and it's this suite of digital resources that every resident in Ulster County has equal access to with their library cards. So whether you are in Pine hill or crags more, or Kingston, you have absolutely the same access to all the same resources as anyone else in the County as long as you have your library card, and library cards are free. So you have all, we've presented you with a very detailed budget of exactly what the resources are and they are things like digital magazines, streaming video, ebooks, and audio books. And you know, one of the items that you'll see on your budget is, is called Library Aware and Kara Lester, who is with us this evening, she's the director of the West Hurley Public Library, as well as the treasurer and webmaster for the Ulster County Library Association, used one of those resources, used library were to create this infographic that Natalie is sharing with you right now. And that

shows the change that we're seeing in the use of those digital resources, specifically, when library buildings had to close as a result of COVID. And, you know, this, this suite of digital resources allowed us to, you know, strongly continue our library services to our communities online. And you can see that, you know, the the increase in ebooks and audiobooks just steadily climbing from 2018 to 2019, to 2020. And a big thing this year is that we're seeing increases in our streaming video services. Our Canopy Services have increased to, you know, over 22,000 views from January to September this year. And another service that we offer is Acorn TV and you see that 1,130. What those equal is 1,130 weeks of access for streaming video. And we've, we, we're watching this. We're seeing the increase in those services and we're matching our collection accordingly. On the lower left side of that infographic, you'll see the change, or, or the, our current collection. That shared ebook collection includes 15,436 titles, ebook titles, and along with those titles we have 27,292 copies. So in some cases, if you're looking for a best seller, or James Patterson, we've bought multiple copies of those books to allow plenty of access. The same for e-audiobooks. We have over 5,000 individual titles, but we have almost 11,000 copies of those titles. So, you know, this is not a new, this is not a new service that we're providing. But it seemed very prescient during the the COVID shutdown that we were able to, you know, continue to serve our communities very, very well. And now we're seeing this shift, as you all are, for distance learning, some families have shifted to homeschooling. And we again are shifting our services that we're providing the Ulster County Libraries this year, in the last quarter of the year, have begun offering something called Tutor.com, which is live one-on-one tutoring for students. And we're seeing a real excitement about that from students ages kindergarten through early college, as well as their parents who are sort of becoming, you know, ancillary educators in their own homes, and having to support their kids education. We're looking forward to providing that we've, we, we're actually already starting to provide that and next year, we're asking for Legislative funding support, to continue to provide that into the new year. We've, the Libraries were able to do it this year, because we've shifted around some funding from things like in-person programming that we were not able to provide and some other areas of, of money in our budgets, and we put that towards Tutor.com, but next year, we're going to be you know, back into a higher level of service again, so we're looking for some Legislative support for those services. I guess, I did want to introduce both Kara, who is with us, and Stuart Auchincloss, who is a long time trustee of the Mid-Hudson Library System and Ulster County, Ulster County's voice on the Mid-Hudson Library System. And the Mid-Hudson Library System consists of five different counties and 66 member libraries and Stuart is a longtime advocate and trustee of the system. So, you know, like I said, this is an ongoing service that we're providing. We're, we're delighted that we've been able to provide these digital resources and it's really very important that we receive Legislative funding, because no library regardless of the size, you know, and we range from Craigsmore to Kingston, none of us would be able to provide this level of service digitally without the shared funding to provide us this economy of scale. We were able, you know, just a quick example of that is when we were all looking at Tutor.com earlier this year, I got a quote for just Kingston of 4,000 dollars to provide that service, and we're going to be able to provide it county-wide for 13,000 dollars so there really are economies when we take this shared funding and spend it together.

Chairwoman Archer: So that's a live tutoring. Is, is that so, is that, for that 13,000 is it X number of sessions?

Margie Menard: It's x number of hours. What we're going to be able to provide is seven hours a day, seven days a week. So from 2pm to 9pm. Any resident of Ulster County with their library card is going to be able to log on to this service, and meet face-to-face with a live tutor. And they can, they can engage however they want either by voice or by chat or by video. There's shareable screens and whiteboards and tools that they can use. It's really an amazing service. And in the off hours between, you know, that's from two to 9pm. But in the off hours, there's a drop off service where people can submit a paper for review and, and feedback or, you know, study guides that they can gain access to and sample tests, that kind of thing.

Chairwoman Archer: Any other questions? Legislative Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: I just want to acknowledge just how important these resources are. I mean, I think that we all just know intuitively, especially during COVID, where people found themselves unable to access their libraries in person, that all the services that we helped to fund were still accessible. Of course, there's the issue, which is a different issue to tackle but about accessibility to computers at you know, in, in the community, which isn't, which isn't a library issue. It's something that we have to we have to tackle on other levels. But I can tell you just personally, Legislator Peter Criswell told me about Canopy. Even though I'm a regular, and avid user of my library. My daughter, her favorite thing to do in the world is to read and she's missed the library. And I was completely blown away with my background in filmmaking with Canopy's offerings. I cannot believe it's free and available with just my library card. So, and, and the other thing I just want to acknowledge is, of all, of all the things that, you know, we fund, this is something that truly is available to each and every one of our constituents equally. It's not, it's not any community centric. If you have a library card, and you can get it for free, even now, in the COVID environment. You can get a library card if you don't have one, you can access all of these things. So I think the, the main thing is about the outreach to let people know that all of these, all of these services exists and are available for free because, to, to our constituents. So I feel very strongly about supporting this and I'm grateful for all that you do. I know that in most communities, the library's, you know, the center and the heart of the community. It's a place where people go to to gather and to do more than just go and grab a book and leave and I'm, I'm thrilled and proud and happy about my own library. But that's each and every community has that so thank you for all that you do.

Margie Menard: Thank you for the support. You know, and along the same lines, about, about our streaming video. It seems like, you know, entertainment and perhaps something that is not integral to people's lives. But as, as Legislator Bartels was saying, the quality of this video is very high. There's a lot of children's, excellent children's programming. There's documentaries. And, you know, I find myself one of the people who recently is a cord cutter. I cancelled my cable subscription as a cost savings and I did it, you know, I'm one of the more fortunate ones. I was sort of reevaluating my budget and I said "maybe I should do this", but some people have to do that some people are looking at their budgets and saying we just don't have the extra, however much, a month to pay for this service. So you know, as a, as a way of sort of meeting that need, because we do, everyone does have a need for entertainment, and edification, and education, the libraries are providing the service, and we can do it cost effectively, in a way that individual families and individual libraries cannot.

Chairwoman Archer: Well, and now also, even Spectrum offers 10 dollar monthly internet access, and really, between that and the library card. You know, regardless, you know, if you're at that income level, where affordability is an issue, there are options. So I think we need to figure out how to advance that. Legislator Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: I just had another question. Just in looking at the list, I recall that the library used to, I'm gonna say it wrong, but used to offer access to basically, it was like a family history, a lineage service?

Margie Menard: Yeah.

Legislator Bartels: I don't know what it was called.

Margie Menard: It was called Ancestry.com and it's a genealogy research database. We will be providing that through August of next year and we may find a way to provide that, at least some of the libraries, but we had to sort of reevaluate the, the needs in the community and what we were going to be able to offer, so we made the tough decision that next August, we would not probably be renewing that service, unless we find money for it elsewhere, so that we could provide something like Tutor.com that really needs an immediate and, and strong need.

Legislator Bartels: Absolutely. How much was Ancestry.com? And are you able to monitor the usage of these different services? Do you get feedback from the organization?

Margie Menard: We do. And I'm gonna ask Kara to unmute and share here. Kara can you give the dollar numbers for Ancestry?

Kara Lustiber: It was an, Ancestry was a suite so it included Ancestry, which was at the time, we purchased, only available within libraries. Then it was Fold Three, which was a military database available from home, and Heritage Quest, which is a slimmed down version of Ancestry, but that was available from home. One of the problems we've had, and it was a strong consideration when we decided to go with, look at other products, is we haven't been able to get any good usage statistics out of, out of the company. So we weren't able to prove to ourselves or to any funders how well that this, this was being used. Ancestry right now is being offered, they decided to open it up. So that's is available from home, at least until the end of the year. So if you want to use it, you know, if you have an itch, now's the time.

Legislator Bartels: And how much was the the suite?

Kara Lustiber: It was 13,000 for the suite.

Margie Menard: So there wasn't-, it was an equal match between Ancestry and Tutor.

Kara Lustiber: Tutor.

Legislator Bartels: Well, I also appreciate that you are making those evaluations and doing that work internally to, to look both at usage and needs.

Margie Menard: Well, you know, as Kara said, we couldn't prove it to ourselves and that's something that we in Libraries do all the time. We look at what we're offering, we try to decide how it's being used, are we still meeting the need in our community, because, you know, we've been around as Libraries for a long time and the needs have changed and as you said, you know, we've become meeting spaces and program providers, as well as books and videos, and everything else. So we're constantly evaluating our services and this was just one way to do that.

Chairwoman Archer: Great. Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you so much. Appreciate all the information.

Margie Menard: Thank you.

Kara Lustiber: Thank you.

Chairwoman Archer: Alrighty. Can we move on to the Sawkill Fire Company: David Hoffman. I believe David, you're here to share your Fire Company's insights. Hello, David? David, we're not hearing you. So I see that the mute is off. Maybe it is your computer volume you might want to check.

Deputy Clerk of the Legislature - Finance Feaster: David has expressed that he's had some computer issues tonight.

Chairwoman Archer: So do we want to reschedule David to next month?

Deputy Clerk of the Legislature - Finance Feaster: We could move on to the next and see how it goes.

Chairwoman Archer: Well, that, David was the last one.

Deputy Clerk of the Legislature - Finance Feaster: Oh, he's gone?

Chairwoman Archer: No, he's still there. Legislative Bartels.

Legislator Bartels: If, if he's on a phone, didn't someone yesterday at the session, say you have to star...

Chairwoman Archer: Six. Star six to unmute it.

Legislator Bartels: And we might be able to hear him. Something like that.

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: I don't think he's on a phone but he said he got kicked out several times.

Chairwoman Archer: Ah, so his service may...

Legislator Gavaris: If he can hear us, can we give him the phone number and the meeting code to call in and just do it over the phone?

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: He has that. I was emailing him during the meeting. I'm going to message him. And David, if you can hear this, please message me back.

Legislator Cahill: Hi Chairman Archer, this is Brian. Just wanted to also, something that we run into work quite a bit, our people accidentally turn their microphone off with their function keys on their laptops.

Chairwoman Archer: Right.

Legislator Cahill: That's another possibility on my product. It's the F4 key, but it may be another one on a different product. I'm not sure.

Chairwoman Archer: Okay, why don't we? Did you hear back from him? Okay. All right. Why don't we try and schedule them for the next meeting, and hopefully between now and then we can get this sorted out or at least even prepared to call in so we can walk so he can walk through his proposal.

Legislative Financial Analyst Kelder: Sounds good.

Chairwoman Archer: I'm sorry, David, that we weren't able to meet with you tonight. But we'll have Natalie get back to you with information about our next meeting and hopefully you can join us then. And we promise we won't make you wait the whole meeting to get you on. So I apologize. We had a long list today. Legislator Cahill, is that okay with you?

Legislator Cahill: Yeah, I guess. You know, Mr. Hoffman isn't communicating back. So I guess we really don't have much of a choice here. Right?

Chairwoman Archer: Right. We will, we'll make sure we try and help him prepare, so...

Legislator Cahill: Yeah, that's great. Okay, I'll reach out to them to see if we can, you know, make sure we have a secondary backup for the next time in case...

Chairwoman Archer: Great, thank you...

Legislator Cahill: Yep.

Chairwoman Archer: Legislator Cahill. Okay. Anybody else have anything before we close the meeting? Okay, I'll take a motion to adjourn.

Legislator Gavaris: Motion.

Chairwoman Archer: All in favor.

Legislator Bartels: Aye.

Chairwoman Archer: Thank you for your time tonight, everybody. I appreciate it. Good night.

Legislator Bartels: Goodnight.