

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 26, 2015**

**** NOT APPROVED ****

Committee Members Present: K. LaForge, D. Pullen, S. Burt, D. Decker, C. Jessup, T. O'Grady, C. Crandall

Others Present: M. Alger, L. Ballengee, H. Budinger, P. Curran, D. Fanton, K. Graves, D. Healy, T. Hopkins, J. Luckey, T. Miner, D. Rahr, C. Santora

Media Present: No media present

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m. by Human Services Committee Chairman Kevin LaForge.

Health Department

Health Department Director Lori Ballengee told the Committee that per the loss of the contract with Cooperative Extension for WIC, Cancer Services, Emergency Preparedness, and the Family Planning Educator, she had, at the behest of Legislator Decker, investigated other agencies in order to maintain the programs as well as retain the affected personnel. Ms. Ballengee entered into discussion with Jones Memorial Hospital (Wellsville), Ardent Solutions (formerly Allegany/Western Steuben Rural Health Network), and Olean General Hospital. Ms. Ballengee told the Committee that Jones Memorial Hospital was not interested. Hospital CEO Eva Benedict felt that the WIC Program does not meet the hospital's mission, and would defer to Ardent Solutions. She added that Jones would assist with the Cancer Services Program from the medical/clinical aspect if Ardent Solutions were chosen. Ardent Solutions, she said, offers benefits that are not as good as the benefits currently enjoyed by the employees. There is no retirement plan, so employees would need to establish and pay for retirement on their own. Ardent would subcontract the staff to DOH which would maintain the program which is similar to the set-up with Cornell. Ardent wants 33 percent for the fringe package which does not include retirement, and staff would have to pay for some things they don't now. Ardent also wants 10 percent for administrative overhead which amounts to \$47,291 annually. That would be their cost to administer the programs. Ms. Ballengee went on to say that her major concern with Ardent Solutions is that no one on its staff has a medical/clinical background and some of the programs are truly medical/clinical, that, and no retirement offerings are Ms. Ballengee's main concerns with Ardent Solutions. Olean General Hospital is asking for a 25 percent fringe rate which would save about 16 percent over the Ardent plan. OGH CEO Tim Finan told Ms. Ballengee he didn't think there would be any administrative overhead, but if there were, it would be minimal. Ms. Ballengee did not know what "minimal" might mean. However, she said, if we contracted with one of these agencies, the contract could be terminated at any time, leaving us in the same boat we find ourselves in currently. When asked about looking into the Cuba Hospital, Ms. Ballengee noted that Cuba Hospital has a lot of staffing issues, so she felt it best not to approach them. Ms. Ballengee said her strong preference is to retain the staff as County staff so we have control over the contract. She added that the DOH worked really hard to ensure that retaining the staff would not use County tax dollars, even with 46.32 percent fringe package, we will be able to absorb that in the grant monies. If we don't take on this on, many of the dedicated employees, some of whom have been with these programs since their inception, stand to lose sick time, etc. Wherever they end up (if not in the County) they will start at "0," that is no sick time, possibly no retirement, etc. She added they are not complaining because they

are grateful to continue to have jobs, but it seems wrong to reward such dedication with a reduced fringe packages, etc. Legislator LaForge asked Ms. Ballengee if, in her opinion, internalizing the program will give the County the best chance for success in future grant funding vs. something going wrong with one of these other options. Ms. Ballengee said that we have had WIC over 15 years and Cancer Services grants well over 20 years, and they have been very successful. The audits have been exceptional and the number of participants in WIC is higher than it has ever been. She added that these two programs in particular truly save lives. Legislator Decker said his only reservation is that it's grant money, so it is still taxpayers' dollars supporting these programs. Ms. Ballengee said that the new five-year block grant which will begin October 1, 2015, has already budgeted for the 46.32 fringe amount, and since we are the only ones who applied, we will certainly get the grant. The question arose whether these staff, many of whom are nervous about having to test for their positions, could be grandfathered in. However, that is not an option. The next step is to move this to Personnel to create these positions (nine staff members for WIC, three staff members for Cancer Services, one Emergency Preparedness staff member, and one Community Health Educator). Approval to move this on to Personnel was given on a motion by Legislator O'Grady, seconded by Legislator Burt, and carried. **Refer to Personnel Committee**

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. following a motion by Legislator Decker, seconded by Legislator Jessup, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia Santora, Secretary to the Clerk of the Board
Allegany County Board of Legislators