

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES

A meeting of the Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on May 27, 2014.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Monica Martinez, Chairwoman
Leg. Kate M. Browning, Vice Chair
Leg. Lou D'Amaro (Excused Absence)
Leg. Kevin J. McCaffrey
Leg. Robert Trotta

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, 15th Legislative District
Legislator Robert Calarco, 7th Legislative District
George M. Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Lora Gellerstein, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature
Diane Dono, Budget Review Office
Massiel Fuentes, Budget Review Office
Jill Moss, Budget Review Office
Lisa Pinkard, Aide to Leg. Martinez
William Shilling, Aide to Leg. Calarco
Amy Keyes, Aide to County Executive
John O'Neill, Commissioner/Department of Social Services
John Nieves, Department of Social Services
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer
Ben Zwirn, Suffolk Community College
Ryan Stanton, LI Fed – AFL-CIO
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Reporter

5/27/2014 Human Services Committee meeting

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 2:01 PM

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Human Services Committee. If we could all stand for the Pledge to be led by co-chair Legislator Browning.

SALUTATION

You may be seated. Okay, continuing with today's agenda, there are no correspondences. Do we have any -- no public portion, no cards either. Anyone in the audience who would like to address the Committee at this time? Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Good afternoon Human Service Committee Chair Martinez and Committee members. I just want to give you an update on our Childcare Block Grant because that's always a source of good conversation.

The Department did receive a increase of almost \$600,000. But that was due to the market rates going up, meaning that the providers can charge more to the County for the DSS clients that are placed there. But there are other counties that received a substantial increase. We did -- the Department did write into OCFS well in advance of the allocation. I just wanted to make this Committee aware of that.

And we're going to continue to dialogue with OCFS around that. They've given us some preliminary reasons why, but we still don't have the exact details why some other counties of similar size -- it's called the large counties: Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Monroe, Erie, Onondaga are considered the large six other than the City. They received substantially more. So we feel -- I don't want to say shortchanged, but we feel that there could have been a little more equal distribution, the incremental funding for Childcare Block Grant funding. And we'll continue to dialogue with OCFS, but we're going to try to arrange a meeting with some parties; for instance, Welfare to Work Commission asked if we could meet, which we would definitely meet with them, as well as some other folks, possibly the Long Island Childcare Council, County Exec's Office, etcetera and see if we can come together and, you know, continue to advocate for Suffolk County, make sure that we receive our -- what we believe to be our fair share.

I have a comparison schedule I'll leave with the Clerk. It kind of outlines the increases and decreases amongst all the counties in New York State.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Please. Thank you. I know we've been working closely with WTW and {Dutchess} Childcare Council. And it's amazing that you just, you know, made those comments, but I believe we're meeting this week.

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Yes, we're meeting Friday on another issue.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Yeah, so we can discuss it a little further as well if you'd like.

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Absolutely. That's sounds great. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Thank you. Any questions?

LEG. TROTТА:

Is that Federal or State money you get?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

It originally starts as Federal. And then it gets passed down to New York State who then decides -- does an allocation methodology. And then they pass it to the local districts.

LEG. TROTТА:

Who decides that?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Who decides how we receive it? Is that the question?

LEG. TROTТА:

Who decides who gets what?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Well, the Feds decide how much the States get. And then the State has a methodology, decides how the counties get it. It's a -- it's a form. I can send it to you rather than just recite it. It's -- basically they take like the average five years' of claims, they make some adjustments. And then that's what they distribute. They pro rata it, so to speak, based on five years' of claims.

LEG. TROTТА:

What organization in the State decides that?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

New York State OCFS, Office of Children and Family Services

LEG. TROTТА:

Okay. You supply them with data, they look at it and they say --

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Correct.

LEG. TROTТА:

-- *this is how much you're getting?*

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Yeah. Well, they actually do all the calculations send them to us. I can send you the background information. I know you're fairly new to this piece, but I'll definitely send it to you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

So you submit the claims that go in.

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

I'm sorry?

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

You submit the claims?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Yes, we submit the claims, correct. But they -- they meaning New York State OCFS determine the methodology. So from one year to the next it could change. They may decide that next year they'll take the last four years' of claims rather than the last five years' of claims.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Do you have the amount that we received last year?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Yes, I have -- actually the schedule does a comparison side by side.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Okay. Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

I don't know if you're going to be able to give me an answer right away, but the transportation, the special needs transportation on the school buses, or pre-school transportation, does that fall under DSS?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

No, that would be DOH.

LEG. BROWNING:

The Health Department.

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Department of Health, yes.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay, thanks.

LEG. TROTТА:

Is there recourse to -- like if they give you \$600,000 more, can you say *well, we need more because?*

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Yes. And I tried to get out ahead of that. That's why I wrote a memo to them earlier in the year before they actually divvied out the dollars so that hopefully it wouldn't have to be after the fact. But, yes, we could go back there. There's really no what I'll call an appeals process, but you can go back and have a dialogue with them, which is what we've been doing at least since I've been here in April of 2012.

And just to be fair, I mean we did receive a million dollar increase in the prior year based on Suffolk County. All the Legislators had signed a letter, Welfare to Work Commission -- Childcare Council had sent a letter in as well as well as the Department, and having dialogue and sending in, you know, an official memo asking for an increase. So in fairness they did give us almost a million dollars the prior year, but there's still a need.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Any other questions, Legislator? Okay. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

Thank you. I'll leave the documents with the Clerk.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Please, thank you.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

All right, to continue with today's agenda, there are no presentations and there are no Tabled

5/27/2014 Human Services Committee meeting

Resolutions. So that brings us to Introductory Resolutions, **1492, Recognizing October as "Disability Employment Awareness Month" in Suffolk County. (Muratore)**. I make a motion to approve.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. LEG. D'AMARO NOT PRESENT. PO GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE)**

There are no other items on the agenda so this meeting is over.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:09 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**