

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
August 15, 2023

Present: Lisa Virkler, Chair; Andrea Moroughan, Vice-Chair; Richard Chartrand; Jessica Moser and Jeffrey Nellenback.

Others: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Phil Hathway, Thomas Osborne and Ian Gilbert; County Manager, Ryan Piche; County Treasurer, Eric Virkler; and County Attorney, Joan McNichol.

Chair Legislator Virkler called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Legislator Virkler moved to accept the June 20, 2023 minutes, seconded by Legislator Chartrand, and carried.

Youth Bureau By-law Change recommendations – Deanna Edick, Director

Deanna Edick began by explaining that the reason for some of the changes being proposed was due to a lack of attendance by members, which causes a lack of a quorum. The proposed changes center around reducing the number of members to no more than 13 total. It also adds a clause that after a members third unexcused absence it shall result in forfeit of membership. The number of meetings will be reduced to not less than four in a calendar year. The new bylaws will remove the need for committees and remove the process for applying for OCFS Youth Development Fund Expectations because they are always changing from year to year. Currently the ratio of students to adults is 50/50 but the new bylaws would only require a total of two students, instead of two from each school district. Legislator Moser questioned if it was third unexcused absence total or in a row, Deanna responded the expectation is in a calendar year. Deanna said the next step will be to present this to the Youth Bureau Advisory Board for their comments and adoption.

Supportive Housing discussion

Legislator Virkler reported that the group that is involved in this endeavor is actively looking at other sites besides the Stowe Street location. TOPS plaza was suggested but they have no interested at all in selling any space, a few other sites looked at would require much more work to make them viable. Most recently a group went up to Ogdensburg to look at an organization, Step By Step, that created supported housing. This organization was not government related but were able to purchase an old elementary school for \$15,000.00. The organization was able to apply and receive HHAP & ESHI grant funding for renovations and operational costs, and can now house 19 or 20 individuals.

A brief video of Lincoln School Housing Project was shown.

Legislator Virkler explained that she learned that people don't want to live in a place where they have no control, they need some form of independence to be successful. Ryan Piche stated that there was on-site staffing 24/7 so people were required to check in and out which was more about protecting the individuals living there from their outside former friends. The organization had mentioned that it did take them more than a year and they did end up going to court because the 45 adjacent homes who were opposed. In fact, one vocal opponent of the project now assists with the gardening. Many people around the facility no longer feel opposed toward it instead they have embraced the idea.

Transitional Living Services was awarded the ESHI grant funding which is one piece of the puzzle. Jaylyn Heames from Snow Belt explained that this project was for local residents only, no sex offenders, individuals are required to participate in treatment goal which can take a while to get approved, each floor is opened only by pass card entry so it is very secure. Half of the individuals there are on Social Security Disability. One Stop comes in a couple times a month along with other outside services. It is more about how to be a good neighbor, not about isolation. Most of the individuals come in and rotate out to seek more independence, which is essentially moving on to the next step. There are showers for the staff that remain on site. The organization owns their own transportation vehicles and has incredibly supportive staff which is important in helping people get "well". There have been no police calls in the past year, residents are there voluntarily, not court ordered proving that they want to get better and better their lives.

There was further discussion on the current process for Lewis County and looking at two more potential locations that could be for sale if they are feasible locations. County Treasurer Eric Virkler suggested questioning why a high density residential area doesn't allow for multi-family homes. There was also mention of looking into infrastructure costs at all locations.

The following draft resolutions were reviewed:

1. Appointing Ashley Wilson to the Community Services Mental Health Subcommittee to fulfill the unexpired term of Crystal Collette from September 5th through December 31, 2024.
AYE 5 NAY 0
2. Appropriating funds in the amount of \$200,000.00 from Fund balance into Community Services accounts to cover current and future care, maintenance and examination services to patients placed in NYS Office of Mental Health psychiatric facilities pursuant to County Criminal or Family Court Orders.
AYE 5 NAY 0
3. Authorizing agreement between Lewis County Department of Social Services and (TBD) for a warming center facility for the 2023/2024 "Code Blue" season. *The bid opening is scheduled for Tuesday, August 22nd at 2:00 p.m.*
AYE 5 NAY 0

4. Authorizing agreements between Lewis County Department of Social Services and various Foster Care agencies from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2025.
AYE 5 NAY 0

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Virkler moved to adjourn at 2:49 p.m., seconded by Legislator Chartrand and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board