

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
October 17, 2023

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

Others: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Phil Hathway; Thomas Osborne; Josh Leviker; and Ian Gilbert; County Manager, Ryan Piche; County Treasurer, Eric Virkler; Human Resources Director, Caitlyn Smith; and County Attorney, Joan McNichol.

Chair Legislator Virkler called the meeting to order at 1:42 p.m.

Legislator Virkler moved to accept the September 19, 2023 minutes, seconded by Legislator Moroughan, and carried.

Lewis County Health System Repayment discussion

Legislator Virkler began by stating her opinion that she doesn't necessarily think opening maternity is wise, however this is money the county borrowed from the hospital and is in the position to pay it back in full if the hospital needs it. Legislator Hathway agreed with Legislator Virkler even though he was not a member of the Committee. Legislator Moroughan questioned whether the Hospital and Nursing Home are at full capacity and if there are enough employees right now, Mr. Cayer, CEO of Lewis County Health System responded that there were 19 beds on the acute side that are full which is at 100% due to construction; the Nursing Home is at 75% of total capacity, meaning they had 120 beds filled out of 160; and are meeting the minimum staffing requirements.

Legislator Nellenback questioned what the payback period was on the money borrowed from the hospital, Joan McNichol answered that the MOU was open ended, and the county is currently taking a \$180,000 to \$250,000 reallocation credit each year, but no other direct payments have been made. The reallocation are the administrative costs the county entity is entitled to charge the hospital each year, so in essence it would be like the county sending the hospital a bill but instead of paying that bill the hospital just deducts it from what the county owes them.

Legislator Moser's concern is that there is a legal MOU in place, and it should be followed, perhaps a middle of the road option would work. Legislator Virkler questioned the Committee for what a middle of the road option might look like, Legislator Moser responded that perhaps it would be an increased allocation each year from the budget or if the Board is comfortable that the County wouldn't need the funds for anything else, then pay back the amount owed. Ryan Piche interjected that in the next Committee meeting there will be discussion on fund balance, and it is looking like at the end of 2023 there will be projected \$27 million in fund balance. Legislator Virkler stated that she felt like the hospital helped the county when they wanted to complete a project and now the hospital wants to

complete a project and the county should help them out. She questioned if a motion was made to draft a resolution to repay the funds borrowed how the board members would feel.

Legislator Nellenback voiced his opinion that he would agree to paying a portion of it back but not the full amount. Legislator Virkler clarified that the funds being repaid would go toward the current hospital project and re-opening maternity. Legislator Nellenback questioned the hospital needing additional funding from the county to be able to run maternity each year. Mr. Cayer stated that he was told the hospital could request new funding from the Board for one item, so instead of requesting new funds they are asking for a re-payment of borrowed money. Maternity if opened will require subsidy in the coming years but that is what some of this funding could be used for. The hospital has requirements on their fund balance which only leaves them with \$4 million of available funds, which feels a little light. The request is for repayment of borrowed money instead of a subsidy for Maternity.

Legislator Moroughan questioned if Maternity would be able to be staffed properly, Mr. Cayer believed that it would be staffed appropriately as is the Nursing Home because it is census dependent. The need is for LPN's not CNA's, and the hospital is currently hiring RN's due to the availability of LPN's. Legislator Virkler pointed out that JCC is currently having clinicals Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays with 3 separate groups at Lewis County Health System, which is looking promising and hasn't been that full in some time.

Legislator Virkler moved to repay the full amount owed to the hospital, seconded by Legislator Moser. Legislator Moroughan and Legislator Nellenback both opposed the motion, and Legislator Virkler and Legislator Moser were in favor.

Legislator Chartrand pointed out that with our Health Insurance Plan the Board approved two Holiday's and then ended up needing those funds later. Legislator Dolhof stated that in the past the County has forgiven money owed to them from the hospital and has given that information to Mr. Cayer and Mr. Hellinger who requested more time to review for accuracy, doubting amounts. The Committee is just trying to move this forward to the full board on November 7th.

Joan McNichol went over two points of order, the first being a motion by Legislator Virkler for the committee to move it forward to the full Board of paying off the debt owed to the hospital which requires all committee members to vote, which Legislator Chartrand did not, the second is that Legislator Dolhof is proposing an amendment to the motion. Legislator Dolhof clarified that it is hard to follow the history of the money borrowed by the hospital and there needs to be more time to review that and what amount would be acceptable to pay back now.

Legislator Chartrand voted against Legislator Virkler's motion, therefore the motion was defeated 3 to 2.

Legislator Virkler concluded by stating that the county is in a position right now to pay the hospital back the amount borrowed. Mr. Cayer pointed out that he brought forward one item as requested, most of the hospital's fund balance is restricted so only \$4 million is available for usage, it is the hospital's intention to support maternity and GYN services in the future knowing it won't cover itself.

The following draft resolutions were reviewed:

1. Authorizing renewal agreements between the County of Lewis and various providers for Substance Abuse and other Mental Health Disorders.

AYE 5 NAY 0

2. Re-Appointing Tina Cummings and Louise Fox to the Community Services Board Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee effective January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2027.

AYE 5 NAY 0

3. Re-Appointing Anna Platz and Melanie Saber to the Community Services Board effective January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2027.

AYE 5 NAY 0

4. Appropriating additional NYS grant funds in the amount of \$61,000.00 for the Unmet Needs Program and Transferring funds in the amount of \$150,000.00 from Special Contingency and Contingency for the Senior Meals Program. *Carla Hellinger, Director of Office for the Aging thanked the committee for allowing her to speak. If you look from 2022 to 2023, January to September total meals, congregate and home delivered, there has been a 28% increase. If you go back prior to the pandemic, it will show a 58% increase. Legislator Virkler exclaimed that it was great that people are utilizing this program.*

AYE 5 NAY 0

5. Authorizing agreements between Office For the Aging and various providers for program services in 2024.

AYE 5 NAY 0

6. Authorizing consultant agreement between Office For the Aging and Amanda Woolnough, Registered Dietician to provide oversight of the work completed by CNS for compliance with the nutrition standards of the Nutrition Program at a rate of \$50.00 per hour up to sixteen hours per week from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

AYE 5 NAY 0

7. Authorizing agreement between Lewis County Public Health Agency and Michelle Nikitich to provide occupational therapy to children receiving Preschool Special Education services from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024 at rates set by NYSED and annually adopted by the board.

AYE 5 NAY 0

8. Supporting Operation Green Light in recognition of active military service members and those in transition to civilian life.

AYE 5 NAY 0

9. Appointing April Seymour-Ritz as a member of the Youth Bureau Advisory Board to fill a current vacancy effective 11/7/2023 through 6/30/2025.

AYE 5 NAY 0

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Nellenback moved to adjourn at 2:12 p.m., seconded by Legislator Moroughan and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board