

HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Held In The
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 318

CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512
Members: Chairwoman Scucimarra, Legislators Gross and LoBue

Thursday

March 19, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 P.M. by Chairwoman Scucimarra who requested Legislator Castellano lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Gross, LoBue, and Chairwoman Scucimarra were present.

Item #3 – Approval of Minutes – February 11, 2014

Legislator LoBue made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted; Seconded by Legislator Gross. All in favor.

Item #4 – Presentation/The Mental Health Association/Executive Director Megan Castellano

Legislator LoBue made a motion to wave the rules and accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator Gross. All in favor.

The Mental Health Association Executive Director Megan Castellano stated the Mental Health Association (“MHA”) is a small non-for-profit organization located in the Village of Brewster and have been active for 22 years. She stated MHA is different from other organizations in how they do not have “traditional” treatment and implement a lot of peer-to-peer treatments. She stated MHA has provided 5,624 service visits with an annual operating budget of \$185,000. She stated presently there are 20 current or past recipients of mental health services who are employed with MHA. She stated the new model, the recovery center is a way to reach out in the community and establish the individuals who are in need of services. She stated there is a lot of collaboration and information referral to assist the individuals to receive the services they need. She stated she would like to highlight the Peer Bridging Program which provides services to those in the Putnam Hospital Center and the Putnam County Jail. She stated it is the goal to reach out to create a connection to the community with those in the program to prevent recidivism with drugs or criminal acts. She stated there has been a shift from institutionalization from psychiatric facility to correctional facility.

Legislator Gross stated more than approximately 60% of inmates have mental health issues.

Executive Director Castellano stated in the 1990’s MHA received about \$8,000 to fund the Peer Bridging Program. She stated there has not been an increase in the funding for this program; however MHA has found ways to expand the program. She stated there was need for the program to expand especially in the County Jail.

Legislator LoBue restated 431 people were served in the Peer Bridging Program.

Executive Director Castellano stated the 431 people served were in inpatient MHA Services at the Putnam Hospital Center, additionally 355 people were served in the partial hospitalization program, and 58 people were served in the County Jail.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned how many staff members are working in MHA.

Executive Director Castellano stated there are currently about 20 individuals who are employed at MHA who were either past or current recipients of mental health services.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if there were any programs for veterans.

Executive Director Castellano stated MHA does have a program for veterans. She stated MHA is working in partnership with the Putnam County Veterans Services Agency to collaborate with the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer to Peer Program. She stated there are a lot of veterans with mental health needs. She stated she was looking at some statistics that pointed out that 22 veterans commit suicide every day. She stated there is a unique connection with someone who has a similar experience. She stated MHA reached out to veterans in the community to join the PCF Joseph P. Dwyer Peer to Peer Program and have them be trained to answer the phones to offer assistance. She stated it has been challenging to recruit veterans because it is a part-time position with a modest pay and locating combat veterans who are willing to share their experiences is hard. She stated the contract for the Veterans Program is ending at the end of March; therefore MHA is applying for a second year funding to continue this Program. She stated MHA is contract funded so there is no charge for the services provided to individuals. She stated the last item she would like to discuss is suicide prevention. She stated suicide is becoming a tremendous issue for our community. She stated suicide nationwide is the second leading cause of death for ages 15 to 24 and fourth leading cause of death for ages 18 to 65. She stated the County Coroner Nesheiwat is fortunately involved in the Suicide Prevention Task Force. She stated in 2013 there were 13 confirmed suicides in the County. She stated historically there were averages of 0 to three (3) suicides in the County in past years. She stated there is a trend that middle-aged men are the ones who are committing suicide. She stated the S.P.E.A.K App for cell phones is great for reducing the suicides in the County.

Legislator LoBue questioned why middle-aged males tend to commit suicide.

Executive Director Castellano stated nationally it is a trend that middle-aged males commit suicide, but the reason is unknown.

Legislator LoBue stated the trend perhaps is due the occupation or the economy.

Executive Director Castellano stated two (2) big priorities for MHA is suicide prevention and veterans' mental health. She stated Safetalk is a resource for the community to raise awareness and putting suicidal individuals in touch with resources. She stated it is a three (3) hour course that is now open to the community. She stated next year MHA would like to have a course dedicated to first responders. She stated MHA has been offering Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training ("ASIST") which is a step up from Safetalk. She stated Mental Health First Aid Training will be offered in May. She stated there is outreach in the schools for suicide prevention for children. She stated there is a partnership forming with Green Chimneys to launch a "Text for Teens" support line, which can be accessed through

phone calls or text messages. She stated there is a conference occurring on Thursday, March 26th with a panel discussion on safe storage of guns and medication. She stated this conference will be located at the TOPS Building from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Legislator Gouldman stated in the Town of Putnam Valley there is a Town Day and he would like Executive Director Castellano to attend that event.

Executive Director Castellano stated she would be thrilled to participate in the Town of Putnam Valley's Town Day. She stated it is the goal of MHA to educate the community.

Commissioner of Health Dr. Allen Beals stated MHA does great work for the community. He stated there is a great partnership with the Health Department and MHA.

Executive Director Castellano stated MHA receives a small stipend of \$7,000 from the County. She stated the stipend has been the same amount since 1999.

Item #5 – Discussion/Commissioner of Health Dr. Allen Beals

- a. Proposal/Expand Indoor Clean Air Act**
- b. Proposal/Raise Age of Smoking from 18 to 21**

Commissioner Beals stated he thanks the Committee for allowing him to speak to these two (2) items. He stated the amount of people who smoke has decreased, yet it is still a health issue. He stated there is still persistence in smoking, especially with youth, lower educated individuals, and those in the lower economic class. He stated there is a proposal to raise the age of purchasing tobacco from 18 to 21 years of age. He stated the reason is approximately 85% of smokers begin to smoke below the age of 21. He stated making tobacco products more costly and more inconvenient would decrease the number of smokers. He stated at age 55 there is a decrease in individuals who smoke. He stated the tobacco companies are marketing e-cigarettes to the youth. He stated the youth who try e-cigarettes have a higher tendency to become smokers. He stated regulating the use of e-cigarettes similar to cigarettes will make it less convenient and prevent individuals from smoking either type. He stated there are a number of known toxic substances in e-cigarettes but, longitudinal studies have not been conducted.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated other substances can be placed in the e-cigarettes.

Commissioner Beals stated correct, the e-cigarettes can be used as a device to smoke marijuana. He stated he is sure in time it will be known that e-cigarettes cause cancer similar to how cigarettes cause cancer. He stated in relation to cigarettes, the tobacco companies are offering coupons on the sale of cigarettes. He stated New York City has placed legislation that promotions geared to decreasing the cost of cigarettes should be outlawed. He stated the reason cigarettes are taxed so heavily in the State is to make purchasing cigarettes less appealing.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated seeing the children in the high school smoking cigarettes is sad. She stated she believes it is important to raise the age and pursue this proposal.

Legislator Gross stated he has some relatives that are involved in the e-cigarette business in North Carolina and it is big business in the South. He stated he interviewed several individuals in the store who were in their 20's and they were tobacco cigarette smokers. He stated they switched to e-cigarettes because they felt it was healthier.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to waive the rules and accept all of the additional; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Legislator Gross read from the USA Today news article "States Racing to Regulate E-cigarettes" dated February 8, 2015. He stated it is known how bad the e-cigarettes are. He stated the American Cancer Society is recommending the use of e-cigarettes in lieu of tobacco products knowing all of these products are unhealthy. He stated in terms of raising the age of buying tobacco products, an individual can join the military at 18 and get married at 18, he believes at the age of 18 a person can make their own decisions. He stated many individuals use the e-cigarettes to stop using tobacco products.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she believe the e-cigarettes were initially an alternative for cigarettes but has grown into something other than a tool to quit smoking.

Commissioner Beals stated the companies are targeting young children to be replacement smokers.

Legislator Gross stated 80% of individuals that die of lung cancer have contracted that cancer from the environment.

Legislator LoBue stated she believes it is a combination of tobacco and the environment; she stated radon gas is very harmful to our community.

Commissioner Beals stated the County has one of the highest cancer death rates in the State which is partially due to the radon gas.

Legislator Gross stated radon kits are offered in the Health Department.

Commissioner Beals stated the radon kits are available at the Health Department and they are around \$8.50 per kit.

Legislator Gross stated when he states the environment he is implying carbon dioxide, jet fuel and other substances. He stated he is not condoning the use of cigarettes but he would like to put everything into perspective.

Legislator Wright stated he echoes on Legislator Gross' comments. He stated he believes too much responsibility has been taken away from those who are 18 to 21 years old. He stated the continuation of treating the younger generation with less personal responsibility is not a good thing.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the balance is off because the youth is being targeted by big tobacco companies.

Legislator Albano stated he is in favor of raising the age of purchasing tobacco products. He stated he is not in favor of a lot of regulations however; this will potentially make a difference.

Legislator Gross stated the State profits off the high taxes of tobacco products which is money that is highly needed.

Legislator LoBue stated she is unsure in her stance on changing the age of purchasing tobacco products. She stated in terms of placing regulations on where e-cigarettes can be used, it makes sense for cigarettes and e-cigarettes have the same regulations.

Commissioner Beals stated the consequences of second-hand e-cigarette smoke have not been fully determined. He stated the product has been analyzed and it does contain toxic substances; therefore in 20 years it will be deemed harmful.

Legislator Albano provided an example of an individual who smoked e-cigarettes in the car which created a film on the inside of the car window. He stated it can be assumed that toxins create the film on the car window.

Commissioner Beals stated this proposal would just regulate the smoking of cigarettes and e-cigarettes indoors.

Legislator Gross stated he supports the proposal.

Legislator Nacerino stated she would support this proposal. She stated she would also support raising the purchasing age of tobacco products; it would be to err on the side of caution.

Legislator Wrights stated on the parallel of raising the alcohol drinking age from 18 to 21, there are statistics that illustrate that binge drinking in college youth is a direct effect of the raise in drinking age. He stated there is a failure in transition to the permissible habits. He stated alcohol has become a "forbidden fruit". He stated the effects of raising the age of consuming alcohol are not all beneficial.

Commissioner Beals stated in a National Survey in the State, our County is in the top four (4) of the healthiest counties; he stated binge drinking is a factor in decreased rating points.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated there was a survey done in the school systems that showed the earlier children drink the more they continue their drinking habits.

Legislator Gross stated in Europe, the drinking age is 16. He stated Europe does not have the same drinking issue as the United States. He stated he agrees with the statements that Legislator Wright made in terms of the age. He stated the law of restricting the age does not work as well as it is believed to. He stated the Nation should look to Europe as an example in terms of drinking. He stated he is aware that in some countries in Europe such as Sweden, there are harsh penalties for driving while intoxicated. He stated the age to consume alcohol increased under the President Regan Administration when insurance agencies had issues with DWIs and their costs.

Legislator Nacerino stated she understands the regulations are not fool proof but it is our responsibility to protect the youth.

Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza stated in terms of Europe, except for the U.K., alcohol is seen as a beverage and not a drug. He stated in the United States alcohol is seen as a drug. He stated it is key to have people begin to view alcohol as a beverage.

Legislator LoBue stated this issue starts in people's homes. She stated if there is a lack of structure at home, people are more susceptible to "evil" in society. She stated she is conflicted on her stance on these two (2) issues. However, she is leaning towards raising the age of purchasing tobacco products because smoking is so dangerous. She stated youth have no foresight of the future.

A constituent in the audience stated smoking is a healthcare issue and with e-cigarettes it is currently unknown.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she would like to move the proposed legislation on restricting the use of e-cigarettes indoors.

Legislative Counsel Clem Van Ross stated at this point there is no proposed legislation before the Committee; therefore he recommends the Committee request for the Law Department to review the provided information to draft a local law on this matter.

Item #7 – Approval/Proclamation/Organ Donation Awareness Month

Commissioner Beals stated New York State is ranked 49th out of the 50 States in the percentage of individuals who are enrolled as an organ donor. He stated there is no age limitation to be an organ donor. He stated in the County there are 42 individuals who are in need of an organ transplant. He stated in 2014 nine (9) individuals in the County were recipients of an organ transplant. He stated out of

the 42 individuals who are waiting for a transplant, many will die waiting. He stated it is easy to enroll to become a donor; one can register online or at the DMV, or when an individual registers to vote.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how many individuals are enrolled to be an organ donor.

Commissioner Beals stated approximately 26% of the State is enrolled.

Legislator LoBue questioned which organ is in the most demand.

Commissioner Beals stated kidneys, hearts, lungs, and skin are in need. He stated when someone shares a story about a family member living longer due to a transplant it inspires him.

Legislator Albano shared some examples of people he knows who received transplants that prolonged and helped save their lives. He questioned if it is shown that you are an organ donor on your license.

Commissioner Beals stated it is shown on your license if you register to be an organ donor at the DMV.

Legislator Gross stated he would like to confirm that a person is declared dead before their organs are removed.

Commissioner Beals stated yes. He stated in fact this matter should be discussed with one's family because if a person is on the organ donor registry and the family expresses reservations, the organs are not taken.

Legislator Addonizzio questioned what the time frame is from someone declared dead to having their organs removed.

Commissioner Beals stated it is done right away in a hospital setting.

Legislator LoBue questioned if someone has gone to court over the matter of organ donation.

Commissioner Beals stated he is unsure.

Legislator Gross made a motion to approve the proclamation, Organ Donation Awareness Month; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Item #8 – Approval/Appointment/Putnam County Board of Health/Raymond E. Philips

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated Mr. Raymond Philips has a very impressive resume.

Commissioner Beals stated he would be a great addition to the Board of Health. He stated he was unanimously approved by the Board of Health.

Legislator LoBue made a motion to approve the appointment of Raymond E. Philips to the Board of Health; Seconded by Legislator Gross. All in favor.

Item #10 – Approval/Budgetary Amendment (15A018)/Health Department/Reallocation of Personnel Due to Vacancy

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated a nurse resigned which created a vacancy in the Health Department.

Commissioner Beals stated correct. He stated the vacancy created an opportunity to rearrange staff and service within the Health Department. He stated he would be able to replace this position at a lower salary. He stated there will be a savings of \$19,442 per year and \$13,959 for the remainder of 2015.

Legislator Gross stated he respects Commissioner Beals' judgment and would like to move this matter forward.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to approve the Budgetary Amendment (15A018) to the Audit & Administration Committee; Seconded by Legislator Gross. All in favor.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated there is a typo on the second page of the resolution that says Fiscal Impact 2015 that needs to be amended to say Fiscal Impact 2016.

Legislator LoBue made a motion to approve the the amendment to the second page of the resolution; Seconded by Legislator Gross. All in favor.

Item #9 – Approval/Resolution/Crude Oil Trains

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she supports this resolution. She stated since this matter was last discussed, three (3) more rail accidents occurred; North Dakota, West Virginia and in Beacon, NY.

Legislator LoBue stated the resolution would be sent to various representative of the State, such as Governor Cuomo.

Legislator Gross questioned if the premise of the resolution is to have safer rail cars.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated correct, it is requesting more safety on the transportation.

Legislator Gross made a motion to approve the resolution on the Crude Oil Trains; Seconded by Chairwoman Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Item #6 – Discussion/Plastic Bags

- a. **Proposed Rockland County Resolution/"Say No to the Bag" Campaign Urging the Voluntary Reduction/Elimination of Single use Plastic Bags**
- b. **Correspondence and Backup on Plastic Bags Provided by Legislator LoBue**

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the Legislative Office received numerous correspondences from those in favor in the plastic bag ban.

Legislator Albano stated recycling can be challenging but, it is important.

Legislator LoBue stated she disagreed with Legislator Albano. She stated she believes that plastic bags are one of the most egregious and there is a huge issue with plastic bags in our waterways. She stated the two (2) landfills in the County contain a lot of plastic. She stated she is aware of the proposed resolution in Rockland County that urges the voluntary reduction and/or elimination of plastic bags. She stated she is also aware of the City of Rye, New York who would like to ban the use of plastic bags. She stated she is in favor of banning plastic bags and have the ban be “phased in” to allow businesses adjust. She stated volunteerism looks good on paper but it tends to be ineffective.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated this matter has been discussed in Albany County, which resulted in the bins outside of big grocery stores to encourage the return of plastic bags. She stated local municipalities surrounding our County have discussed a ban. She stated in Rockland County there is a proposed Public Awareness Campaign that cashiers ask customers “did you bring in your bags today” to encourage less use of plastic bags.

Legislator Gross stated there have been a lot of propositions to ban items in this Committee. He stated he is concerned in the direction that this Committee is going in. He stated obesity is emerging as a top issue. He stated education about littering is important. He quoted an article from the Journal News, dated Friday, February 13, 2015 that discussed how China leads in plastics polluting oceans. He stated as a Nation we are doing well. He stated plastic bags are repurposed to be used for other things. He stated perhaps similar to returning soda bottles, a plastic bag can be returned for a couple of cents.

Legislator Gouldman stated he would support a public awareness campaign; however he believes banning is not appropriate. He stated having these types of laws will deter businesses from coming to the County.

Legislator Nacerino stated she agreed that a public awareness campaign would be a step in the right direction. She stated the raise in awareness and education would assist in eliminating the issue.

A constituent in the crowd stated she recycles her plastic bags. She stated plastic bags were used because it was believed that paper bags created deforestation.

Legislator LoBue stated it is important to educate the community. She re-stated she would like to phase in the plastic bag ban because it would be challenging to outlaw plastic. She stated the Town of Kent has an excellent recycling program. She stated the use of plastic bags has been banned in various municipalities and they still have thriving economic development with their businesses. She stated she would like to invite Mrs. Greens store to come to discuss how discontinuing the use of plastic bags is possible.

Legislator Gouldman stated he would like to see an enforcement of the laws that require recycling.

Legislator LoBue stated the Towns in the County have the contracts with the carting companies. She stated eliminating a product would ensure the safety of the environment. She stated a lot of the Nation’s plastic waste is going to Asia.

Legislator Gross stated the County licenses the carters that work in the County. He stated there should be an encouragement for the carters to develop a legitimate recycling program. He stated he is aware of one carting company in Connecticut that has a machine that can sort out the recyclables from the garbage.

Commissioner Beals stated the matter of municipal solid waste is enforced by the Health Department. He stated the Health Department enforces the State Recycling Laws and the ones in the County Code.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the businesses have been following the law.

Commissioner Beals stated yes, and if the businesses are not, a hearing will be summoned.

Item #11 – Other Business

a. Approval/2015 Sub-Award Grant/Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza

Commissioner Piazza stated one of the grants for the Child Advocacy Center (Sub-Award Grant) is due on April 1st and the Social Services Department is applying for a continuance. He stated there are a number of other grants or allocations for the Child Advocacy Center for issues such as human trafficking.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if human trafficking occurred in the County.

Commissioner Piazza stated yes, there was a human trafficking case that was prosecuted in federal court. He stated if the State is offering funds, the Social Services Department would like to take advantages of the potential funding. He stated there is also an opportunity to apply for State funds to have a mental health therapist with Child Protective Services.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to approve the 2015 Sub-Award Grant; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Item #12 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 7:56 p.m. Legislator Gross made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Lisa Sommers.