

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES MINUTES: APRIL 14, 2010

COMMUNITY SERVICES

COMMITTEE: Alfreda Williams, Chair, Judy Myers, William Burton, John Testa

In Attendance: **Legislators:** Peter Harekham CE: Katy Delgado DSS: Kevin Mahon, Diane Atkins BOL: Susan Kirkpatrick, Mary Jackson, Tina Limengo, Larry Goldstein, Melanie Montalto Guests: Irene Hezzi, Susan Edelstein, Howard Milbert, Kathy Halas, Karen Cheeks-Lomax, Diane Anderson

MINUTES:

Chairwoman Williams called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

Chairwoman Williams asked the Commissioner of Social Services if there has been any progress in finding other areas to make cuts in order to restore the funding to the child care programs and scholarship.

Kevin Mahon, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services stated that over 90% of the Department's budget is mandated by State and Federal programs, so they have to look at where we are going over those mandates, and look at the optional programs first. He stated that we budget above and beyond what is required by the state for Title XX daycare, and so we are able to save money by freezing Title XX once we are over what is required by us.

Legislator Burton asked for an explanation on how it is determined which programs the Department is able to cut. Commissioner Mahon stated that they look at the need and the usage of the programs and cut those that are least vulnerable. Legislator Burton asked for the list of all of the non-mandated programs, their funding, and usage.

Several of the child care advocates explained that there is confusion in the freezing of Title XX, because they are being told that if a family is currently receiving full child care subsidy and their income increases and they are qualified for Title XX they are now not eligible. Commissioner Mahon explained that this is not true, anyone who is currently receiving any type of child care subsidy is able to move from one program to another and they will clarify this with their workers.

The child care advocates also explained that families enrolling for summer camp now have a problem as well. They also stated that families that they are working with do not want to go through the trouble of filling out the application only to be denied and put on a waiting list, so the waiting list number of 2 which DSS is claiming to have is skewed.

Kathy Halas, Director of the Child Care Council of Westchester stated that raising the parent share twice in one year, first from 10% to 15% and now from 15% to 20% may be too much for families to bear all at once.

Legislator Myers stated that these cuts to save a little money will result in more county spending in the long run, when families can no longer afford to put their children in day care and must leave their jobs to stay home with their children and apply for family assistance, Medicaid, and food stamps. She also expressed concern for the child care workers who will lose their jobs when enrollments decrease and there is not enough money to pay the workers.

The Committee and child care advocates expressed their displeasure with the cuts and freezing of Title XX. Kathy Halas stated that another growing concern is that schools throughout the county are considering cutting their pre-k programs in order to balance their school budgets, and this would put many parents in a tough position financially as well.

Moved by Legislator Burton and seconded by Legislator Myers the minutes of the March 16th, 23rd and April 6th, 2010 Community Services Committee meetings were approved with a vote of 4-0.

With a motion by Legislator Myers seconded by Legislator Burton the Committee on Community Services adjourned with a vote of 4-0 at 4:06 p.m.

AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE FOR REVIEW UPON REQUEST