

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: HEALTH SERVICES

DATE: MARCH 29, 2006

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Barody
Haskell
F. Thomas
Tessier
Champagne
Mason

Representing Health Services Department:
Patricia Auer, Director
Sharon Schaldone, Assistant Director, Home Care
Ginelle Jones, Assistant Director, Public Health
Services
Tammie DeLorenzo, Fiscal Manager/Supervisor of
Clerical Services
Helen Stern, RN, Immunization Program
Coordinator
William Thomas, Chairman
Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and
Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk, Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Kenny
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

Committee Member Absent:

Supervisor Sheehan

Mr. Barody called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. F. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, subject to correction by the clerk.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mrs. Auer; and she distributed copies of her Agenda packet for the meeting, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Pursuant to Agenda Item No. 1, Pending Items, privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Schaldone who updated the committee members on the status of the Telemedicine Program. She apprised that currently 62 monitoring units were in place in patients' homes and only six were not being used. Ms. Schaldone reported some of the patients had been discharged from the program with maximum benefit.

She stated the plan now is to proceed with the next phase of the program which would be to begin marketing it. In conjunction with that effort, Ms. Schaldone said she had a brochure on the program that was prepared by Honeywell HomMed, the vendor of the monitoring units. She explained as part of their purchase agreement with the company they will be given 500 brochures at no cost. She distributed copies of the brochure to the committee members and a copy is on file with the minutes. Ms. Schaldone explained these were draft copies and the final brochure would be printed on glossy finish paper. She asked for the committee members' input on the brochure. Ms. Schaldone stated the gentleman pictured on the front of the brochure was one of

the agency's patients. She said he had been using the Telemedicine unit for about two months and he would most likely be in the program long-term because he has chronic congestive heart failure (CHF) and his insurance company is covering the costs of his care. Ms. Schaldone noted the inside picture in the brochure was of the patient and his wife and the picture on the back of the brochure was of Nancy Gasper, one of the department's staff nurses. The committee members perused the brochure.

Ms. Schaldone asked if there were any comments on the brochure. She advised they are ready to have it finalized and the plan is to distribute it to all area physicians, especially cardiologists because they want to expand the program to include open heart surgery patients. She noted those patients are at highest risk for CHF and other heart problems within the first two - four weeks after surgery as they need their weight, blood pressure, pulse, etc., checked every day. In addition, Ms. Schaldone said they plan to market the program to the cardiac physicians at the various hospitals in Albany where open heart surgeries are performed.

Mr. Haskell asked if the voice on the monitors was only in English. Ms. Schaldone replied the units can be programmed for up to 13 different languages. They could have the brochures printed in other languages if they wished, she said. Mr. Haskell noted there were a lot of Spanish-speaking people in the area now. Mr. Barody asked how many bi-lingual patients there were in the program; and Ms. Schaldone replied there were not any. She stated they could have a small number of the brochures printed in Spanish. Mr. Haskell said he was not as concerned about the brochures being in another language as he was that the monitors were.

Mr. Barody asked other than the pictures what input the department had provided for the brochures. He commented he thought they looked like a marketing piece for Honeywell HomMed. Ms. Schaldone replied she and some staff had prepared them. Mr. Barody queried if they had put in the references about the firm; and, Ms. Schaldone responded that was because the firm manufactured the units. Mr. Barody remarked the units could be any units as far as the County was concerned. Ms. Schaldone concurred with Mr. Barody that his assumption was correct that the trade-off for the firm paying for the units was that the County would market the firm's equipment. She said the firm's units were the only ones they had. Regarding the brochures, she explained the firm did provide some examples for them and she and the staff customized them to be specific to the agency. She highlighted the sections of the brochure that were specific to the agency for the committee members' information.

Mr. Tessier entered the meeting at 9:36 a.m.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Barody asked if there were any grants available that they could look at that would help cover the costs of a study of the County's results of the program. He noted they were looking at the program to save not only travel costs, the nurses' time, compliance, lower medical costs, and less re-hospitalizations but perhaps lower drug costs, etc. Ms. Schaldone replied the New York State

Department of Health (DOH) grant they have received is a two-year plan under which the department will send DOH data and updates on the program on a quarterly basis. In addition, she said the FDA grant they will be hearing about in April also has that reporting requirement.

Ms. Schaldone advised that Honeywell HomMed had also asked them to consider being a poster agency for its marketing efforts. Relative to that request, she said the company had asked her to send them background information on the agency and what their results had been with using the monitors and why they were using them. Ms. Schaldone stated she had distributed copies of the information she had e-mailed Honeywell HomMed this past Monday. A copy of the handout is on file with the minutes. She referred the committee members to the information on hospitalizations which was outlined under the headings of **Agency Problems Prior to Initiating Telemed Program** and **Present Data** on the first page of the handout. Ms. Schaldone reviewed the data in detail with the committee members and pointed out it reflected that the rate of hospitalizations was reduced after they began the Telemedicine Program. She noted she anticipated that these numbers would continue to decline, especially from the February rates because the hospitalizations were due to other complications and not from CHF. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Mason stated a letter from a patient's family who had participated in the program which praised the program was attached to Ms. Schaldone's report. He suggested that something like the letter be incorporated into the brochure. Ms. Schaldone concurred with Mr. Champagne that the target audience of the brochure was physicians, hospital case managers, etc. She said she had included the letter with the information she had sent to Honeywell HomMed for the aforementioned poster. Ms. Schaldone noted the letter was in response to a patient survey on the program and they provided each patient in the program with a patient satisfaction survey to obtain their input.

Mr. Haskell asked if in the picture of the monitoring equipment in the brochure some other object could be shown in actual size as a comparison to the size of the monitor. Ms. Schaldone responded when the marketing demonstrations are done they have a box that is a duplicate of the monitor that shows its actual size and also speaks like the real monitor does. Mr. Haskell commented he thought the brochure was very good.

Dialogue ensued between Mr. Champagne and Ms. Schaldone on various aspects of the program. She confirmed for Mr. Champagne that they currently have six units that are not in use but that they would be used. In reply to Mr. Champagne's query of when they would obtain the other 60 units, Ms. Schaldone said she felt the current level of turn around of the equipment was what they could manage. She noted there were six available units and four would be coming in this week so ten would be available this week. Ms. Schaldone explained the patients' length of stay on the monitors was approximately four - six weeks. However, she stated about 15 units will be used in the Long Term Home Health Care Program (LTHHCP) so they will not be turned around. Thus, she said they will have about 40 units available for other patients.

Ms. Schaldone concurred with Mr. Barody that the use of the monitors was diagnosis and reimbursement driven. She noted relative to being diagnosis driven they had originally targeted CHF/COPD patients and now they were going to move on to other cardiac diseases. Ms. Schaldone stated the program had already resulted in savings on the number of nursing visits to CHF/COPD patients. She apprised the average number of visits was 10 - 20 per episode and that has decreased to six - nine visits per episode at the cost of \$120/visit.

Mrs. Auer commented relative to the question of obtaining more monitors their program is working very well. However, she said she understood from what had happened in other agencies that if they were too greedy too quick the program gets bigger, but not necessarily better. Mrs. Auer stated they did not want that to happen with their program so they needed to be sure they had a very good hold on every disease entity they did. Mr. Barody said that related to the study he had asked about because he felt it was important how they would track and control the data in order to keep moving ahead and to make sure they were capturing all the data which could extend to how much less gas was being used. He noted he thought that was the kind of data they needed to provide the supervisors as they moved the program forward relative to making decisions about purchasing and expansion.

Mr. Barody asked if it would be possible for them to provide a more comprehensive list at the next committee meeting of what variables would be tracked as they moved the program forward. He noted the committee members could review the list to make sure nothing was being missed. Ms. Schaldone responded if they would tell her what items they were looking for. She advised for the projects she was involved in under the grants she has to track concerned visit frequencies, patients identified at high risk, the number of visits saved, etc. Mr. Champagne commented it seemed they were right on track but he thought Mr. Barody meant they should try and reduce those items to dollars and cents; and Mr. Barody concurred. Ms. Schaldone stated Ms. DeLorenzo could do that; and Ms. DeLorenzo agreed. Mr. Barody noted he did not want to pile a lot on them because their time should be spent on nursing, but he felt it was important to collect all that data and pay attention to it. Ms. Schaldone stated they were still in the process of educating all the staff nurses to use the monitors and that needed to be completed before she could look at increasing their patient case loads in the program. She noted she would be providing the staff with the information she had provided the committee members today at their April in-service meetings.

Mrs. Auer mentioned relative to the issue of getting all the staff up to speed with the program when they first started it the only space in the department for the data collection equipment was in Ms. Schaldone's office which was not a good arrangement. However, she said during the past month the computers to access the data were set up in the supervising nurses' offices so they were sharing their space with the staff that needs to access the program's data.

Mr. W. Thomas entered the meeting at 9:54 a.m.

Relative to the issue of space in the Health Services Department, Mr. Barody said he would ask

Mr. Haskell, Chairman of the County Facilities Committee, for a quick update on the status of the County's Health & Human Services Building project. Mr. Haskell reported the RFPs (Request for Proposals) for the engineering and architectural design services had been returned and reviewed and two engineering firms would be interviewed tomorrow. He said they hoped to be able to have the necessary resolution to authorize hiring a firm ready for the April Board of Supervisors' meeting. Mr. Haskell stated the project was being fast tracked. Mr. Barody thanked Mr. Haskell for the report.

Review of the Pending Items resumed, and Mrs. Auer spoke on the Fleet Management Efforts item. She recalled she was going to provide the committee members with monthly updates on the status of the system. Mrs. Auer stated she thought things were moving along in the right direction. She noted when they started the program they were concerned that it was not going to work but she thought that was because it was their busiest week ever for needing repairs. Mrs. Auer reported they are working out any kinks that come up and DPW continues to be very cooperative. They are providing Mr. Remington with their usage data and she will be meeting with him again about the system, she said. Mrs. Auer commented the situation was not perfect but there had been some successes and she was comfortable with the situation. Mr. Haskell asked if the updates could be provided for the next six months; and Mrs. Auer acknowledged the request.

Mrs. Auer noted the next Pending Item was that department staff was going to make a presentation on Avian flu and their preparatory planning efforts for Pandemic flu. She asked if the presentation could be made at the end of the meeting; and Mr. Barody agreed to the request.

Mrs. Auer introduced Helen Stern, RN, who she said was the department's Immunization Program Coordinator. She stated Mrs. Stern is the leader of the teams of clinic nurses that provide the department's clinics that are held throughout the County. Mrs. Auer noted the presentation was in conjunction with her plan to have the department's staff people inform the committee members about the programs they are involved in periodically during the year.

Mrs. Auer commenced with review of the New Business agenda items.

The first New Business item, she said was a request for approval of a resolution to authorize out-of-state travel for Robin Andre PHN, and Nancy Getz RN, to attend the 13th Annual Professional Lactation Conference in Burlington, Vermont on April 6th and 7th. She advised she had not made any commitment on the Conference yet. Mrs. Auer stated they had just found out about the Conference and usually she would not consider approving the request because of the short time frame. However, she said such conferences are not held very often and the nurses need to have a certain number of training hours of continuing education in order to maintain their certifications as Lactation Specialists.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell and seconded by Mr. Mason to approve the request. In reply to Mr. Barody's query on the costs to attend the Conference, Mrs. Auer apprised the total cost

for both of the nurses to attend was \$205, which was half the costs because both of them had been granted one-day tuition assistance to attend. The hotel costs were \$113, she said. Mrs. Auer noted they now apply for tuition assistance for any conferences they might attend. She concurred with Mrs. Parsons that the correct date for the overnight stay shown on the agenda should be April 6th and not April 12th.

Mr. Barody called the question, and the motion to approve the aforementioned request to ratify the attendance at the Conference, as presented, was carried unanimously. A copy of a resolution request form for the item with the correct date for the overnight stay was included in the agenda packet.

The next request, Mrs. Auer stated was for approval of a resolution to authorize an agreement with Glens Falls Hospital to allow nurses from The Snuggery to periodically accompany the department's Maternal Child Health nurses during their work days. She advised she had reviewed this request with Trish Nenninger, Second Assistant County Attorney, who had spoken with Paul Dusek, County Attorney, on it, and it was determined it was possible to enter into the agreement. Additional details on the rationale for the request were provided in the agenda.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to authorize the necessary resolution for the next board meeting. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Continuing, Mrs. Auer requested approval of a resolution to amend Resolution No. 696 of 2005 to reflect revised Medicaid rates established for North Country Home Services for various services as outlined in the agenda. She explained the rates for this provider were not available when Resolution No. 296 was adopted last year.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request, as presented, and to authorize the necessary resolution for the next board meeting. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Concluding the resolution requests, Mrs. Auer requested approval of a resolution to authorize agreements with Stacie Dimezza, SLP and Maggie Dochak, SLP for the provision of speech therapy services. She reviewed the rationale for the requests as outlined in the agenda.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned requests, as presented, and to authorize the necessary resolution for the next board meeting. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer reviewed the information on Fluoride with the committee members that was outlined in the last page of the agenda. She stated at the last Professional Advisory Committee (for the Health Services' Department) meeting they discussed the issue of fluoridation of community water supplies (for prevention of dental decay). They had also discussed this periodically last year,

Mrs. Auer added. She acknowledged they understood they could not do anything about whatever the towns decide to do about treating their water supplies with fluoride. She noted that since fluoridation of community water supplies was considered to be one of the largest accomplishments in public health in the Twentieth Century, the Professional Advisory Committee felt it would probably be prudent to at least ask this committee if they thought it would be appropriate to provide education on this issue to communities. She advised that Robert Phelps, Commissioner of the County Social Services Department, is a member of the Professional Advisory Committee, and he had provided her with information that showed the County's Medicaid expenditures for dental care were \$1.2 million per year.

Copies of Mr. Phelps's memo to Mrs. Auer that outlined this information were distributed to the committee members along with copies of a handout from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA) Children's Policy Agenda on Children's Oral Health. Copies of the items are on file with the minutes.

Mrs. Auer stated the Professional Advisory Committee had not done a lot of work on this issue. Thus, she said the question today was whether the committee members would be interested in having them form a small group whose initial mission would be to put together an educational presentation on fluoridation issues, concerns, etc., for this committee's members for the May or June meeting, or did they just want to drop the issue. She noted that Mrs. Stern had some other information on the issue. Mrs. Auer said she understood that many years ago before she was in the department the fluoridation issue was raised and it became quite politically charged. She said they were not looking to do that, but just to provide education. Mrs. Auer asked for the committee members' input on the matter.

Mr. Haskell commented according to some recent national news reports he had heard it seemed fluoride was not as beneficial as once thought. However, he said he did not know how in-depth the studies had been on it. Perhaps, Mr. Haskell said that was the information Mrs. Stern had. Mrs. Auer noted she thought they were just talking about the education aspect. Privilege of the floor was extended to Mrs. Stern and she said the information she had read was in the *Wall Street Journal*. She stated the article seemed to indicate that fluoride occurred naturally in some places and where those levels were high there were problems with it. However, Mrs. Stern noted she thought the article did not say there were problems in communities that were introducing it into their water supplies.

Mr. Barody said he had read that article too and he agreed with Mrs. Stern's synopsis of it. He commented he felt the aforementioned \$1.2 million in Medicaid costs was an impressive figure and as everyone knew the County participates in those costs. However, Mr. Barody said the problem was that he did not know if the figure was for fluoride problems, checkups or what. Mr. Haskell noted he thought that was the County's total costs for Medicaid.

Mr. Kenny entered the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Mr. Mason stated he felt it would not hurt for the committee members to look into this issue to at least educate themselves about it. Then, he said if they did not go any further with it that would be all right. Mrs. Auer advised that was their mission. Then, she said they could advise the Professional Advisory Committee that they had brought the issue up and that they would provide this committee with an informational session about it by having some dentists and physicians come in to do that. Mrs. Auer concurred with Mr. Mason that then they could either continue on with it or just let it go.

Mr. Barody advised he felt they needed some data to back up what they were saying about how much of an impact on the \$1.2 million Medicaid costs was actually from decay problems. He asked Mrs. Auer to have Mr. Phelps provide a break down of what portion of the Medicaid costs were for dental services. Mrs. Auer concurred that she would obtain that information from Mr. Phelps.

At the conclusion of further discussion on various aspects of the fluoride issue, Mrs. Stern said she had some information she could provide the committee members on it. Mr. Barody asked her to do that.

Mr. Barody spoke on the aforementioned issue of the Avian flu and the department's planning efforts for Pandemic flu. He stated this was an issue that they would need to keep discussing. Mr. Barody advised that according to recent news reports he had heard the (Federal) Secretary of Health and Human Services predicts that some sort of a pandemic flu outbreak will occur in the committee members' lifetimes. In addition, he said even though the Secretary said the Federal government would develop guidelines for a pandemic and like the Hurricane Katrina situation a pandemic outbreak would be a local situation that would have to be responded to at the local level. Mr. Barody stated as the Health Services department was the County entity that would be involved in the situation Mrs. Auer and he feel they should begin a continuing dialogue on the matter. Mr. Barody stated the presentation today was the first step in that direction.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ginelle Jones, Assistant Director, Public Health Services, who commenced with the aforementioned presentation on the Avian flu and the department's planning efforts for Pandemic flu. She distributed copies of a memo dated February 8, 2006 that she had sent to medical providers in the County updating them on the status of influenza cases in the County and on DOH's Pandemic Influenza Plan. A copy of the memo is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Jones also distributed copies of a handout entitled, "Pandemic Flu Planning". She explained this was a copy of her presentation so the committee members could review it at their convenience after the meeting. A copy of the handout is on file with the minutes. Ms. Jones said if the committee members had any questions on the information they were welcome to call her at the office at any time. She said she would review the information quickly so that Mrs. Stern could have time to speak on some of the issues relative to a pandemic event.

Ms. Jones commenced with review of the presentation, and she stated the objectives today were to compare and clarify the types of flu. However, she noted she did not really mean types of flu but she had tried to come up with the appropriate flu words. For example, she said everyone hears about the seasonal flu and that was what the yearly flu shots are for. Ms. Jones stated that currently everyone is hearing the words Avian flu, Bird flu and Pandemic flu. However, she stated Pandemic flu was a misnomer that she would clarify later in the presentation.

Continuing, Ms. Jones reviewed the information on the aforementioned varieties of flu as outlined on Page 2 of the presentation. Regarding the Pandemic issue, Ms. Jones stated it was shown separately from the flu because she did not want it to be looked at as a type of flu. She explained it was an epidemic which she pointed out was described as a global epidemic resulting from an influenza virus that causes serious illness in humans that spreads easily from person to person. Ms. Jones noted the conditions of a pandemic and who it would affect were also listed in the chart. She reviewed and elaborated on the information on the prevention and treatment of the flus as outlined in the second chart on Page 2 of the handout.

As Ms. Jones continued with her presentation, she pointed out that Page 4 listed the countries where the Avian flu - H5N1 has occurred in humans as of February 8th and the Avian flu in animals as of March 17th.

Regarding the DOH's Pandemic Influenza Plan (Page 5), Ms. Jones pointed out DOH projects in a worst case scenario that 35% of the State's population would be affected. She apprised based on that projection that would be about 22,050 residents for the County depending on what number was looked at for the County's population. Ms. Jones pointed out the statistics in the worst case scenario did not include New York City.

Ms. Jones noted the websites that were supposed to be listed for the NYSDOH Pandemic Influenza Plan did not show up in the document but she would be glad to provide them to the committee members if they would like them. In reply to Mr. Barody's query on the State website, Ms. Jones said it was www.health.state.ny.us. Ms. Jones advised the State's Pandemic Plan had 13 sections and was 400 pages in length. She noted the sections were listed in the chart on Page 7 of the presentation.

Concluding the presentation, Ms. Jones stated relative to the County's Pandemic Influenza Planning items (Page 8) the County's Plan would be an annex to the State's Plan which is an annex to the Federal Government's Plan. She displayed a copy of the County's Plan and noted it would be due on August 8th. Ms. Jones advised they have two emergency response and preparedness committees. The first, she said was through Public Health and its purpose is to look at infection control, physician education, and what the strategy would be for surveillance, prevention and testing relative to the flu. Ms. Jones explained the second committee was through the department's home care agency under which they would be looking at their surge capacity. The participants on that committee included nursing homes, transporters, durable medical equipment vendors, hospitals, etc., she said.

Ms. Stern commenced with her presentation. Relative to the possibility of a Pandemic flu she said they should keep in mind the figures outlined in Ms. Jones' presentation for the State's worst case scenario for such an event. Ms. Stern stated then if they thought of a possible scenario for the County could be that the government provided them with 10,000 doses of vaccine because initially there would be a huge shortage of vaccine for a population of 60,000. She explained those doses would come to the Supervisors or someone and whoever that was would be responsible to decide who in the County would receive the vaccine. Ms. Stern noted she had read an article that said at a December meeting of scientists and physicians at the National Institute of Health (NIH) the issue was discussed of what would have to be considered in deciding who would receive the doses of the vaccine. She commented that would not be an easy decision.

Continuing, Ms. Stern noted Ms. Jones had mentioned that in past flu outbreaks the most vulnerable or those who would most likely die from the illness were given the vaccine. However, she stated the question would be who would keep the County operating if all the doses were given to the nursing homes. Thus, Ms. Stern noted the thinking that all humans are equal would have to be revised and perhaps the thinking would have to be in terms of what a person's value was to the social status of the County. She stated in that regard, a principle was discussed called the fair innings principle, whereby the question would be if someone had experienced most of their life's innings would they take the vaccine or give it to somebody who had not experienced so many innings. Brief discussion ensued. Ms. Stern commented this was an issue that really needed to be considered.

Ms. Stern stated the last issue was very controversial and it concerned the question of the County's economics and who kept the money flowing so the vaccine would be given to those who have jobs and pay taxes before it was given to anyone else. She stressed that the thought of making such decisions was very serious. Then, Ms. Stern said she read an article from NPR (National Public Radio) by a physician who is on the medical staff of New York University and who substantiated his information that it was very, very unlikely that there would ever be a Pandemic influenza outbreak.

Mr. Barody said he did not agree with that because such events have occurred repeatedly in history and they will happen again, it was just a matter of when. He stated this would be due to viruses mutating and that it takes considerable time to develop vaccines for certain viruses. Mr. Barody noted the aforementioned report from the Health and Human Services Secretary was on PBS TV and it was very sobering. If, he said the program was repeated everyone here today should watch it.

Discussion ensued, and Mrs. Auer noted that an example of the issue of deciding who would receive the vaccine was that in last year's flu vaccine shortage a lot of people were suddenly the staffs' new best friends. She commented if they could imagine an event of the magnitude where people were dying and they had to make such choices. Ms. Jones noted in terms of the County's population they were planning on 60,000 but the issue of what the tourist population might be if a pandemic occurred during that season should be kept in mind.

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Mr. Haskell stated these issues should be taken very seriously and a plan should be developed now because it could not be done in just one meeting.

Mrs. Sady left the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

At the conclusion of further discussion on a Pandemic flu outbreak, Mr. Barody commented a lot of issues were involved concerning the matter and there were more questions than answers.

Mr. Haskell relayed to the committee members that a resident of his town (Thurman) had heartily praised the care he received from the department's health care nurses during a recent illness.

There being no further business, on motion by Mr. Haskell and seconded by Mr. Mason, Mr. Barody adjourned the meeting at 10:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk