

HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES - amended
September 18, 2008

Present:

R. Parete J. Stoeckeler
P. Terpening K. Ronk
L. Petit T. Briggs
J. Roberti

UCMHD: M. Beckman, E. Brown

Chairman Parete called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Copies of the UCMHD 2009 Budget summary were distributed to Committee members.
2. Legislator Briggs moved that a resolution to authorize the Chairman to enter into an agreement with SUNY Albany School of Social Welfare for the continuation of the student intern program be approved. Legislator Ronk seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.
3. A resolution authorizing the Chairman to sign contracts with school districts for the FACETS program was tabled. M. Beckman explained that the County Attorney raised questions about the legality of the funding arrangement. Legal counsel for the NYS Office of Mental Health has indicated that it disagrees with the county's position on this matter. Both attorneys will explore the issue together to determine if Ulster will allow the contracts to go through.
4. Legislator Briggs moved that a resolution to accept State aid from NYS OASAS for an employment specialist position at Gateway Industries be approved. Legislator Ronk seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.
5. M. Beckman provided the Committee with an update on the Golden Hill building renovation project. He reported that the renovation Steering Committee had met prior to the Health Services Committee meeting. The Steering Committee requested new cost estimates from the architect. Beckman will work with Brian Cunningham and the architect to make revisions as quickly as possible.
6. M. Beckman reported that the UCMHD Chemical Dependency Day Treatment Program (CDDTP) would close as of the end of the day on September 19, 2008. The closing was due to inability to produce enough revenues to offset costs. He reported that all the clients were successfully transitioned to appropriate services and that the 6 staff associated with the program were reassigned to vacancies within the department, thus avoiding any layoffs.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward J. Brown
Deputy Director, Ulster County Mental Health Department

Long Term Care Report

Committee Members Present: Chairman Robert S. Parete, Legislators Thomas Briggs, Joseph Stoeckeler, Philip Terpening, Laura Petit, Joseph Roberti, Kenneth Ronk

Others Present: Legislator Frank Dart, Legislator Jim Maloney, Speaker Steve Kelley, Dr. Francoise Dunefsky, Dr. Roberts

Chairman Parete requested that the Long Term Care Committee Report dated July, 2008 be stated in the minutes and file the master copy for reproduction with the Deputy Clerk of the Legislature. Report was submitted at time of meeting.

Steve Kelley (CEO Ellenville Regional Hospital) presented a PowerPoint presentation on behalf of the Blue Ribbon Healthcare Services Advisory Panel – Long Term Care Committee Findings. The following was presented and discussed:

Opening Statement: A group of volunteers researched and reviewed data for about a year with input from consultants and architects. Tonight we present our findings as to the current situation of long term care in Ulster County. The charge of this committee was to examine long term care health services in Ulster County, with a focus on the future opportunities and alternatives for Golden Hill Health Care Center. (Note, presentation does not include the Northeast Center for Special Care.)

Current Situation: Golden Hill is currently running at nearly full capacity - 97.7 percent. The committee recommends more beds for anticipated growth.

Population Growth/Bed Need: Ulster County is growing at 2.3 percent per year. The population needing care most likely 75 years and over is growing at a faster rate than the County population growth. 940 beds projected in 2005 based on 183,976 population compared to 1102 beds projected by 2030 based on 215,719 population. Note, Berger commission states less beds will be needed.

Distribution of Beds: Nearly 25 percent of the Ulster County population lives in the southwestern portion of the county, however only 7 percent of the Golden Hill residents come from that part of the county. Nursing homes are mostly located along the Hudson River. Note, 11 percent of residents are from outside the County.

Provision of Care at Golden Hill: Very well maintained, clean, well run. Made a point to state how impressed the committee was with the Administrator's knowledge, caring and compassion for the residents. Also with the Administrator's ability to balance the fiscal needs of the county and still deliver high quality care. Went as far as to suggest giving the Administrator a raise as well as her staff. Could not have completed the study without their input and help.

Facility Concerns: The facility was designed as "state of the art" in the 1970's. However Golden Hill is greatly outdated and major portions of the facility do not meet current requirements per existing State Hospital Code and the Building Code of NYS. "The facility has reached or is nearing the useful life expectancy and will require replacement in the near future", (Vosburgh). Major concerns as to the piping throughout the building that could erupt at any time. A previous architect / engineer study in 2004

deemed the pipes in the building as corroded- deteriorated. A cross section of some piping analyzed looks like a horseshoe due to using caustic chemicals when cleaning. Some ADA non-compliant concerns are insufficient toilets, insufficient dining / recreation areas, exam and treatment rooms, interior fire doors and resident room doors are also non-compliant.

Subsidy to Cover Operating Loss: Ulster County had to pay \$18,200 per resident or \$5.1 million in 2007. Noted that the state reimbursement structure reimburses County nursing homes at a lower pay structure than non-county nursing homes.

Renovate - Repair vs. Build New: 1.) To renovate the old facility costing \$44 million with a NYS DOH reimbursement of \$33 million, 2.) Build two new County facilities, costing \$95 million with NYS DOH reimbursement of the full \$95 million, 3.) To build new **non-county** sponsored facilities costing and reimbursement of \$95 million at no risk to the County. Note, to renovate – option #1, \$33 million reimbursable dollars is a best case scenario estimate. After talking to the State Dept. of Health we're not so sure they would support renovating an older building without the County first submitting a proposal. The NYS Health Dept. noted that they are not doing renovations of this size in other places. Also noted, option #1 and option #2 **overruns** are not reimbursable thus putting the County at risk for all non-allowable costs and or cost overruns.

Recommendations: Replace Golden Hill with two new nursing homes with roughly the same amount of beds or a few more. Locate the new facilities closer to underserved clients geographically located. The two new facilities should have non-county sponsorship which would remove the potential for subsidy in the future and risk to the county for cost overruns and non-covered costs. The current facility should continue to operate until the new facilities are completed.

Benefits: Removes the need to subsidize \$4-6 million per year in operating losses. Removes risk to the County for funding cost overruns or unapproved expenses related to renovations or replacement construction. Provides new, modern state of the art facilities that comply with current regulations & designed features like quad living areas, or pods or communities which would achieve a more home like atmosphere vs. large open space wards. Building two new facilities will have the least disruption to residents. Improves access for underserved towns. Avoids the risk of making poor, quick or expensive decisions during a crisis.

Question and Discussion:

Chairman Parete thanked the panel for their hard work and many hours of research. He felt we may need to consider an updated analysis of the current building conditions. Wants to appoint a sub-committee to this committee for point contact of information. Legislator Briggs made a request to Chairman Parete to speak with Michael Hein to see if monies are available in the budget for an updated study.

Legislator Stoeckeler felt the project could take 7-8 years to complete not 3-4 as stated. Wants to actively keep this on the radar and have a commitment from the committee as it was pushed aside during the jail project. Also mentioned to possibly consider renovate and build one smaller facility. He also thanked everyone on the committee for their efforts and wants to keep everyone informed.

Legislator Phil Terpening agrees with Legislator Stoeckeler and also expressed concerns the building is only 35 years old! He mentioned other local facilities in our community that are older and still going. He feels the study is exaggerated and also stated we need a place for the poor and middle class – not just for the rich. Also stated that a County run facility is worth paying for.

Legislator Frank Dart thanked the committee for the report. He stated he felt the committee overstepped their objective. The objective was to present facts and figures on what we currently have, what we need and the cost factor. Leg. Dart does not want to privatize the facility and is totally behind supporting jobs for the 414 current Golden Hill employees. He feels revenues will dry up if privatized. He also apologized to the citizens that they had to read about the report in the local paper – thinking their job was in jeopardy.

Mr. Kelly remarked that all three studies done previously came to the same conclusion.

Dr. Roberts stated their task was to take a lot of information and make recommendations. He stated the committee is open to any suggestions and added we all want good quality care for the citizens.

Dr. Dunefsky, CEO of Gateway Industries stated she has worked in the community for 35 years and the care at Golden Hill is zero to none. Exceptional care is given at Golden Hill. Dr. Dunefsky feels a state of the art facility is needed and stated that after coming from a previous meeting with the state she feels the state is not in the business of building facilities.

Chairman Parete recognized Lee Cane with the League of Women Voters for being at every meeting.

Legislator Ronk gave an overview of Introductory Local Law No. 12 of 2008 (A Local Law Prohibiting Smoking 50 Feet From All Building Entrances Upon All Real Property Owned Or Leased By The County Of Ulster).

Legislator Stoeckeler motioned, seconded by Legislator Ronk to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nettie Tomshaw
Legislative Employee