

Public Health Committee Minutes
May 9, 2011 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Wright; Supervisors Daly, Kinowski, Lucia, Raymond, Richardson, Southworth, and M. Johnson; Spencer Hellwig, Administrator; Ryan Moore, Mgmt. Analyst; Jack Kalinkewicz, Personnel; Lori Stiles, Public Health; Hans Lehr, Mental Health; Diane Brown, Maplewood Manor; Robert Wilcox, Attorney; Press.

Chairman Wright called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Kinowski, seconded by Mr. Lucia the minutes of the April 11, 2011 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. Kalinkewicz said the search committee has selected Karen Levison as the new Director of Public Health, which will be forwarded to the Law and Finance Committee and then to the full Board of Supervisors for their approval. In addition to the meeting that took place for the approval of Ms. Levison to the position of Public Health Director, there were discussions on the steps that the county will need to take to move to a full service health department, which will include restaurant inspections, water quality and rabies. The population in the county is getting to the point of necessity, he said. Meetings have taken place with the Department of Health and they have said we must begin the process.

Mr. Wright said all committee members should have received a copy of the letter from Chairman Wood to the Regional Director of the Department of Health for their review.

Mr. Kalinkewicz said the Department of Health has approached the county for a number of years. At this point they have a little bit of leverage to say, you will not get a Director of Public Health approved until you, at least, talk to us about this, so we did, he said. It was a good meeting and they are trying to be as helpful as they can, but obviously there are costs that will be associated with it down the road and all that goes with it. They do make a case for why Saratoga County stands out in the entire state as the only one, with all of our characteristics and demographics, that has not changed over.

Mr. Wright said the county has sent a plan to the State that is laid out through the year 2016.

Mrs. Brown said at the last Public Health meeting she explained that unless 50% of the patients at Maplewood Manor had Medicare/Managed Care by January 1, 2011, if they were to go into the hospital and are Medicaid residents, the nursing home would not get any bed holds. Mrs. Brown said she attended a meeting last week to discuss this matter, and as yet there are no details from the State concerning the issue.

Mrs. Brown said she had a meeting with the Department of Social Services with regard to liens of property. She said the way it works is if a child lives in the house for a minimum of two years prior to a nursing home admission, then the house can be given to the child, with no penalty. If there is a disabled child, the house can be given to the disabled child, even if the child doesn't live there, with no penalty. If a resident comes into the nursing home and there is a letter that indicates they would like to go back to the home, then the property doesn't need to be sold, if it was the home that the resident was living in. A lien would be filed and when the property is sold then the lien would be collected, and all the money would be transferred to the State. The county would not receive any money, she said.

Mr. Kinowski asked, since we don't really have leverage to make the people pay what they owe, does that bring us back to having the paperwork done prior to someone being admitted? Mrs. Brown said, yes, they have really tightened up on that process. The difficult part is the Medicaid approval process. Currently there are eleven people at Maplewood Manor that don't have Medicaid. Their applications have been submitted, but they are not yet approved, so they are still outstanding, one going as far back as September of 2010, she said.

Mrs. Southworth asked if there was any indication of why it is taking so long for approval or denial of the Medicaid applications? Mrs. Brown said there are a few that just take a long time, but her office does follow up regularly to see where they stand in the process.

Mrs. Brown said she has had discussions with Mr. Wilcox, from the County Attorney's Office on when it is appropriate to sue when there is a resident at the nursing home that is not paying. She said when someone is admitted they are told that their social security checks are to be turned over to the nursing home, and that they can't pay any other bills except Medical bills, in order to be approved by Medicaid.

Mr. Wilcox said there is a protocol that dates back to 2002, which really precludes lawsuits until \$30,000+ is owed. A policy would have to be made as to whether that is an appropriate level before you wish to pursue collection activity or whether you think that is an inappropriate level of debt. The current protocol indicates a certain number of days between certain actions, and if you total up all the days before the Attorney gets the wakeup on the fact that the resident is behind, and you use the maximum number of days, you are over \$30,000 as being owed. Mr. Wilcox suggested the committee might want to look at a different structure. He suggested looking at addressing a protocol that addresses the amount of stay and how that relates to cost, and what might be owed in certain segments of the residents stay to speed up the process of seeking legal involvement for collection activity earlier.

Mr. Wright said he would like to have available to the committee next month some information on a policy that would speed up the process for collecting on bad debts.

Mrs. Brown said on December 31, 2010 there was a full house at Maplewood Manor of 277 beds. On the female to male ratio, the percentage is 81.9% female to 18.1% male. Of the total resident population at the nursing home 72.6% are 80 years old or older, with three female residents over 100. In 2010 there were 133 discharges and 134 admissions. Most residents in a nursing home are there two years or less; however at Maplewood Manor approximately 25% of the residents have been there for more than two years, which is a high number that is seen in a lot of county facilities. Of all the discharges in 2010 there was one resident that was in the facility between 12 and 13 years and one that was in the residence for almost 14 years.

Mrs. Brown said there are ten residents that have lived at Maplewood Manor for more than ten years, with one resident that has been in the facility since February 14, 1986.

Mrs. Brown said the policy at Maplewood Manor is to Saratoga County residents or people who have a residence in the county. Approximately 85.9% of the residents at the nursing home were living in Saratoga County at the time they were admitted.

Mr. Wright said he attended the residents meeting at Maplewood Manor last month and the majority of the people said they were happy with the care that they were receiving.

Mr. Lehr gave a brief overview of the Annual Report from the Mental Health Center as follows:

Saratoga County is the fastest growing county in the State, and the demand for services in all agencies reflects that continued growth in population.

The early retirement has impacted the Mental Health Department resulting in fewer admissions; however, the admissions policy is set up to always take the most seriously mentally ill.

Mr. Lehr said Mental Health was audited by the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General for years 2005 through 2008. The results of the audit will be received in 2011, and it is anticipated that there will be paybacks.

Mr. Lehr said Mental Health has been mandated for a major restructure of how they bill for services. The bad news is that, while we are paying under the new rules, we are getting paid under the old rules because the Federal Government has not approved the State plan and revenue isn't able to be projected correctly.

Mr. Lehr said the Clifton Park satellite has closed, and Friendship house has moved to a new location in Geysers Crest.

Ms. Raymond asked how the clients responded to the transition? Mr. Lehr said all clients did well with the transition. Within two or three weeks they were settled in.

Mr. Lehr said a five-year lease agreement has been signed with Saratoga Hospital and the clinic restructuring became operational on October 1, 2011.

The following goals have been set for 2011:

- Integrate medical staff into Center practice under the new arrangement of the professional lease agreement. The agreement radically alters the relationship of physicians to the Center, both from a practice and a business perspective.

- Implement the new Medicaid reimbursement coding required for continued substance abuse reimbursement.
- Achieve full operational capacity at Friendship House. Friendship House requires a high-speed data connection to the Clinic for billing and patient record keeping. The facility needs to be upgraded to obtain a certificate of occupancy. Long distance telephone service is outstanding.
- Explore conversion of Friendship House to another NYS OMH program category. NYS OMH is putting significant financial pressure on all continuing day treatment programs to convert to program category “PROS”.
- Improve internal monitoring procedures related to billing and documentation to achieve and maintain a required level of compliance to regulations and standards.

Mrs. Stiles requested a resolution to accept a January 5, 2011 – July 31, 2011 Medical Reserve Corp. Capacity Building Award in the amount of \$5,000 from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and to amend the 2011 county budget. A similar award was received last year for \$10,000, she said.

A motion was made by Mr. Lucia, seconded by Mrs. Southworth to approve a Medical Reserve Corp. Capacity Building Award in the amount of \$5,000 from the National Association of County and City Health Officials and to amend the 2011 county budget. Unanimous.

Mr. Lucia commended Mrs. Stiles for the good job that she has done as Acting Director of Public Health.

On a motion made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Ms. Raymond the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Sansom