

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE MINUTES

DECEMBER 5, 2006 – 3:30 P.M.

Present: Chairman Daly; Supervisors Callanan, Lucia, Raymond and Thompson; Spencer Hellwig, Mgmt. Analyst; Diane Brown, Maplewood Manor; Helen Endres, Alan Kempf, Janet Glenn, Public Health; Dale Angstadt, Mental Health, Press.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Lucia, seconded by Mr. Callanan the minutes of the November 1, 2006 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mrs. Brown said every year when Maplewood Manor does their budget they look at the private pay rate to determine whether or not an adjustment needs to be made. A few years ago the committee and the Board of Supervisors decided that Maplewood Manor would charge residents what the nursing home costs were. The 2006 costs per day were \$225/day. When costs were calculated for 2007 it was determined that the charge of \$225/day still covers the cost.

Mrs. Brown said she is recommending that the private pay rate not be adjusted for 2007. After checking with other facilities with regard to their private pay rate it was found that the average pay rate for area nursing homes in Saratoga County was \$250/day.

Mrs. Brown said some of the nursing homes are going up about \$10/day, and some of them are also charging a different rate for private rooms versus semi private rooms. Maplewood Manor has always had one rate, she said.

Mrs. Brown said she is required by the Department of Health to ask all staff if they would like a flu shot. They are provided at Maplewood Manor for a charge of \$12 this year. It has been determined that when a healthcare worker in a nursing home has been provided with a flu shot they are, obviously, not bringing in the flu virus, significantly reducing the number of residents that might be exposed. To date there are 307 employees, who responded, with 100 requesting the vaccine, and 75 having already received it.

Mrs. Brown said she has contacted three nursing homes and has found that they are providing free vaccine to their employees. In one area county, they provide free vaccine to all employees.

Ms. Daly said Public Health will be holding a drill on December 18th, whereby they are going to see how many people they can vaccinate in a short length of time. This vaccine will be free of charge.

Ms. Endres said the free vaccine is a separate amount of flu vaccine that is provided by the State and given free of charge so Public Health can test their point of distribution

clinic. This clinic will be for first responders, hospital personnel, and nursing home personnel including Maplewood Manor. There will be 500 doses available on a first come first serve basis.

Ms. Daly suggested getting out some additional communication and encouraging staff to attend the drill. She also suggested making the time period from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. available for Maplewood Manor employees should they be on the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift.

Ms. Daly said another possibility would be to hold another flu clinic at Maplewood Manor.

Mrs. Brown said if the flu clinic is held at Maplewood, the county insurance may be able to be billed. This is currently being explored.

Ms. Raymond asked how much the flu vaccine costs the county? Mr. Kempf said the majority of the vaccine costs \$11.

Ms. Daly said she would contact the Director of Personnel and resolve any union or contract issues. A recommendation will be made to increase communication with regard to a drill and holding a flu clinic at Maplewood Manor for this year. Further, looking into Union issues with regard to providing flu vaccine to all employees at Maplewood and/or at a minimum all healthcare workers at the county as a stepping place for next year.

Ms. Endres requested a resolution authorizing increases in hourly rates for Aide Agencies, effective 1/1/07. Currently we have six Aide Agencies. We have had requests from three Aide Agencies for increases: Greater Adirondack Home Aides, Home Health Care Partners and Visiting Nurses Home Care.

Greater Adirondack Home Health Agency is requesting a 3% increase from \$24.31 to \$25.04/hr. They have also requested the same increase from Warren County where they also supply aides. The greatest number of cases that we have are through Greater Adirondack Home Aides with approximately 52.05% year-to-date usage. They do not have a holiday rate and they do provide weekend coverage, when requested, at no increased cost, she said. They are also an independent non-for-profit agency and are not affiliated with any other Certified Home Health Agency.

Ms. Raymond asked when the hourly rates are raised, are the agencies giving pay rates to their employees? Ms. Endres said she did not exactly know how much they pay their employees, but they do provide more and more benefits for the employees.

Greater Adirondack has made positive changes in their 2007 budget reflecting the aides choices. They increased the employee contribution to health insurance coming up in 2007 from \$80/mo. to \$90/mo. Aides also receive a group rate and they administer the policy for the aide's convenience.

Ms. Endres said although gas prices are dropping, Greater Adirondack home health aides will increase their mileage rate from \$.40 per mile to \$.42 per mile. They quoted in their request, that they are also the only agency that pays their aides an hourly rate for travel from client to client. The aides will receive a performance raise of 3.0% effective July 1, 2007. This is an annual raise from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008 and the aides have received this raise over the past four years.

Ms. Endres said the next aide agency that is looking for an increase is Home-Health Care Partners. This is the second highest percentage of cases that we use, at 14.72%. Two years ago they requested an 11% increase. We successfully negotiated their increase down to 6% and held it for a two-year period. This year they requested a 10.53% increase from \$19/hr. to \$21/hr.

We countered with a \$20.50/hr. and \$30.75/hr. for holidays and they have agreed, resulting in an 8% increase that would be for a two-year period, she said.

Ms. Endres asked Home-Health Care Partners what they were doing for their employees? The response was: We do offer many benefits including health insurance, which we contribute \$150/mo. to the plan. The staff earn paid time off and a bonus is paid annually based on hours worked. Our partnership program offers staff an opportunity for quarterly bonuses.

Ms. Endres said Visiting Nurses Home Care is asking for a 3% increase from \$18.57/hr. to \$19.13/hr. The holiday rate is \$27.87/hr., which represents a 3% increase. They are utilized approximately 5.82%.

A motion was made by Mr. Callanan, seconded by Mr. Lucia to approve the increase in hourly rates for Aide Agencies effective 1/1/07, as stated above. Unanimous.

Mrs. Endres requested a resolution increasing compensation for the Medical Director effective 1/1/07.

Dr. Del Giacco, consistent with last year, is requesting a 3.5% increase. The currently reimbursement is \$35,631 with an increase in 2007 to \$36,878.

Dr. Del Giacco's duties are to provide medical consultation and direction for the entire Agency including Home Care, Public Health and Prevention.

Dr. Del Giacco chairs the Quality Assurance Committee, which meets quarterly. Public Health is mandated by the State to provide TB services and Dr. Del Giacco acts as the TB medical consultant, seeing patients on-site monthly in the TB clinic. He assists with policies and procedure implementation for the TB program.

Ms. Endres said her office is also in contact with him daily, and at times twice a day during the week, with TB treatment issues. Dr. Del Giacco oversees and conducts case

management and treatment of active TB cases in the county. He also provides medical oversight and approvals for the Physically Handicapped Children's Program, reviewing and signing all authorizations for services under the Physically Handicapped Program. He provides medical consultation/direction when needed by the Public Health Director.

A motion was made by Mr. Callanan, seconded by Mr. Lucia to approve an increase in compensation for the Medical Director, Dr. Del Giacco effective 1/1/07 from \$35,631 to \$36,878. Unanimous.

Ms. Endres requested a resolution to increase agency charges, effective 1/1/07. Periodically we look at our Agency rates to determine if there is a reason to raise the rates. While increasing these charges is primarily a bookkeeping procedure, there are important reasons to do so:

1. We need to establish our charges high enough to maximize Medicaid revenues while remaining competitive with similar agencies serving County residents.
2. Increasing our charges gives us more leverage to negotiate more favorable rates from private insurance companies.

We have surveyed area home health agency charges and, at this time we only need to increase the rate for nursing, PRI's and Home Health Aide services. All other rates will remain the same as they are now, SP - \$110/visit; PT, OT MSW & Nutrition - \$105/visit.

The changes are:

	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Nursing	\$145	\$160
Nursing (PRI)	\$145	\$160
Home Health Aide	\$ 45/hr.	\$ 50/hr.

Ms. Endres said Public Health is looking to be competitive within the market. As our cost exceeds the Medicaid ceiling (which for 2006 was tentatively \$146) we only need to ensure that our charge remains above the ceiling to maximize access to Medicaid funding.

The initial 2006 Medicaid rate for nursing is \$139.68. We expect the actual rate to increase. The 2007 rates have not been determined, as the 2005 cost reports have been delayed by the State.

The patient review instrument (PRI), is done for entrance level into the nursing homes, and generally follows the charge for a nursing visit.

Based upon annualized year to date 10/06 Medicaid Nursing and Home Health Aide services, increasing the fees should make an additional \$8,000 - \$9,000 available for 2007.

Nursing was last increased effective 7/1/05 and the Home Health Aide, effective 6/1/04.

We readily offer a sliding fee scale for any of those individuals who have difficulty paying for the PRI, as well as any services that our Certified Home Health Agency provides, should there be no insurance coverage available.

A motion was made by Mr. Lucia, seconded by Mr. Thompson to approve an increase in Agency fees as stated above for Nursing, PRI's and Home Health Aide services effective 1/1/07. Unanimous.

Mr. Thompson asked how long a visit by the nurse would be? Ms. Endres said the first visit can vary lasting anywhere from two hours to 2 ½ hours, with paperwork after that it could last another hour or two. There are more and more requirements under Medicare that have to be prepared for patient records. A second visit may be less than the initial visit, depending on the type of service that is needed.

Ms. Endres said Public Health has received all of their allotted flu vaccine. To date 2,318 shots have been given. There has been good participation within the community and more clinics are scheduled.

On a motion made by Mr. Lucia, seconded by Mr. Thompson the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Sansom