

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE MINUTES

JANUARY 5, 2006 – 3:30 P.M.

Present: Chairman Daly; Supervisors Connors, Raymond, Gutheil and Richardson; Spencer Hellwig, Mgmt. Analyst; Helen Endres, Alan Kempf, Terry Stortz, Public Health; Diane Brown, Maplewood Manor; Dale Angstadt, Hans Lehr, Mental Health; Robert Strock and Brian Strock, Students.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Ms. Raymond the minutes of the December 7, 2005 meeting were approved unanimously.

Ms. Daly announced the appointment of Ms. Raymond as Vice Chairman of the Public Health Committee.

Mr. Angstadt requested a resolution to amend the 2006 budget to access additional 100% State Aid funding from OASAS, which is the State agency that funds the Alcohol and Drug Treatment program that contracts with Family and Children's Services of the Capital Region to fund a satellite program for the **Center For Problem Gambling Program.**

The program located at 15 Maple Dell in Saratoga Springs will be funded up to \$150,000, and will include three full time positions. The program, which opened last year, will service Warren, Washington and Saratoga County.

A motion was made by Ms. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Connors to approve a resolution to amend the 2006 budget to access additional 100% State Aid funding in the amount of \$150,000 and to contract with the Family and Children's Services of the Capital Region to fund a satellite program for the Center for Problem Gambling Program. Unanimous.

Ms. Endres requested an amendment to resolution #155-02 increasing inoculation fees, effective 7/1/06 for Flu vaccine and Pneumococcal vaccine and related administrative costs. The current charge for the flu vaccine is \$7.50, which has been in effect since 2002, she said. Public Health monitors all their costs, however, vaccine costs continue to increase. It is expected that the flu vaccine for the fall will cost \$10.99 per dose, not including the nursing administration, clerical time, billing time and any other clerical overhead costs, and supplies.

Ms. Endres requested an increase from the current \$7.50 to \$12.00 for the flu vaccine. In comparison with some of the neighboring counties, it was found that they are charging anywhere from \$15 to \$20 for flu vaccination. At the clinics the residents are encouraged to bring in some information, enabling Public Health to bill some insurance companies

for the vaccine. Those that do not have insurance or a company that Public Health contracts with, are charged \$7.50. Senior citizens under Medicare Part B, Railroad Retirement, or Senior Blue are exempt from payment, and the county Public Health is reimbursed for their immunizations.

Ms. Endres requested an increase in the Pneumococcal vaccine from the current charge of \$20 per dose to \$25 per dose effective 7/1/06. The current cost of the vaccine is \$20.44 per dose. It was \$198.63 in December 2004, which was an increase of 9.72%. The Pneumococcal vaccine has the same additional overhead costs as noted above.

A motion was made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve an amendment to resolution #155-02; increasing the fee schedule for inoculation clinics for Flu/Pneumococcal vaccine and associated administrative costs effective 7/1/06 as follows: Flu vaccine from \$7.50 - \$12.00 per dose; Pneumococcal vaccine from \$20 - \$25 per dose. Unanimous.

Ms. Endres requested committee approval of reimbursement rates from insurance companies, effective February 2006 as follows:

Empire Health Choice, Inc. (d/b/a/ Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield):

Nursing:	\$110/visit	PT:	\$85/visit
OT:	\$ 85/visit	MSW:	\$85/visit
HHA:	\$ 55/visit	SP:	\$85/visit

Ms. Endres said as discussed with the committee in the past, Public Health has been negotiating with insurance providers, to increase the rate they pay. As per resolution 125-03, this will only require committee approval, she said.

Ms. Endres recommended acceptance of the Empire Health Choice, Inc. proposed rates. Public Health has been negotiating for many months with Empire Health Choice, Inc. to re-establish our reimbursement Contract with them and to also include the additional lines of business we previously did not participate in, she said.

The Nursing rates are similar to the rates that have been received from other insurance companies at \$110 per visit. Therapy rates will be reimbursed at \$85 per visit. This is slightly lower than some of the other insurance companies; however, it is still higher than the cost of providing the service, she said.

A motion was made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Ms. Raymond to approve entering into an agreement with Empire Health Choice, Inc. (d/b/a Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield) at the following rates: Nursing: \$110/visit; OT, PT, MSW and SP, \$85/visit; HHA; \$55/visit, effective February 2006. Unanimous.

Ms. Endres recommended discontinuing the reimbursement contract with NOVA Healthcare Administrators.

In 1998, Public Health was approached by NOVA to become a participating provider. At that time they provided coverage for many Skidmore students and employees, as well as a small number of employers in the region. They no longer cover Skidmore.

Their proposed rates of reimbursement have consistently been the lowest of all of the rates offered by Third Party plans. Since 2003, Public Health has had a total of three patients receiving a total of eight visits for this payer, she said.

NOVA has offered only \$100/visit for Nursing, which is well below any of the other plan's rates for 2006. It is not cost effective to continue with this relationship, therefore, it is recommended that the contract be terminated with NOVA Healthcare Administrators.

A motion was made by Ms. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Connors to approve terminating the Public Health reimbursement contract with NOVA Healthcare Administrators. Unanimous.

Mrs. Brown said back in November she was approached by a representative from Senior Whole Health. This is an insurance program that has yet to enter into New York State. It is actually a combined program, with clients that have both Medicare and Medicaid coverage. Senior Whole Health would be the insurance provider and would actually get funds from Medicare and Medicaid to provide the insurance to the client base. Their premise is that they can do it cheaper than Medicare and Medicaid, she said. The following example was given: Currently, when a Medicaid resident needs to go to the hospital, Medicaid pays to hold the bed (up to 20 days). Medicare pays the hospital to care for the resident during the hospital admission. With Senior Whole Health, there would be different tiers of reimbursement. Instead of the resident going to the hospital to be treated for something that could be treated at Maplewood Manor (but may currently be cost prohibitive), Senior Whole Health would reimburse more money to cover the extra costs associated with keeping the resident in the facility. Keeping the resident in his/her home is not only financially, but also psychologically beneficial, she said.

Mrs. Brown requested approval from the committee for a Memorandum of Understanding with Senior Whole Health to allow them to use Maplewood Manor as a possible site, in the event that if they were to obtain approval for the insurance plan in New York State, to say that Maplewood Manor would be interested in looking at an agreement with them.

Mrs. Brown said Senior Whole Health is currently operating in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and other states in the Northeast. Typically, the rate that would be paid to take care of the resident in the nursing home is higher than the rate that is currently being received from Medicaid. By law, Senior Whole Health cannot commit to what they would pay until they are set up in New York State, she said.

Mrs. Brown said the Memorandum of Understanding is non-binding and can be terminated without cause with 90 days written notice.

A motion was made by Ms. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve a resolution to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Senior Whole Health. Unanimous.

Ms. Raymond requested that Mrs. Brown research how people become enrolled with Senior Whole Health, and once they are in, how easy it is for them to get back out.

Mrs. Brown said over the past few month's nursing homes have all been working on evacuation plans. Maplewood Manor has always had an evacuation plan, she said, however, it has been fairly generic and has relied upon the Saratoga County Emergency Services Group to come up with places for evacuation if needed. Requirements are such now that you must identify where you could evacuate residents to and how to go about doing it with regard to transportation. In reverse, if someone was to come to Maplewood Manor, what would be the process in accepting additional residents?

Mrs. Brown said Maplewood Manor has come up with an evacuation plan identifying evacuation sites, i.e. Ballston Spa High School and two county buildings in the area. In the last two years a Memorandum of Understanding agreement has been developed with five facilities, as follows:

Saratoga Hospital	up to	10
Glens Falls Hospital	up to	10
Mt. Loretto Nursing Home	up to	10
Home of the Good Shepherd	up to	50
Prestwick Chase	up to	10

The agreements would be based on the availability of space and would provide temporary shelter for each other's residents in the event of a disaster. Each facility has agreed to provide their own staff and supplies.

A motion was made by Mr. Connors, seconded by Mr. Richardson to approve a Memorandum of Understanding with the above facilities, based on availability, accepting some of each other's residents in the event of a disaster as stated above. Unanimous.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Sansom