

Personnel and Insurance Committee Minutes

June 1, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman A. Johnson; Supervisors Collyer, Hargrave, Richardson, Rowland and Wood; Spencer Hellwig, Administrator; Ryan Moore, Mgmt. Analyst; Jack Kalinkewicz, Personnel; Robert Christopher, Social Services; Press.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Hargrave, seconded by Mr. Collyer the minutes of the May 4th and 16th 2011 meetings were approved unanimously.

Mr. Kalinkewicz gave a brief overview of the monthly Self-Insurance Report as follows:

Cases for the month are up 36 and up for the year by 175. Expenses for May are down over last year by \$40,770.24 and the year to date expenses are down by \$181,554.48. The contract with SRS is still being worked on, with the language of the contract currently being reviewed by the County Attorney's office.

Mr. Johnson said there is a request from Mr. Christopher for some temporary positions in the Social Services/Food Stamps department.

Mr. Kalinkewicz said Mr. Christopher has indicated that he really needs temporary help in the Food Stamps Department to the level of three Welfare Examiners, and one Senior Welfare Examiner.

Mr. Kalinkewicz stated that Mr. Christopher had not received any new positions in the Food Stamps department for the years 2010 and 2011; however, there were two positions approved in 2009. Over the course of the last year, through vacancy review, Mr. Christopher was asked to review his department structure and shift appropriate personnel to areas that he is receiving excess applications such as Food Stamps, and Medicaid. It is at the point now where the applications have risen to a level where he really needs the temporary assistance to get through to the end of the year. A request has been made to have the positions approved through the end of 2011. Prior to the end of the year, if there is a need to increase staff, Mr. Christopher will make an additional request for 2012.

Mr. Kalinkewicz said there will be no budget impact as these funds were approved in the 2011 budget in the revenue section through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Department of Defense funds that were targeted specifically for food stamps.

Mr. Richardson asked why there was such a trend upward in the recording of Food Stamp recipients? Mr. Kalinkewicz said that there were significant changes made in the guidelines for eligibility. There is a campaign in effect to make sure that people are

aware that food stamps might be available to them, and applications can now be done on line.

Mr. Collyer asked if it is anticipated that the four Welfare Examiners would be kept on for full time employment? Mr. Christopher said what he envisions is that these positions would sunset. If the number of staff that is needed on a permanent basis were approved, they would do away with the temporary positions.

Mr. Christopher said in 2006 there were 4,441 food stamp cases, and in January of 2011 there were 8,124 food stamp cases. It began to dramatically rise in 2008 and it has been going up regularly, he said. There were many changes made to the Food Stamp program whereby the income eligibility standards were raised, which incorporated a whole new population of people who were eligible for food stamps. Those were permanent changes, and the benefits have been made much more favorable to the elderly, aged and young families who pay daycare, as well as 24 hour a day capability. Now people are able to re-certify by telephone, which requires more work than if they came in to apply, he said.

Mr. Rowland asked if it would make more sense to go for the 6-month period rather than piece mealing it. If you are going to have positions in the future because of the need, it doesn't make much sense at this point to do a temporary at three months to only come back in three months. He said it might make more sense to go to six months? Mr. Christopher said the way they do it in HEAP is they are all temporary employees, and because of the way that it is structured it is more beneficial financially to do it three months by three months.

Mr. Hellwig said you would be going from 40% to 51% on the benefit when going part-time to full time.

Mr. Kalinkewicz said that if this is just seen as a stopgap into 2012, and we know that there will be a request for more positions, you are better off having the permanency there, as they are already established and would move into permanent positions at that point.

Mr. Collyer asked if there was a salary change moving from temporary to permanent? Mr. Kalinkewicz said, no, they are hired at the base rate even if they are temporary.

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Christopher if it was his intent to make the four temporary positions requested full time? Mr. Christopher said, yes.

Mr. Kalinkewicz said the six-month piece of this is smart because it does give time to look at things between now and the end of the year.

A motion was made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Rowland to approve the hiring of three Welfare Examiners and one Senior Welfare Examiner for the Food Stamp Unit in Social Services for a period of six months. Unanimous.

Mr. Collyer said he has been reading in the paper where Fulton and Montgomery Counties seem to have a lot of Fraud, but there doesn't seem to be much in Saratoga County. Mr. Christopher said Saratoga County has an aggressive Fraud Unit that concentrates on Food Stamp Fraud, and Medicaid Fraud and they do a good job with it. There is also the FEDS program (Front End Protection System) where there is a presence with the cases from the day the person applies. A fraud investigator is sent out to make a home visit to make sure that everything is the way it is stated to be in the household. All this helps to minimize fraud. We don't really see a lot of Food Stamp fraud in our county, he said.

Mr. Collyer asked, with the expansion of the program will there be potential for more fraud or are departments staffed sufficiently to handle it? Mr. Christopher said it was not in his plan to request any more personnel. He said in his opinion the Fraud problem is more of a State problem than it is a local problem.

On a motion made by Mr. Rowland, seconded by Mr. Hargrave the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Sansom