

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**July 18, 2022**

Present: Lisa Virkler, Chair; Andrea Moroughan, Vice-Chair; and Jeffrey Nellenback. Legislator Richard Chartrand had been excused.

Others: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Tom Osborne, Josh Leviker, Phil Hathway, and Ian Gilbert; County Manager Ryan Piche; County Attorney Joan McNichol; Treasurer Eric Virkler; Human Resource Director Caitlyn Smith; and Information Technology Director Conner Biolsi.

Committee Chair Legislator Virkler called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Legislator Virkler made a motion to accept the minutes from June 21, 2022 as recorded, seconded by Legislator Moroughan and carried.

**Office For the Aging Homecare Services – Crystal Collette, Office For the Aging Director**

Home Care is one of the core services at Office For the Aging (OFA). Home Care covers many basic needs like grocery shopping, laundry, cleaning, getting individuals up and moving, meal preparation, personal care, and many more basic needs. Aging in Place is a concept that means to be able to stay in your own home for as long as possible while you age but this requires support. OFA Case Managers, Shannon Frappier-Farney and Curtis Dicob, partner with the individual and their support system to coordinate services and additional supports.

OFA supports Lewis County residents age 60 years and older with housekeeping and personal care in the home. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been fewer clients served due to a lack of aides. It was Crystal Collette's goal to get rid of waiting lists, however, because the company Lewis County contracts with doesn't even have enough aides, there is a waiting list of at least 27 people waiting for housekeeping, personal care, and respite services. The ISEP program is for low-income seniors and is much less expensive than the cost of nursing home care. The average cost per year to stay at home with support services is \$10,000 versus \$130,000 up to \$150,000 for nursing home care. Medicaid pays the nursing home bill for seniors who can't afford it, which in turn costs the county money.

Through various funding streams like NYS EISEP grant, Alzheimer's Respite grant, NYS Respite funds, and UnMet Needs grant there is a total of \$231,587 for support services. Currently the options that are in place for support services are US Care Systems, which is a cost of \$27.62 to \$28.03 per hour; Seniors Helping Seniors, which is \$27.62 per hour; and Consumer Directed Care through Plan It Staffing or Consumer Directed Choices (new), which is \$23.75 up to \$27.00 per hour. For each of these options, the actual aides are only getting paid \$16.00 up to \$20.00 per hour.

This isn't working because of the low wages, having to use their own vehicles for transportation, high turnover with the aides, and little support. An aide could work overnight at Walmart and make \$22.00 per hour. Most aides are not paid mileage for using their own vehicles or travel time to go from one appointment to the next. The county has unspent money for support services because there are just not enough aides for the amount of clients needing services.

Crystal proposed two options for 2023, using the approximate budget of \$231,587.00. Option A would be to hire two full-time and one part-time case aides at \$16.51 to \$19.31 per hour. And pay them mileage at the federal reimbursement rate. This would equate to roughly \$117,175 in salary and \$20,000 in mileage. Option B would be to contract two full-time positions from US Care specifically just for Lewis County at roughly \$35.00 per hour and to pay them mileage. This would equate to roughly \$145,600 in wages and \$20,000 in mileage. There was discussion on each option. Crystal responded to a question that even with 3 full-time aides it wouldn't completely cover the waiting list but maybe at least half of them.

Ryan Piche explained that there is a much larger problem because the same pool of people who would apply to be an aide is the same pool that hospitals need for nursing home staff. Legislator Virkler asked why we couldn't just add these aides from Option A to the Lewis County Home Health at the hospital, Ryan responded that the hospital was very enthusiastic about it. This is being discussed now in preparation for the 2023 budget. Legislator Dolhof questioned if this meant that county would need three more vehicles and Crystal responded yes. Legislator Virkler shared that a friend of hers who runs a Home Health Agency outside of Lewis County pays for Uber to transport her staff to and from appointments because it is more cost-effective measure than losing aides.

### **Permanent & Transitional Housing**

Ryan explained that one of the initiatives for 2022 was to address the issue of homelessness in Lewis County. Jenny Jones, Social Services Commissioner has been working on this with TLS, and Snow Belt Housing. Homelessness can happen for a variety of reasons like, economics, domestic violence, mental illness or substance abuse. People come to Social Services for emergency housing, this discussion is looking at how to prevent people from entering emergency housing and how to assist them so they are leaving much faster. There is funding available to assist with this issue through OTEA, Homeless Housing Assistance Program (HHAP) funding. Snow Belt Housing and other development companies are interested in this funding stream for developing housing. The second funding stream is Empire State Supportive Health initiative (ESHI), which is for the case management component of getting individuals services that they need. This would be financial assistance in helping to manage a building full of individuals too. TLS is interested in the ESHI funds for providing the case management component.

Jenny Jones has reached out to an attorney in Rochester, NY who has helped with this initiative in other areas of New York State. The next step in this process was to look at what could be converted in Lewis County or what could be built. There were several properties that were looked at, including the Rudd Road property, Water Street distributing building, Glenfield School, and the Andover House. Many of these properties, although they are big enough, would need to be gutted to meet qualifications for HHAP funding. The lot right next to DSS could be used to build a facility.

The type of rooms that would be needed are a transitional area, like a dorm suite, where at least six people would have single rooms with a common area. Individuals would stay here until an apartment becomes available. It might also make sense to have a few family units. There will still be a need for hotels every once in a while, for the first night or two. The next step would be to create and send out an RFQ to get a better idea of what would be best option for Lewis County.

Ryan concluded by stating the the project would be owned by Snow Belt Housing, staffed by Snow Belt, TLS and Lewis County Opportunities. Construction costs would be funded by HHAP and on going staffing through ESHI funds. The County is only leading the initiative by employing consultants and engineers, which in the long run will save the county money if we find a viable solution. It could be that there is a need for both a renovated property and a new building because rental prices are so high and low-income individuals can't afford the rent.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Amending compensation plan with reference to the Office For the Aging by creating one (1) temporary office specialist position at grade 11, salary range \$16.38 to \$18.77/hr. for HEAP.  
AYE   3              NAY   0
  
2. Authorizing amendment to the agreement between Lewis County Public Health Agency and Excellus Health Plan, Inc. for the diabetes prevention program to obtain reimbursement for services provided to eligible participants.  
AYE   3              NAY   0
  
3. Authorizing agreement between the Department of Social Services and Hand in Hand Early Childhood Center for day care services from September 1, 2022 through August 31, 2023 at the Day Care market Rate established by Hand in Hand Early Childhood Center up to the DSS Fair Market Rates as established by the State.  
AYE   3              NAY   0
  
4. Authorizing acceptance of temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) allocation in the amount of \$25,000.00 for non-residential DV services and

agreement between LCDSS and Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. as service provider under the plan.

AYE 3            NAY 0

5. Amending Indigent Burial Policy and Procedures through the Department of Social Services to reflect increased rates and give authorization for the Commissioner of Social Services to adjust the rates as needed to comply with the requirement under SSL §141.

AYE 3            NAY 0

The following motion was made:

Legislator Virkler made a motion to authorize Social Services Commissioner, Jennifer Jones to create and send out an RFQ for engineering services on concept phase of permanent and transitional housing options, seconded by Legislator Moroughan and carried.

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Virkler moved to adjourn at 3:01 p.m., seconded by Legislator Nellenback and carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board