

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**May 17, 2022**

Present: Lisa Virkler, Chair; Andrea Moroughan, Vice-Chair; and Jeffrey Nellenback. Legislators Richard Chartrand and Ron Burns 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 2:12 p.m.

Legislator Virkler made a motion to accept the minutes from April 19, 2022 as recorded, seconded by Legislator Nellenback and carried.

**Housing Needs Assessment Report – Chazen A. LaBella Company**

Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer introduced herself. The scope of work that was required for the Housing Needs Assessment Report was the housing initiatives report; demographic and economic data; housing inventory; market analysis; implementation strategies and recommendations; and final document. The process included working in collaboration with the Lewis County Fair Housing Task Force and key people tied to the housing market, also using Esri Tapestry Segmentation and Envision Tomorrow Software.

The preliminary findings show that Lewis County agencies are doing the work. Snow Belt Housing Inc and Lewis County Opportunities are pursuing and administering multiple housing programs in Lewis County. Lewis County is gaining at a rate faster than the rest of the state. This means that the county has a high median age of 42, slow but steady population decline of 1.9% and a higher rate of elderly, disabled and fixed income residents. The implications for housing are not as many new homes are being built, only 2.9% each year and existing homes may not be repaired, 46% are at least 60 years old and 36% are at least 83 years old.

Accommodating Future Housing Needs would mean that the Target Annual Units Added from 2023 to 2040 would be 22 for Standard and Large Lot Single-Family; 8 Small Lot Single-Family; 5 Townhomes; 3 Multifamily; and 2 Mobile Home/Other. Idea for maintain existing Housing stock would be to expand collaboration between agencies to explore sharing of staff/resources; explore development of a senior housing project; and leverage existing housing programs, like North Country HOME Consortium.

Another recommendation would be to create more types of all housing, with a focus on homes that seniors want to live in like exploring development of short term supportive/transitional housing; expand mobile and manufactured home

replacement program; and expand policies like tax abatement on property improvements. Other things that could be done are to reduce fees for infrastructure hookups, freezing assessed home values, and expediting permits.

Recommendations to reduce the amount of housing taken off the market would be to consider creating a county housing trust fund or explore creating a land bank. Housing trust funds are a flexible source of funding that can be used to support a variety of affordable housing activities. It could be created and administered at county level, which means a housing trust fund would not be subject to the restrictions of federal subsidy programs, and therefore could be designed specifically to address local priorities and needs. Land banks can be used to build a process to bring homes that are out of the housing market back into the market and onto the tax rolls. Land banks are not-for-profit corporations whose purpose is to facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties to productive use through real property acquisitions, elimination of harms and liabilities, and sales.

County Manager, Ryan Piche questioned if Lewis County is large enough to sustain a land bank, Hartley responded that Tompkins County is a good example. There could be collaboration with municipalities to make it more enticing. She recommended that the county look at best practices from other places and consider the Housing Trust Fund first.

### **Public Health Relocation Concept – Ryan Piche, County Manager**

Ryan explained that the county has an opportunity to do better for Public Health. They currently rent space at the hospital for around \$90,000 a year and are spread out on three different floors. The hospital really needs that space back. The State and Federal Governments are looking to put more and more money into the Local Public Health Departments over the next few years which would require more space and a better set-up. TLS, who owns the Lowville Commons building, has applied for NYS Transformation Grant, and also included in the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. If successful the Lowville Commons could be a one-stop shop for Human Services and house Mountain View Prevention Services, Credo, ARC, and TLS.

If this would happen the current Mountain View Prevention/Credo building would be turned into the new Public Health building. There would be some renovation needed but it already has a good set up. Due to this building being built with OASIS funds it needs to be used for Human Services. The transition hinges on successful grant awards and would not be started until next year anyway.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Approving renewal agreement between Lewis County Public Health Agency and Birnie Bus Tours, Inc., for transportation services required for preschool special education program.

AYE   3              NAY   0

2. Authorizing agreement between the County of Lewis OBO the Department of Social Services and Greater Syracuse Moving & Storage Co., Inc. for transportation and equipment disassemble and reassemble moving services from the Stowe Street Human Services Building to the Glenfield School Building at a cost not to exceed \$158,804.34.

AYE   3        NAY   0  

The following motions were made:

1. Legislator Virkler moved to authorize Purchasing Director, Brian Hanno to send out an RFP for leasing the new section of the Glenfield School Property, seconded by Legislator Moroughan. Legislator Virkler stated that originally the unutilized part of the building was going to be used by Hand-In-Hand for an expansion but recently informed the county that this wouldn't be possible so now the county is hoping to find either another childcare vendor who wants to use it or another business. The motion was then carried.

The executive session was moved to the end of Finance & Rules Committee meeting. Legislator Virkler mentioned that there is a blood drive at Beaver River Central School tonight and another one on Friday at the Lowville Mennonite Church and encouraged everyone to donate as supplies are limited.

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Nellenback moved to adjourn at 2:54 p.m., seconded by Legislator Moroughan and carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board