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3 **SENIORS & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**
4
5 **OF THE**
6
7 **SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**
8
9 **MINUTES**

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14 A special meeting of the Seniors & Human Services Committee of the
15 Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa
16 Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature
17 Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York via
18 hybrid/video Zoom conference to discuss the matter of the 2021-2023
19 Capital Budget and Program and the 2021 Operating Budget on October
20 13, 2020 at 1:30 PM.
21
22

23
24 **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

25 Leg. Sarah S. Anker, Chairperson
26 Leg. Samuel Gonzalez, Vice Chair (excused absence)
27 Leg. Thomas Cilmi
28 Leg. Steven J. Flotteron
29 Leg. Jason Richberg (excused absence)
30
31

32
33 **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

34 Presiding Officer Robert Calarco, 7th Legislative District
35 Leg. Al Krupski, 1st Legislative District
36 Leg. Leslie Kennedy, 12th Legislative District
37 Leg. Susan Berland, 16th Legislative District
38 Leg. Tom Donnelly, 17th Legislative District
39 Leg. Anthony Piccirillo, 8th Legislative District
40 Dan Dubois, Chief Deputy Clerk/Legislature
41 Holly Rhodes-Teague, Director/Office for the Aging
42 Frances Pierre, Commissioner/Department of Social Services
43 Ken Knappe, Chief Financial Officer/DSS
44 Olga El Sehamy, Youth Bureau
45 Sandra Alfano, Youth Bureau
46
47

48 **MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

49 Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer
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51
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1 **THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:37 PM**

2
3 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

4 Welcome to the Seniors and Human Services Committee meeting.
5 Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Presiding Officer
6 Calarco.

7
8 **SALUTATION**

9
01:36PM 10 Okay, thank you. You can be seated. We're going to just keep in
11 our thoughts and prayers those that are going through these very,
12 very challenging times with the COVID pandemic.

13
14 **MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

15
16 Okay, as we move forward, again, this is public hearing, we're here
17 to talk mainly about the two departments. We have Seniors, the
18 Office for the Aging. Holly Rhodes-Teague is available for
19 questions. Is there any information, Holly, that you can give us
01:36PM 20 as far as dealing with both the COVID issue and also for -- oh,
21 before we continue, the clerk -- assistant clerk will call the
22 roll. Hold on for just a minute, Holly.

23
24 **(*Roll call by Dan Dubois, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature*)**

25
26
27 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

28 Here.

29
30 **LEG. GONZALEZ:**

31 (Not present)

32
33 **LEG. CILMI:**

34 Here.

35
36 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

37 (Not present)

38
39 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

01:37PM 40 (Not present)

41
42 **P.O. CALARCO:**

43 Present.

44
45 **MR. DUBOIS:**

46 Three.

47
48 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

01:37PM 49 Okay, I want to put on the record excused absences for Legislator
50 Gonzalez and also for Richberg -- Legislator Richberg.

51
52 Okay. We're good? All right, so, again, Holly do you want to give
53 some update on, again, both the COVID pandemic issues and dealing
54 with our senior citizen population and then also, you know, the
55 budget issues. Thank you.

1 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

2 All right. At the present time with COVID, we are still
3 experiencing huge numbers in terms of the meals that we are
4 serving. All our contractors are still serving way more than we
5 normally have. Prior to COVID, we were serving about 25, 2600
6 people a week between the congregate of the home delivered meals.
7 We are still running around 4,000 to 4100 people per week. I think
8 the height of it, it was like 4200 so it really hasn't gone down
9 all that much. We are -- you know, we know we're serving many more
01:38PM 10 meals than we normally do. We may actually reach a million meals
11 by the end of this year. We're going to be probably just under
12 that number.

13
14 The good thing for us is that, as you all know, when we were before
15 the Leg a few times this year, we did receive stimulus funding. So
16 we do have the funding available for meals at this point. You
17 know, what happens in 2021 in terms of how long that money
18 continues, I'm not sure yet. But right now we're in good shape in
19 terms of providing the extra services that we have been providing
01:38PM 20 for the meals.

21
22 Our other programs are all providing online or remote services so,
23 you know, we still are funding those programs, you know, the legal
24 services, residential repair programs. You know, some of them are
25 on hiatus for a little while, but they're all coming back slowly
26 but surely.

27
28 In terms of our 2021 budget, we are fortunate in that we are
29 heavily funded so I believe we can continue our services, you know,
01:39PM 30 for 2021 at this point.

31
32 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

33 Okay, thank you, Holly. Legislator Krupski has a question for you.

34
35 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

36 Where is Legislator Krupski? (Referring to Zoom screen)

37
38 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

39 I'm next to Legislator Anker. You just can't see me.

01:39PM 40
41 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

42 There you go. Okay.

43
44 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

45 So, Holly, you know, thanks for all your efforts, you know, through
46 all this, delivering meals. Now was that the meal delivery through
47 the towns?

48
49 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

01:39PM 50 Yes. What we did is we -- I mean, I know you know from Southold,
51 we were able to have them -- actually they turned on a dime. They
52 went from doing congregate home delivery within, you know, a couple
53 days they were all able to turn their services around to make them
54 either curbside or to do -- to do home delivery for everyone. And
55 the numbers have just steadily increased. We thought by this time
56 when we were looking in June doing a projection, we thought by this

1 last quarter of the year we would probably have a significant
2 reduction. That has not occurred. And what I'm hearing from
3 around the State it has not occurred. People are sticking with the
4 programs. There's a, you know, there is -- you know, there's a
5 need for people with nutrition. There's a deficit out there.
6 People are afraid. They're not going to the stores or they just
7 don't have the funds to pay for meals, you know, that they normally
8 would have done prior to COVID so --

9
10 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

11 Well, either that or they all have good cooks there so they've
12 gotten accustomed to it.

13
14 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

15 Yeah. So, anyway, you know, the food itself is very good. But
16 anyway, what we're finding is that the need's there. We increased
17 the contracts, you know, to go, we hope, 'til the end of the year;
18 if not, we'll do another amendment to those contracts.

19
20 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

21 So everyone's been able to staff up and provide that service
22 without that much discomfort?

23
24 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

25 Yeah, so far. You know, they call occasionally to ask us for some
26 help but they're doing a great job. I have to say, without
27 question every one of our contractors has stepped to the plate and
28 done what they needed to do.

29
30 **LEG. KRUPSKI:**

31 Well, thank you for your efforts there. It's an important service
32 and I'm sure it won't go away, once people see that it's a service
33 they can rely on and then they become, you know, then they learn
34 they should be depending on it because it's a big help for people
35 staying in their homes, so thank you.

36
37 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

38 Yeah. Thank you.

39
40 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

41 Okay. Do any of the other Legislators have questions for Holly?
42 Legislator Donnelly.

43
44 **LEG. DONNELLY:**

45 Hi, Holly. Thank you, Sarah.

46
47 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

48 Hi.

49
50 **LEG. DONNELLY:**

51 I know I'm not on this Committee but I just wanted to come on just
52 for a couple of minutes. I just had a question how is the -- in
53 light of the COVID crisis that we've been going through the last
54 few months, it seems like the senior meal program that's running in
55 coordination with the township is really kind of run almost, you
56 know, unscathed. It's really kind of terrific to hear. What's

1 your assessment of being able to continue to provide that service
2 into 2021?

3
4 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

5 Well, we did receive, I think, just about 3.5 million in stimulus
6 funds. So they certainly had helped in terms of being able to say,
7 *boy, we can just continue these meals.* The problem's going to come
8 if these sites stay closed, if people continue on this program -- I
9 obviously think we're going to have more people on this program
01:42PM 10 permanently, but I don't know if it's going to be the same number
11 we're serving right now. Then that becomes an issue because I
12 don't know what's going to happen after stimulus funding. We were
13 fortunate in that last year, in 2019, at the end of 2019, we
14 received unmet need funding because we had a very large waiting
15 list for meals. And the state provided us with additional funding
16 for that. So that has helped as well because that was funding we
17 did not have prior to '19, so. And we have reduced our waiting
18 list substantially through the meals.

19
20 **LEG. DONNELLY:**

21 Really, just an awesome job all around, you know. I know in the
22 two townships that I cover in Huntington and Babylon, you know,
23 I've got nothing but compliments, you know, about the County meal
24 program and the meals getting out, you know, directly to the
25 seniors which are amongst our most vulnerable population right now,
26 you know. So, really hats off to you and your team for all the
27 great work.

28
29 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

01:43PM 30 I appreciate that. Thank you.

31
32 **LEG. DONNELLY:**

33 Thank you, Sarah.

34
35 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

36 You're welcome. Legislator Cilmi.

37
38 **LEG. CILMI:**

39 Thank you, Sarah. Hi, Holly.

01:43PM 40
41 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

42 Hi.

43
44 **LEG. CILMI:**

45 Thanks for everything. So couple of questions for you. You said
46 you received three point something million in funding.

47
48 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

49 In stimulus funds from the FCR and the CARES Act.

01:44PM 50
51 **LEG. CILMI:**

52 Okay. Is that part of the -- do you know, was that part of the 257
53 million --

54
55 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

56 Mine came separately from the Federal government through the New

1 York State Office for the Aging.

2

3 **LEG. CILMI:**

4 Okay.

5

6 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

7 And right now because it's still an emergency, I could use that
8 funding in any of my programs. But that might change once the
9 emergency is no longer declared.

01:44PM 10

11 **LEG. CILMI:**

12 Okay.

13

14 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

15 And then it would have to go back to the separate funding streams
16 that they, you know, they brought it to us under.

17

18 **LEG. CILMI:**

19 Gotcha. Thanks. And from a budgetary perspective, from a cost
20 perspective, you said that the demand has gone up. And I agree
21 with you. I think -- I think that demand will stay high because I
22 think what'll happen is folks who may have been reluctant for
23 whatever reason to use the service previously maybe were either
24 forced to or encouraged to use the service given this situation and
25 found, *hey, you know what, this really ain't that bad.*

01:44PM 20

26
27 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

28 Right.

29

30 **LEG. CILMI:**

31 And so now we'll continue it moving forward. So what I'm curious
32 about is in terms of the number of meals that you've been
33 delivering, you did mention some number as to how that has
34 increased. I'm wondering what the budgetary -- fiscal budgetary
35 implication is there.

36

37 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

38 Well, you know, it's interesting. A couple of the towns, I mean,
39 Islip for example, Islip was one of my highest in terms of the
40 people they were serving at the height of COVID, their numbers have
41 slowly come down a little bit. And, you know, they said people are
42 able to go shopping and they're doing some of that stuff. The food
43 insecurity is huge, though. I mean, I do think that our numbers
44 are going to be much higher than they were, you know, prior to
45 COVID. But, you know, hopefully as we progress out of COVID,
46 people will be able to get out shopping and do their own thing.

01:45PM 40

47
48 I don't know what's going to happen in terms of the budgets. I do
49 know that, you know, for 2021 I'm fairly sure I'm going to be able
50 to handle the numbers. I don't know past that if the numbers stay
51 high what will happen. Because, you know, once the stimulus money
52 goes away and, you know, things change, I don't know.

01:46PM 50

53
54 **LEG. CILMI:**

55 Right.

56

1 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

2 So, I'll let you know as we progress. But if I have to, I can move
3 money from other places but that means I would reduce services
4 somewhere else at that point.

5
6 **LEG. CILMI:**

7 Sure. But the increase that you've seen to date, what has been the
8 fiscal impact of that?

9
10 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

11 We, for example -- well, let me just give you a quick example:
12 From the second quarter of 2019, that April to June of 2019, I
13 compared it to the second quarter of 2020, we were serving, I
14 believe, it was 73 percent more meals in that timeframe.

15
16 **LEG. CILMI:**

17 And so what's the financial equivalency there?

18
19 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

01:46PM 20 Let me just -- hold on a second. Let me just look at my budget
21 stuff.

22
23 **LEG. CILMI:**

24 I'm sorry to catch you off guard.

25
26 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

27 Yeah, no, I'm just -- I'm just looking. So, I'm just trying to
28 think. This is the actual numbers. We added to the budget for
29 this year, you know, to go to the end of the year, we're projecting
01:47PM 30 -- we added another \$1.6 million to the budget.

31
32 **LEG. CILMI:**

33 Good.

34
35 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

36 If that helps.

37
38 **LEG. CILMI:**

39 It does, it does. I just wanted kind of a rough idea what you were
01:47PM 40 expecting in terms of increased budgetary demand, that's all.

41
42 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

43 Yeah, we added an additional 1.6 million and we believe that'll
44 carry us through the end of year. It might be a little higher than
45 we need, but we're not really sure at this point.

46
47 **LEG. CILMI:**

48 Okay. And you said that -- so you added 1.6 but you gained three
49 point something --

01:47PM 50
51 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

52 Right.

53
54 **LEG. CILMI:**

55 -- in stimulus money.

1 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

2 That 3.5 can be used for any program -- any of my program
3 increases. But right now predominantly our increase is all in
4 meals. You know, it's the meals.

5
6 **LEG. CILMI:**

7 Okay. So at this point -- when you consider the funding that --
8 the additional funding that you've received --

9
10 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

11 Right.

12
13 **LEG. CILMI:**

14 -- you're actually netting out, you know, a million plus, maybe two
15 million plus in the positive.

16
17 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

18 The money goes through September of next year. That money's not
19 just for 2020.

20
21 **LEG. CILMI:**

22 Okay.

23
24 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

25 It goes through 2021.

26
27 **LEG. CILMI:**

28 Okay. So all goes well next year --

29
30 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

31 We should be okay.

32
33 **LEG. CILMI:**

34 We should be okay. Gotcha.

35
36 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

37 That's what I'm hoping for. We're watching it closely.

38
39 **LEG. CILMI:**

01:48PM 40 Great. Well, listen, I have an aunt who lives in Florida who is
41 just over ninety-years-old. She's obviously not receiving Suffolk
42 County food services, but I did turn her onto a similar program
43 down where she lives. And although she was very reluctant at
44 first, she's very independent, as I'm sure many of our seniors here
45 are, she's now enjoying that service and relying on that service.

46
47 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

48 Oh, that's good.

49
50 **LEG. CILMI:**

51 So, you know, I have some personal experience with the type of
52 service that you're providing and I just, you know, thank you on
53 behalf of all of our residents.

54
55 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

56 Thank you. You know what's really key, if they're hooked into a

1 service, then they have somebody checking in on them, people, you
2 know, people know what's going on with them. It's really
3 important. I can't say that enough. So, if you have other people
4 that need services from us, please hook them into us.

5
6 **LEG. CILMI:**

7 Absolutely. Thanks again.
8

9 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

10 Thanks.
11

12 **LEG. CILMI:**

13 Yep.
14

15 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

16 Okay. Any other Legislators, questions for Holly? Okay. I see no
17 more questions for you. Thank you, Holly. And, again, the work
18 that you've done for our Office for the Aging has been incredible.
19 And I think Suffolk County is the hardest hit -- one of the hardest
20 hit counties in the country. And it's just been an incredible
21 challenge for everybody. But, again, I want to thank you for all
22 the work that you've done and the multitude of people that you've
23 helped.
24

25 **DIRECTOR RHODES-TEAGUE:**

26 I appreciate that. Thank you.
27

28 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

29 Okay, so, again, I'm in the Leg. Rob, do you have Olga El Sehamy?
30 I don't see -- oh, there she is. Okay, so we have Youth Bureau.
31 Would you like to report in as far as, again, the COVID issues and
32 also the funding issues. Go ahead.
33

34 **MS. EL SEHAMY:**

35 Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Olga El Sehamy. I'm
36 Director of Human Services. And with me is Sandra Alfano, Youth
37 Coordinator. She's here on behalf of Reverend Pearson who is out
38 on medical leave.
39

40 So, during the COVID pandemic, we remained very much in touch with
41 all our contracted agencies to see how we could help them and
42 realizing that many of them were not able to provide their services
43 as contracted. One, because some of them were summer programs that
44 they could not get into schools or they didn't have the facilities
45 available. And, you know, we -- some of them actually had to
46 switch to provide other services like food pantries because many of
47 the families of the kids they served were having food insecurities
48 so they switched to that.
49

50 We also sent out surveys to all of them besides our regular phone
51 calls and contact. We sent out surveys to all of them to tell us
52 how they were managing the contracted services, what did they see
53 that things were changing. And, you know, based on that we were
54 able to readjust.
55

56 One of the highest needs that we see it's for children who need to

1 log -- or students who need to log into their virtual classrooms,
2 right? And many either the parents are not available to help them
3 with that or parents have to work and still trying to help their
4 younger kids log onto their studies. And we see that as a big need
5 now in the County. Any details that you want to provide, Sandy?
6 Sandy.

7
8 **MS. ALFANO:**

9 So we have instituted and developed through two towns, went through
01:52PM 10 the county, we're trying to address that particular need through
11 possibly some of the schools which have teaching, facilities such
12 as St. Joseph's where the teachers cannot go into the schools to do
13 the student teaching. And they need to do student teaching to
14 complete their studies. And the children need teachers to help
15 them with their work. So, we're trying to coordinate services to
16 create something for both of those entities to work together to
17 achieve one common goal.

18
19 And we're also -- we have seen a diversity of different and very
01:53PM 20 creative ways that the agencies have been able to contact and
21 maintain establishments with our youth. They have done -- really
22 they have been very innovative and creative in the way that they're
23 trying to reach out and keep the children engaged and keep the
24 children on track. Because it's been very difficult with the
25 isolation.

26
27 We've also seen a huge uptick in mental health and how our agencies
28 are really trying to address the mental health situation of our
29 children because this has been a very, very difficult time for
01:53PM 30 them. As part of their growing and part of their development as
31 youth is interacting and socializing and that component has been
32 diminished with the crisis. So, there's been ways that we've been
33 trying to be innovative to also address that.

34
35 **MS. EL SEHAMY:**

36 And we worked during the summer with the Department of Labor to
37 continue our youth program with employment. We were able to place
38 several youth in summer jobs, just like we have done in the past,
39 we were able to still do that.

40
41 **MS. ALFANO:**

42 We also had -- a lot of our agencies had summer camps that were
43 live but they had to socially adjust obviously to the guidelines,
44 but we were able to service many children live, which was an
45 amazing feat because it was last minute by the time the guidelines
46 came out and the registration had to take place. And in addition
47 the County also hosted through the PAL for the gang prevention, the
48 Police Athletic League Youth Academy.

49
50 **MS. EL SEHAMY:**

51 Youth Academy. And we had posted -- we only did like a couple of
52 online forms for children on mental health. We found a big, big
53 reception of that. The one we did, I think, about a week ago, we
54 had 55 people that logged onto it online and like 300 views on
55 Facebook. So we're working -- I'm personally with the
56 multi-cultural mental health with Mental Hygiene, we want to

1 continue doing more of that because we saw a big reception on doing
2 that. Thank you.

3
4 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

5 Well, thank you. We really appreciate what you're doing for our
6 youth. And, again, you know, I feel -- you know, we all feel very
7 badly about not being able to provide maybe some of the services
8 that we have in the past, you know, due to our -- the fiscal
9 crisis. But I do have to thank so many wonderful not-for-profit
01:56PM 10 organizations that have stepped up and they've done an amazing job.
11 Okay, Legislators, any Legislators have questions for our Youth
12 Bureau? Okay, I do not see any questions. Again, thank you so
13 much for coming to the Committee meeting and keep up the great
14 work. So, thank you.

15
16 **MS. EL SEHAMY:**

17 Thank you so much.

18
19 **MS. ALFANO:**

20 Thank you very much.

21
22 **MS. EL SEHAMY:**

23 Thank you for the support. Should we log off or stay on? Log off?

24
25 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

26 You can log off, yeah, that's fine.

27
28 **MS. EL SEHAMY:**

29 Okay. Thank you so much.

30
31 **MS. ALFANO:**

32 Thank you.

33
34 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

35 Thank you. Okay, next we have our Commissioner of DSS Commissioner
36 Frances Pierre. And, again, thank you so much, Commissioner, for
37 joining us today. Do you want to give us just a brief report as
38 far as DSS and some of the concerns that you have dealing with
39 COVID and also the funding issue?

01:56PM 40
41 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

42 Sure. Thank you, Legislator Anker. I have with me Ken Knappe, our
43 Chief Financial Officer as well here in my office.

44
45 So, as far as the COVID at the Department of Social Services, we've
46 been fully functional this whole time, you know, being essential
47 staff we have been operating at all four of our centers and on
48 average at this point we have about 300 folks coming in daily even
49 though we have uploading. They can upload their documents, you
50 know, through technology. They're still coming into the centers
51 and we're servicing them that way.

52
53 We also have been fully operational in our shelters. We have 498
54 singles in shelters; 384 families and we're serving a total of
55 1,791 persons in our shelter. One of the things that we found
56 during the pandemic is that because of the moratorium we've had,

1 you know, the evictions that have been on hold, we have not seen an
2 influx of families coming into our shelters. Our numbers have been
3 low. So, we have had the opportunity of really, the Department of
4 Social Services, not utilizing motels as shelter, only during the
5 time if we have to quarantine or isolate anyone that is
6 experiencing, you know, COVID. Then we're placing them in shelter;
7 otherwise, we have, you know, four other providers that are running
8 shelter through the motel system. But DSS, we're not sheltering
9 through emergency housing. We're not sheltering in the motels.

10
11 As far as emergency housing, we currently have about 831 children
12 that we have in shelter. Of those 831, 532 are school-age kids.
13 And during the COVID time we bussed 344 to school and another 188
14 are learning remotely. So they're, you know, they're going to
15 school through being in shelter and utilizing technology. So
16 various shelters have been able to put WiFi in so that they can be
17 serviced at school. But otherwise, again, fully operational and
18 doing the best that we can during this pandemic.

19
20 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

21 Commissioner, let me ask you a question quick --

22
23 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

24 Sure.

25
26 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

27 -- regarding the, you know, the kids needing the technology. Do
28 they have laptops or do they have the ability to use computers to
29 do virtual learning?

30
31 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

32 They do. So either the school provided it for them or they do have
33 computers at shelters as well. So they do have the capability of
34 learning remotely while in shelter.

35
36 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

37 All right, thank you.

38
39 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

40 You're welcome. Any other questions?

41
42 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

43 Yeah. As you were saying, again, so this is basically the shelters
44 in itself, are you prepared or are we prepared to possibly have an
45 increase; because what I'm hearing with COVID is, you know, I think
46 it's on the front page of the paper today, people in businesses are
47 not able to pay their electric bills and then mortgages. Once the
48 moratorium is no longer in place, what is going to happen to those
49 people that are either renting or even, you know, paying their
50 mortgages?

51
52 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

53 Well, I'm happy to report that actually DSS for the first time
54 received \$2.8 million from OTDA, which is specifically ESG COVID
55 funding. And what we have done is we partnered with two providers
56 to provide assistance from the prevention end. So anyone that's

1 experiencing homelessness or they're about to be evicted, just from
2 the prevention end so that they would not come into shelter,
3 they'll be working with one provider. At the same time we've also
4 allocated funding on the back end so that people that are in
5 shelter could go into rapid re-housing. So, we've also partnered
6 with another provider to assist in moving people that are in
7 shelter into transitioning them into permanent housing to make room
8 for those that may be coming in shelter.

9
10 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

11 Yeah. And another issue, too, like with the Youth Bureau, I know
12 DSS you work a lot with the not-for-profits. And unfortunately,
13 you know, their funding's going to be cut. How are we dealing with
14 that as far as, you know, what -- maybe, you know, Long Island
15 Coalition for the Homeless might be helping us with or some of
16 these other wonderful not-for-profits, you know, how is that
17 partnership going to continue?

18
19 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

02:01PM 20 Well, the emergency housing contractors that we have will not
21 experience the cuts. So, it's other contract providers that would.
22 And we're hoping that through the Federal government, you know,
23 with disaster assistance that whatever cuts we've put in place can
24 be restored at that point.

25
26 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

27 That's good to hear. Legislator Cilmi, did you have a question?
28 You're on mute.

29
30 **LEG. CILMI:**

31 You must have been reading my mind. Commissioner, thanks for
32 everything you're doing there and all of your staff, really,
33 working very hard to make things happen for our residents. So, can
34 you tell me what the fiscal impact to the department has been
35 year-to-date with respect to COVID-related expenses; additional
36 COVID-related expenses?

37
38 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

39 So, do you want to talk more about that?

02:02PM 40
41 **MR. KNAPPE:**

42 This is Ken Knappe. I'm in charge of finance for DSS. Hello,
43 Legislators.

44
45 **LEG. CILMI:**

46 How are you?

47
48 **MR. KNAPPE:**

02:03PM 49 A part of the process that we're seeing with the Governor's
50 eviction state of emergency of not evicting tenants or mortgages
51 and whatnot, we have seen as the Commissioner mentioned our
52 homeless numbers have decreased as far as putting them in shelters.
53 So, for 2020 we have seen what I characterize almost in my way as a
54 false positive. We have seen our expenses go down related to those
55 types of caseloads. In addition, in the family/children services
56 world, with the courts being closed for a period of time in 2020,

1 we saw foster care and adoption placements not at the same speed as
2 we've seen in previous years.

3
4 **LEG. CILMI:**

5 Okay.

6
7 **MR. KNAPPE:**

8 And those case loads, those census numbers relate to a little bit
9 less in expenditures taking place in 2020. We are really looking
10 at what 2021 is going to look like going forward and how we're able
11 to get ahead of the curve on that. And the dollar amount for the
12 major programs in the County Exec's budget does seem adequate that
13 we'll be able to handle those going into next year.

14
15 **LEG. CILMI:**

16 Okay. So, have there been any extraordinary additional fiscal
17 impacts, what we would call negative fiscal impacts or any
18 additional costs to the department associated with COVID that are
19 worth mentioning maybe overtime or anything like that, that --

20
21 **MR. KNAPPE:**

22 In our shelters, minimal COVID for the equipment and the services
23 for our shelter providers that had to come across --

24
25 **LEG. CILMI:**

26 So nothing substantial, really is what you're --

27
28 **MR. KNAPPE:**

29 Not a significant number at all.

30
31 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

32 No, no. And even we were able to assist the shelters with PPEs
33 through the department. DPW assisted them when they were having a
34 hard time finding their own PPE so we were able to assist them in
35 that area as well.

36
37 **LEG. CILMI:**

38 Okay. So, if anything, COVID has caused expenses to be lower this
39 year than what they would have been otherwise. But, of course,
40 that portends potentially a spike in expenses next year. Is that a
41 fair statement?

42
43 **MR. KNAPPE:**

44 Correct. And the one caseload that we did see an increase but it
45 doesn't have a budgetary impact in our budget is SNAP, the food
46 stamp caseload.

47
48 **LEG. CILMI:**

49 Okay. And that's because it's federally funded?

50
51 **MR. KNAPPE:**

52 That's right.

53
54 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**

55 Right.

1 **LEG. CILMI:**
2 Right. Okay.

3
4 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**
5 And as folks went into unemployment, they applied for SNAP and
6 public assistance.

7
8 **LEG. CILMI:**
9 Right. Okay. Thank you both. Appreciate it.

02:05PM 10
11 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**
12 Okay. I just want to put on record Legislator Hahn has an excused
13 absence. And also Legislator Flotteron had previously been on and
14 now he's jumped off but just as far who is present.

15
16 Any other questions for our DSS Commissioner? Oh, there's
17 Legislator Flotteron.

18
19 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**
02:06PM 20 I'm here. I just took off the video. I'm listening.

21
22 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**
23 You're there. You disappeared. Okay. Any of the Legislators? I
24 see no other questions and I don't have any additional public
25 comment. Presiding Officer, are we good to go with this
26 adjournment? All right. All right, so I will be adjourning this
27 meeting. Thank you so much for participating. Appreciate you
28 guys.

29
30 **COMMISSIONER PIERRE:**
31 Thank you, Legislators.

32
33 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**
34 You have a good afternoon.

35
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THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:06 PM

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