

The Legislature of Rockland County



HARRIET D. CORNELL
Legislator – District 10
Chair, Environmental Committee

**MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, May 14, 2014
6:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT

LEG. H. CORNELL, CHAIR
LEG. N. LOW-HOGAN, VICE-CHAIR
LEG. T. EARL
LEG. B. KANTROWITZ

MEMBERS ABSENT

LEG. CHAIR A. WOLFE
LEG. F. SPARACO
LEG. C. CAREY

OTHERS PRESENT

LEG. P. SOSKIN
E. YEGER ESQ.
R. HANSEN
M. HAESCH

LEG. D. JOBSON
D. MADRONERO
S. POWERS

CHAIR CORNELL CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:03 PM

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 3/26/14 MEETING

MOTION TO ADOPT:

LOW-HOGAN/EARL

UNAN

1. REF. #8874 URGING CONGRESS TO FUND MESOTHELIOMA RESEARCH AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS IN THE FY 2015 APPROPRIATIONS BILL BY INCLUDING \$5.26 BILLION FOR THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE AND \$25 MILLION FOR THE PEER REVIEWED CANCER RESEARCH PROGRAM AS PART OF THE CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED RESEARCH PROGRAM
(HON. HARRIET D. CORNELL, LEGISLATURE) LG# LG3339

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: LEGS. LOW-HOGAN, EARL, KANTROWITZ, JOBSON

MOTION TO APPROVE:

LOW-HOGAN/ KANTROWITZ, EARL

UNAN

Chair Cornell stated that it is difficult to get funding, even though Mesothelioma hits people very hard. Cervical cancer is funded at a higher rate than Mesothelioma, though they have the same death rate. She has had two good friends die of Mesothelioma. The funding issue was brought to her by a County Probation Officer whose husband has it. Leg. Low-Hogan said her father-in-law had asbestosis. Leg. Kantrowitz said that asbestosis is the earlier form of Mesothelioma. Leg. Low-Hogan said it had to do with him working in the Navy yards. Chair Cornell said that much of the funding is through the Department of Defense. Leg. Earl said that he would like to be a co-sponsor, as he had a lot of coworkers that were subjected to this from working on breaklines on buses. He said they've done away with asbestos in breaklining, but before it was discovered, he saw a lot of suffering from painful deaths.

2. REF. #1021 DISCUSSION/PRESENTATION ITEM- NEW CAPACITY ZONE (NCZ) DESIGNATION FOR THE LOWER HUDSON VALLEY
(HON. HARRIET D. CORNELL, LEGISLATURE)

DISCUSSED: Further discussion set for May 29, 2014, at 5:30 p.m.

3. REF. #9495 DISCUSSION ITEM- OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF COUNTY DEPARTMENT(S) FUNCTIONS AND PROGRAMS (YOUTH BUREAU)
(HON. HARRIET D. CORNELL, LEGISLATURE)

ACTION: S. Powers will provide the committee with a status report of the search for a Director of the Youth Bureau.

DISCUSSED

Acting Executive Director McCarney-Haesche stated that the staffing pattern for the last five years went down by 40% and three relief positions have to be reviewed every ninety days. She said she is proud of her department being able to accomplish what it does with just four employees. Youth workers make \$7.25 per hour. The Executive Director position is still vacant. The Governor's Summer Youth Employment funding increased, so they are expecting an increase. They lost the Americorps grant, reapplied, and should hear in the summer. The program is able to be maintained at a much smaller level, plus there are a few smaller grants. The Certification Program to train citizens for emergency disasters began with a huge interest from the community. The program will help save money. After Hurricane Sandy, the entire staff went out in the county to assess things. Chair Cornell asked if the program was part of Governor Cuomo's initiative? Acting Executive Director McCarney-Haesche said it was, but they had actually started it before he did. Twenty-five were trained and more trainings will be offered, because of the great response. The small grants are for the Environmental Corps of 20-25 students, which is half of what they have done in the past. They had to redesign the whole way they do the programming because of state changes. The Youth Bureau funds seventeen non-profits in the county and oversees them. An example is VCS funding for FINS (Families in Need of Support Program), which is appointed by the court when youth are in distress. It is an excellent program that had been eliminated six years ago, but they asked to bring it back last year, because there was a gap in services. Leg. Low-Hogan asked what the status was for a search for an Executive Director. S. Powers said that all departments are under review and he would find out. Acting Executive Director McCarney-Haesche stated that the Youth Bureau is the lead agency for an 18-month \$250,000 grant with the DCJS, collaborating with the DA, Haverstraw, and Spring Valley to prevent violence. The Youth Bureau is getting just \$15,000, but doing a lot of the work overseeing the entities carrying out the grant. It is more work than anticipated and they will ask for more next time, but she would rather have the money go to the community. The DA gets \$100,000 for a social media piece that will benefit the community. DSS representatives attend VCS, CANDLE, and community collaboratives and the goal is to work together to carry out the initiatives. It is a great way of sharing resources and serving the needs of the community. The youth workers are on the Youth Bureau payroll, but they are placed in different county departments. Some are later hired by those departments. Leg. Soskin recommended M. McCarney-Haesche to head the department. Acting Executive Director McCarney-Haesche stated that she has been fighting for the existence of the department for twenty-three years, as these are not mandated services. There is no overtime paid, yet all staff do it willingly, because it is the nature of the work. They are bringing a lot of money to the county for a little department and serving the community tenfold. The youth are our future. We're spending a little now to avoid later having to pay for them being in jail. Chair Cornell stated that there had been talk for years of consolidated with DSS, but that is not right, because they have a totally different mission.

4. REF. #9495 DISCUSSION ITEM- OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF COUNTY DEPARTMENT(S) FUNCTIONS AND PROGRAMS (HEALTH DEPARTMENT)
(HON. HARRIET D. CORNELL, LEGISLATURE)

DISCUSSED

R. Hansen stated that the county share is mostly flat, but state aid and grants are drying up. General Health was under budget in 2013 and they are projecting being on budget in 2014. There are less grants and funding, but some are going up, like WIC. Chair Cornell asked if they were applying and not receiving grants or if there were fewer to apply for? R. Hansen said that there were fewer to apply for. They are under budget for over-time, but it cost \$10,000 to address an issue. There are ten open vacancies, but they are difficult to fill. They are hoping to fill one or two in July. They had to staff the clinics for over-time, due to the Hepatitis B outbreak in Nyack for the vaccinations. With lower staffing, sometimes their response is reactive, rather than proactive, with education and outreach suffering.

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New York State is getting out of direct care and more into prevention, which is sometimes how funding is attached. The DOH is down 28% from 2010 in staffing,. FTE used to be 231 and is now 168, with the environmental and nursing divisions hit the hardest. State law says you can't make a profit, so they are trying to raise fees as best they can. The fines for mosquitoes and environmental are a very laborious process, so it has trailed off with a declining staff. It could be 4-5 years before any revenue seen. Chair Cornell said that two Department of Health nurses were honored by Helen Hayes Hospital and that she was proud, because we have wonderful people working for the department. Leg. Soskin asked who sets the fines? R. Hansen said that they are set by the Board of Health and the Sanitary Code. The fees are not based on income, but on the violation countywide. Hearing officers can take hardships into account, but there is no latitude for inspectors. Leg. Soskin asked how often fines are reviewed and if they are ever adjusted downward? R. Hansen said that the grid was looked at last year, but he wasn't sure if there was a systematic review. Chair Cornell asked if there were any possible consolidation of functions with other departments or agencies? R. Hansen said that they were doing fine with what they have, but they could do more with more resources. They are thinking about folding a clinic into another clinic, because we have staffing and can direct staff somewhere else, like prevention. With the child health clinic, there is no reason some residents can't go to a private health provider, so it is not a good use of funds. He said that we should be serving the underserved and those at risk, like TB. The TB cases are down and we don't need as many clinic hours, but we need to continue outreach. Morale is an issue, because employees are doing more with less. Chair Cornell asked if residents could go to their own health providers because of the Affordable Care Act? R. Hansen responded yes, but that there was nowhere else to go, but the county, for TB. Chair Cornell said that there was an increase in diabetes and a lot of prevention work is required by the department. R. Hansen agreed, saying that they go to the schools and the community to educate about obesity. It is hard to put a number on it, but these are the things we should be doing. Chair Cornell said that the Department of Health is saving lives through their educational outreach. R. Hansen spoke about Rockland County having the lowest smoking rate in the state and the tobacco cessation was due to their outreach efforts. Chair Cornell said that the Reality Check program, which worked with adolescents, was no longer funded, so we will have to see if tobacco cessation will be as low now.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN 7:33 PM
KANTROWITZ/EARL, LOW-HOGAN**

UNAN

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ENV 5.14.14.MIN/PS