New York State (NYS)
Department of State (DOS)
Division of Community Services (DCS)
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

Advisory Council Meeting
Minutes

Meeting date**: September 12, 2024,** at 10:00 am.
This meeting was conducted in person between sites in Albany, NY, New York City, and Buffalo, NY and via WebEx Video Conference.Attendance was taken by verbal rollcall.

Members Present:	**Denis Wilson, Chair** Executive Director/CEO, Fulmont Community Action Agency, Inc. **Tina Zerbian,** **First Vice-Chairperson** Chief Executive Officer, Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc. **Dan Maskin,** **Second Vice-Chairperson** Chief Executive Officer, Opportunities for Otsego, Inc.	**Mike Bobbitt** Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development **Alan Jones** Chief Executive Officer, Adirondack Community Action Programs, Inc **Michael Martin** Executive Director, Native Americana Community Service of Erie and Niagara Counties, Inc. **Andrea Ogunwumi** Executive Director, EOP for Chemung & Schuyler Counties	**Charles Quinn** Chief Executive Officer, Regional Economic Community ActionProgram, Inc. **Maurice Reid** President, KenJam Consultants, LLC **Laura Rossman** Chief Executive Officer, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc. **Miguel Santos** Advocate
Members Absent:		**David Hahn-Baker** Activist	**Yves Villus** Executive Director, Erasmus Neighborhood Federation, Inc.
Guest Presenters:	**Jackie Orr** Executive Director/CEO, New York State Community Action Association		

NYDOS Staff Present:	**Nikoletta Battistoni** Deputy Director of DCS **Victor Carrera** Community Services Program Analyst 1 **Valentin Castillo** Office of General Counsel **Alisha Cooper-Wilson** Fiscal Representative **Zoila del Castillo** Deputy Secretary of State for Economic Opportunity **Katharine Furman** Administrative Assistant II **Jessica Garneau** Community Services Prgm Analyst 1	**Amy Gonsalves** Community Services Prgm Analyst 1 **LuAnn Hart** DOS Chief Administrative Officer **Craig Howard** Fiscal Representative **Paul Kinter** Fiscal Representative **Aimee Kollar** Community Services Prgm. Analyst 3 **Nancy Pfohl** Community Services Prgm. Analyst 3 **Katy-Rose Hanson** Community Services Prgm. Analyst 1	**Jessica Lowell** Community Services Prgm. Analyst 2 **Manuel A. Rosa** Director, Div. of Community Services **Kerry Shermer** Administrative Assistant I **Nicole Stehlar** Community Services Prgm. Analyst 1 **Jessica Sweet** Community Services Prgm. Analyst 1 **Robert Vanderbles** Associate Attorney, Office of General Counsel **Theresa Walsh** Community Services Prgm Analyst 2
Executive Directors or Agency Representatives	**Maureen Abbott** Executive Director Tioga Opportunities, Inc. **Maribel Arce** Director of Grants and Planning People's Equal Action and Community Effort, Inc. **Rinia Bell** Community Action Organization of Western New York, Inc. **Ann Black** Deputy Executive Director/CAE Fulmont Community Action Agency, Inc. **Andrea J. Clarke** Chief Financial Officer Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County, Inc. **Melrose Corley** Deputy Director of Strategic Planning and Corporate Programs Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County, Inc.	**Debbie Gildenson** Qualitas of Life Foundation **Brandy Haynes** Vice President of Adult Services Community Action Organization of Western New York, Inc. **Soco Hernandez** Qualitas of Life Foundation **Nicole Laurin** Chief Executive Officer Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Inc. **William Nicholson** Community Services Director Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. **Suzanne Shears** Chief Executive Officer Niagara Community Action Program, Inc.	**Shelley Smith** Executive Director Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. [dba L.E.A.P.] **Brenda Soto** PathStone Corporation **Jerome Underwood** President & CEO Action for a Better Community, Inc. **Nancy Warnock** Director of Career and Family Services, LEAP Services **Venecia Williams** Community Action Organization of Western New York, Inc.
Other attendees	**Lori Remington** St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES	**Nancy N** River Fund	

The meeting began at approximately 10:02am.
Katy-Rose Hanson, Community Services Program Analyst 1, began the recording. Transcription services provided by eScribers, LLC. Recording is made available on the website after the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Nikoletta Battistoni, Deputy Director of the Division of Community Services

Deputy Director Battistoni read the roll call.
10 members were present at the beginning of the meeting, quorum was not established.
Three members expected.

I. WELCOME AND REPORTS

Denis Wilson, CSBG Advisory Council Board Chairperson

Wilson opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. As quorum had not yet been established, but was expected, Wilson stated that the approval of the minutes, the resolution, and new business would wait until a quorum was established.

V. DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Aimee Kollar, Associate Director of Contract Processing, Division of Community Services

Kollar provided a sample of achievements from 2023 as listed in the 2023 Annual Report
See Appendix 1 for the sample.

Manuel A. Rosa, Director, Division of Community Services

Rosa shared about the importance of the Annual Report and how it tells the story of Community Services Block Grants. He noted the 60th anniversary of CSBG and Governor Hochul's proclamation on CSBG. Rosa encouraged participation in the upcoming legislative hearing on CSBG, and participation in the upcoming American Customer Satisfaction Survey.

VI. NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITY ACTION ASSOCIATION (NYSCAA)

Jackie Orr, Chief Executive Officer, New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)

Jackie Orr presented updates from NYSCAA, reiterating NYSCAA Learn as a valuable training tool among Community Action Agencies – see Appendix 2

VII. Old Business

Denis Wilson, CSBG Advisory Council Board Chairperson

Wilson thanked Orr and asked if there were any questions. Receiving none, Wilson moved to the next item: review of current members of the Advisory Council, vacancies, and recommendations.

Manuel A. Rosa, Director of Division of Community Services

Rosa addressed the vacancies on the Advisory Council, which continues to be a challenge.

One candidate has withdrawn her candidacy. Two candidates are in process with the Governor's Office

for Executive appointment.

DCS is vetting a list of 5 people who have expressed interest.

Recess 10:43 – 10:55

See Appendix 3 for remarks made during the Recess

Nikoletta Battistoni, Deputy Director of the Division of Community Services

Battistoni verified that quorum established at 11:00 am.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Denis Wilson, CSBG Advisory Council Board Chairperson

Motion was made by Denis Wilson to accept the Advisory Council Meeting Minutes of 02/17/2022, 05/19/2022, 3/30/2023, and 7/27/2023.

Dan Maskin so moved.

Charles Quinn seconded. Motion was carried and the minutes were approved.

Advisory Council member Micheal Martin noted that he abstained from approval of the March 30, 2023, minutes as he was not present at that meeting, but was in favor of accepting the other minutes.

Wilson acknowledged this to be noted in the minutes.

III. RESOLUTION

Wilson moved to open the hearing on the discussion of the Resolution (see Appendix 4) before the Council.

Wilson read the proposal of the Resolution and asked for comments.

Discussion was held on what "extraordinary circumstances" meant, what the Resolution means, and how it affects the matter of quorum.

Valentin Castillo and Rob Vanderbles, Council

Castillo and Vanderbles provided guidance:

Castillo explained:

1- Extraordinary circumstances include disability, illness, caregiving responsibilities, or any other unexpected factors or events which would preclude a member from being physically present at a meeting.

2- In person quorum is still needed for quorum. Those attending virtually can still vote, but they will not count as part of the quorum.

Vanderbles explained:

1- The procedures that are proposed for your consideration include a procedure by which the member that has a potential extraordinary circumstance, notify DCS beforehand so that the public notice can be crafted to identify the extraordinary circumstance that led to a member attending the meeting from a location not open to the public.

2- The quorum requirement is 11. 11 members are needed in locations physically accessible to the public

noticed in the public notice of the meeting. The legislature added in later that if an individual has a disability within a certain definition, that is prohibiting them from attending in-person, they can count towards quorum.

Vanderbles summarized the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and the Public Officer's Law 103-a:

11 members (majority of 20 total members) attending a meeting at a location physically accessible to the public and noticed in the published public notice of the meeting, or having a disability that prevents them from attending in those physical locations. Beyond that, if individuals are experiencing an extraordinary circumstance, they can, with proper notice, participate in the meeting and count towards voting, provided that the members have first met that physical quorum requirement.

Advisory Council member Charles Quinn asked if he could make his office open to the public in order to attend the meeting virtually.

Vanderbles replied that this is a conceivable possibility, after all the required standards are met to ensure Quinn's office would be an approved site for public attendance.

Advisory Council member Laura Rossman asked if other state office buildings could be designated as approved sites, noting that there are state office buildings closer to advisory council members that would make it easier to attend meetings.

Advisory Council member Mike Bobbitt urged that other state office buildings be investigated as possibilities for public meeting space to make it easier for advisory council members to attend in person.

Dennis Wilson asked if there were further questions or comments, receiving none, he declared the hearing closed and called for a vote on the Resolution.

Charles Quinn moved to adopt the resolution

Mike Bobbitt seconded it.

Dennis Wilson called for a vote to approve the Resolution. A vote was taken with no opposition and no abstention.

VIII. New Business

Election of Officers

Wilson called for any nominations.

Charles Quinn nominated Mike Bobbitt for Chair, Alan Jones for Vice-Chair, and Laura Rossman for Second Vice-Chair.

No other nominations were given.

Wilson called for a vote to accept these nominations. The vote was carried with no opposition or abstention.

IX. Next Meeting: to be determined

X. Adjournment proposed

Dennis Wilson called for the meeting to be adjourned.

Advisory Council Member Michael Martin interjected to follow up on the prior discussion on open meeting laws to encourage the State to consider quorum standards.

Micheal Martin verbally proposed:

I resolve that we as a body encourage New York State to continue to explore ways to make the effective meeting of quorums for doing the business of the people including exploring the quorum standards as currently defined to potentially considering other options such as majority of members seated rather than member council which would then take out those vacancies and or exploring further the requirements of what would be needed to include remote participants under extenuating or extraordinary circumstances to be included as part of quorum and further to review their process for filling vacancies to try to find efficiencies to achieve that in a more expedient manner.

Tina Zerbian seconded.

Dennis Maskin asked what the next step is.

Rob Vanderbles asked them where they want to send the letter

Charles Quinn proposed sending the letter to the speaker, the majority leader, and the governor.

A vote was taken to send the verbally drafted letter to the speaker (of the house), the majority leader, and the governor. No opposition or abstention.

Denis Wilson declared the motion carried.

Manuel Rosa, Director, Division of Community Services thanked Denis Wilson, Tina Zerbian, and Dan Maskin for their service as Advisory Council Board member officers.

X. Adjournment concluded

Denis Wilson called for any other comments, receiving none, he called to continue with the motion to adjourn.

Charles Quinn seconded.

The motion was carried to adjourn the meeting at 11:45 am.

APPENDIX 1

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES: ANNUAL REPORT

Aimee Kollar, Associate Director of Contracting, Division of Community Services

Kollar shared a snapshot of state-wide statistics from the fiscal year 2023 Annual Report. She invited members to contact her for more detailed statistical information.

549,324 individuals achieved one or more characteristics:

- Volunteer hours
  660,209 volunteer hours were donated
  405,474 of those hours were donated by low-income individuals.
- Employment
  103,017 unemployed youth obtained employment
  1,540 adults obtained employment up to a living wage.
- Education
  7,963 adults demonstrated improved basic education
  8,376 children (ages 0-5) demonstrated skills for school readiness.
- Housing
  13,892 individuals obtained safe and affordable housing
  2,829 individuals avoided eviction.
- Income
  978 individuals achieved and maintained capacity to meet basic needs for 180 days
  3,142 individuals who engaged with a Community Action Agency reported improved financial well-being
  204 individuals purchased a home
  352 individuals improved their credit score.
- Health
  135,982 individuals demonstrated improved mental and behavioral health and wellbeing
  11,566 seniors maintained an independent living situation
  11,131 individuals demonstrated increased nutrition skills.
- Civic
  4,072 individuals increased skills, knowledge, and abilities to enable them to work with Community Action to improve conditions in their community
  3,362 Community Action program participants gained other skills, knowledge and abilities to enhance their ability to engage.

Kollar did not have updates on the interim report for the next year.

APPENDIX 2

NYSCAA presentation attached separately

APPENDIX 3: Recess discussion

Recess discussion

During the recess, Advisory Council member, Andrea Oguwumi inquired about what the resolution for remote participation in extraordinary circumstances meant by "extraordinary circumstances" for meeting attendance.

Rob Vanderbles, Council, replied that this is a good topic to discuss when the Council has quorum and is able to vote on the resolution.

Advisory Council member Miguel Santos, brought up the question of the council's role in identifying community needs. Santos shared the concerns brought up by his community including concerns for the migrant population and agencies wanting to know how best to provide service to migrant populations in the state. Santos mentioned that the funding for housing migrants in hotels is drying up which has the potential to increase the homeless population in the state. Santos is looking to have a conversation about this in future Advisory Council meetings.

Manuel Rosa mentioned there is limited CSBG funds to address these issues. DCS has been working with other agencies, particularly the Governor's Office and the Office of New Americans, as well as others, to address these issues and help stabilize housing and food needs. Rosa noted that these changing needs of migrants need to be reflected in the community needs assessments.

Santos noted concerns that prisoners are not being released because they do not have a place to go. Santos suggested that housing opportunities may exist in rural communities in agriculture. Mention was given that Debbie Dobbs, who works with 211 State-wide, has interest in exploring this possibility.

Manuel Rosa acknowledged the suggestion, and deferred to Niki Battistoni's work with the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) of community service programs working with rural counties.

Mike Bobbitt (DYCD) mentioned he has a colleague in state corrections and mentioned he himself was unaware of the issue of people remaining incarcerated due to not having secured a place to be released to. He mentioned putting Santos in contact with his colleague.

APPENDIX 4

Resolution attached separately