

Health & Human Services Committee
February 3, 2026
Minutes

Members Present: Committee Chair Anthony Doldo, Legislators Robert Cantwell, Tina Bartlett-Bearup, Karen Freeman, Frances Calarco, Corey Grant, Board Chair William Johnson

Others Present: Legislators Michael Montigelli, Daniel McBride, James Nabywaniec, Patrick Jareo, Robert Ferris, Steel Potter, County Administrator Ryan Piche, Deputy Administrator Dylan Soper, County Attorney John Sabik, Office for the Aging Director Bethany Munn, Community Services Director Tim Ruetten, Public Health Director Steve Jennings, Veterans Service Agency Dave Pavey, County Auditor Stefanie LaPier, Confidential Secretary Jill Jones, Confidential Secretary Jaimie Lee

Chairman Doldo called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

County Administrator Ryan Piche presented eight strategic priorities for the Health & Human Services Committee for 2026 and outlined owners and partners for each. He reminded legislators that the priorities are deliberately broad and ambitious and are designed to guide the legislative calendar with measurable outcomes. The first goal identified is to enhance security at the Human Services Building in coordination with ongoing capital improvements. Goals related to policy and strategic planning include: conducting and initiating the implementation of results from a comprehensive housing study, launching a Lead Rental Registry specifically for the City of Watertown, continuing to track and provide support for initiatives addressing homelessness, and supporting the Public Health Department's pursuit of national public health accreditation. Goals related to operations and performance include: filling the vacancy for medical examiner and reducing coroner transportation costs, supporting efforts within DSS to improve performance metrics, and standardize customer service training for all forward-facing county offices.

The Committee approved the December meeting minutes as written.

Chairman Doldo offered Privilege of the Floor.

Bruce Wright, Broadway Avenue, Watertown, President and CEO of Guilfoyle Ambulance and Chairman of the EMS Advisory Board, spoke against the resolution to accept the Jefferson County Public Health EMS Rural Healthcare Grant. He argued that the grant-funded services are already being provided by other local agencies and that using taxpayer money would unfairly compete with private businesses. Mr. Wright also said pursuing a Certificate of Need, as proposed in the grant, would be a waste of resources and create problems for the County. Additionally, he criticized the process, noting that the grant was not discussed by the EMS Advisory Board and that stakeholders were contacted individually. He concluded that the grant does not address any existing EMS issues or crises.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Adopting the 2026 Strategic Priorities for the Health and Human Services Committee and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Calarco seconded by Legislator Cantwell and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing an Agreement for the Provision of Caregiver Services Program to Provide for Music Therapy for Older Adults Who Receive Respite Services and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup seconded by Legislator Freeman and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing an Agreement with G.R.O. Energy Solutions LLC of Jefferson County for Provision of Home Modification Program Services and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Freeman seconded by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing an Agreement for Provision of Legal Services for the Elderly of Jefferson County and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup seconded by Legislator Grant and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing an Agreement for Provision of Personal Emergency Response Systems Funding with the Henry Keep Home and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Grant seconded by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreements for Provision of Personal Care Services to Elderly of Jefferson County and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Cantwell seconded by Legislator Calarco and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreements for Provision of Transportation Services to Elderly of Jefferson County and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Cantwell seconded by Legislator Freeman and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing an Amended Agreement with the Home Care Association of New York State and Iroquois Healthcare Association Related to Additional Funding for the Community Medicine and Paramedicine Programs and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup seconded by Legislator Grant and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing an Agreement in Connection with New York State Department of Health County Emergency Medical Services Support Grant and Amending the 2026 County Budget in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Calarco and seconded by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup. Discussion on the resolution between legislators and staff centered around the EMS services that are currently offered and if the funding as proposed would benefit the EMS community and taxpayers. Public Health Director Jennings outlined the purpose of the expenditures and answered questions from legislators. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to send the resolution to the Board with a negative recommendation from the Committee with Legislators Bartlett-Bearup and Freeman voting aye on the resolution and Legislators Doldo, Cantwell, Calarco and Grant voting nay.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Authorizing Funding in Connection with New York State Department of Health Local Health Department Performance Incentive Initiative and Amending the 2026 County Budget in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Calarco seconded by Legislator Grant and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Expressing Support for New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide Program and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup seconded by Legislator Cantwell and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Doldo introduced a resolution Appointing Member to the Jefferson County Public Health Service Professional Advisory Committee and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Cantwell seconded by Legislator Bartlett-Bearup and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

There being no further business of the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Grant seconded by Legislator Cantwell and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Piche". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ryan Piche
Clerk of the Board