



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
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TAMMY BARBER
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HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES – JUNE 18, 2025 CODY M. KELLY, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. McCarron, Ms. Harvey, Mr. Bush

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Meaker

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis; also see attached list

Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 12:27 p.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. **HEALTH:** Rebecca Shultz, Deputy Commissioner

a. **Amending the 2025 Onondaga County Budget to Accept Grant Funds from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (\$5,000,000)**

Purpose: To accept a grant award from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop infrastructure that expands local capacity for farm-to-school opportunities in partnership with the CNY Regional Market.

Background: The Onondaga County Health Department is requesting to accept \$5 million over 5 years from the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. This successful grant application was developed and submitted by Onondaga County, along with partners from the Regional Market, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Syracuse City School District. The funds will be used to develop a food venture center at the Regional Market that expands capacity for aggregating, processing, and distributing locally grown food to supply school meal programs throughout the CNY region. This project offers significant cross-sector community benefits. Through the aggregation of product, small and mid-size farms in the region will have new access to the school food market. School food programs will have more options for meeting quotas to incorporate local food items into their menus at more competitive prices, and local students will benefit from eating fresh local foods and learning about the local food system. In addition, a new commercial kitchen space at the facility will allow for training and development programs to support a robust and innovative food systems workforce.

Budget Impacts: The Onondaga County Health Department will receive \$5 million during the funding period of 3/15/2025-3/14/2030. The department will utilize the county's procurement process to secure the budgeted equipment and supplies. There is no anticipated financial impact to the County for this project.

- Allows support to small and mid-size farms in aggregating products to be available to school district's meal programs
- Some smaller farms may not have the volume of product needed to serve a large institution
 - i.e. Carrots can be aggregated from multiple farms and processed in one location at the Regional Market
 - If school district orders (i.e.) carrot coins, this allows processing, packaging, storing and possibly flash freezing before distributing to school districts
- Brings a win to different sectors like agriculture, school, education and the Regional Market to think about how to change the system to address food insecurities in the region and keep local dollars here

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- This achieves one of the goals set by Bill Fisher (Chief Executive Officer of the Market) when the vision of the Market was presented
- What about when school is out in the summer?
 - A lot of schools have summer feeding programs
 - Syracuse City School District operates sites all around

- Because growing season is shorter, having the ability to freeze, process, and store products means they will not have to get them out the door as quickly
- i.e. Strawberries will not be available in the fall, but they will be able to harvest, process and freeze them to be available to schools
- Is this written exclusively for school districts? (not for food pantries, PEACE Inc., Meals on Wheels)
 - Yes, this grant opportunity is to increase and enhance the farm to school program
 - If the processes can be worked out with the school districts, there would be potential to scale to other institutions
 - Hospitals, nursing homes, and/or any facilities that provide meals to larger groups
- The focus seems to be on the equipment and supplies, but what is the county looking at as far as labor? Will it be county employees involved with packaging, preparation and distribution?
 - Yes, the budget is focused on equipping the facilities and flash freezing lines
 - Part of project is a proposal for a commercial kitchen to have some teaching, workforce development and training
 - All the equipment for that is built in
 - It would be market staff - Russo Produce and Upstate New York Growers and Packers are partners
 - Upstate NY Growers and Packers role is to find small and mid-size farms interested in aggregating their products, and bringing it to this facility
 - Russo Produce is already set up to scale operations – have staff doing the work and are prepared to invest their own capital as a match to this project to make sure it will be successful
- Will the money that is spent from this grant be front loaded in terms of capital costs, or will it be more spread out?
 - This started mid-March with no contract, so they may be delayed on the timeline
 - First year is going to be planning and design
 - Equipment purchases will be in years two and three, then years four and five will be heavy education and promoting
 - Have not seen a contract from the state, but sense is that the funds will be disbursed as the county spends them
- Will the County retain ownership of the equipment?
 - At the end of 5 years, the equipment may be purchased from the County for a nominal price
- If there were any issues with the equipment, would the County be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance?
 - If owned, the County would, but could consider whether these funds could be leveraged to support that
- How does this project fit within the broader picture, and is it something that the County can proceed on regardless of whether the County has the funding for the rest of the project?
 - Yes, everyone that helped pull this application together was conscious that there was potential for other funds to come in, but not guaranteed
 - Ideally, this would have been part of a larger investment in the Market, but having these funds and being able to proceed may position the Market in a better place to continue to advocate for that investment in future years
- Is the Regional Market charging rent for the use of the facility?
 - The Regional Market is working with current vendors
 - Russo Produce continues to pay rent for this space if they are operating it primarily

A motion was made by Mr. McCarron, seconded by Ms. Harvey, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

2. ADULT & LONG TERM CARE SERVICES: JoAnne Spoto Decker, Commissioner
a. INFORMATIONAL: Update on Senior Center Grant Funding

2023-2024 Senior Center Improvement Grant award details on file with the clerk.

- The final total for funding was \$1M, there was other funding from various sources and ALTC
- 18 Senior Centers applied for funding, 17 of them funded; one had not adjudicated the contract
- Total expenditures to date is \$1,212,729.38

- List of Senior Centers involved and what each received:
 - Camillus Senior Center – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$54,590
 - Canton Woods Senior Center – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$100,000
 - Cicero Senior Center – Awarded \$99,944.26, spent \$99,944.26
 - Clay Senior Center – Awarded \$31,526.16, spent \$26,227.51
 - The Dunbar Association – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$100,000
 - Fayetteville Senior Center – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$85,310.93
 - Frank DeFrancisco Eastwood Community Center (PEACE, Inc.) – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$100,000
 - Geddes – John Carno Senior Rec Center – Awarded \$91,650, spent \$92,879.64
 - Huntington Family Center – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$100,000
 - Jordan Elbridge Community Center – Awarded \$23,860, spent \$23,860
 - Manlius Senior Activity Centre – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$63,482.68
 - Marcellus Welcome Center – Awarded \$79,700, spent \$45,990.57
 - Onondaga Senior Center – Awarded \$19,711.31, spent \$19,711.31
 - SAGE Upstate Inc. – Awarded \$12,062.01, spent \$12,062.01
 - Town of Skaneateles Parks Department – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$100,000
 - Syracuse Northeast Community Center – Awarded \$92,000, upped to \$94,000
 - Westcott Community Center – Awarded \$100,000, spent \$99,780.47
 - Town of LaFayette Community Center – Awarded \$100,000 (waiting for contract to be signed and money is set aside for this project that is not included in the total expenditures)
- Opportunity to go to centers, see renovations come to life, see how seniors respond, see how centers are safer

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Throughout these projects, were there any degree of needs assessment beyond what was accomplished?
- Is there an idea of what other capital projects these centers are looking at?
 - There is another senior center grant in the works (\$250K)
 - Hopefully the response will be similar to what was already done
- What is the \$50,000?
 - \$250K is the amount of the second grant
 - Looked at the cost and how to divide it among the 18-21 senior centers; works out to be ~\$12,000
 - If a center did not spend their entire allocation, ALTC used it for another center
- A major issue at outlying senior centers is transportation
 - NYSDOT has a 5310 grant that goes out every two years; should be coming up at the end of this year
 - It gives senior centers money for vans
 - ALTC has been able to cash in on the grants; do not have a van, but money to provide transportation services
- Is ALTC going to have the summer lunches at the Regional Market this year?
 - Yes, increased the number of lunches from 4 to 7; comprehensive lunch program, handing out coupons
 - Will have neighborhood advisors to help connect clients to all the different services and nutrition education
 - NYS had extra stimulus money and increased allocation of farmers market coupons by 50%
 - Last year received 3,000 booklets of coupons (worth \$25 each)
 - This year received 4,500 booklets of coupons – have to make sure seniors are picking them up
 - Lunch programs will be based on what farmers are selling at the time in peak season
 - Site will go get produce, vegetables and fruits from the farmer and serve it as part of the dining site
 - Will do mass advertisement to all the different senior centers
 - Salvation Army, Huntington, and everybody that has a van comes in - might get 100 people

The meeting was adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**DATE: **JUNE 18, 2025**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Maria Mahan	ALTC
J. Anne Spots (Keph)	ALTC S
Taylor Frawley	ALTC S
Rebecca Shultz	OCHD
Steve Smorol	Fin ops
Ben Yaus	Law
John DeSantis	Leg.
Jim Beebe	Leg.
Ethan LaMontagne	Leg.