

Chautauqua County Legislature  
Emergency Meeting  
**Live Streamed on YouTube**  
Wednesday, November 5, 2025 6:30 p.m.  
Mayville, N.Y. 14757

Chairman Chagnon called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Chairman Chagnon: I will call to order the emergency meeting of the Chautauqua County Legislature on November 5, 2025. Would the Clerk please call the roll?

Clerk Lee called the roll and announced a quorum present. (Absent: Harmon, Johnson)

Legislator Dickey delivered the prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

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**1<sup>st</sup> Privilege of the Floor**

Chairman Chagnon: And that brings us to our first privilege of the floor. Members of the public may comment on any subject relating to any local law, resolution or motion appearing on the agenda. Individual comments are limited to three minutes and comments representing a group shall be limited to five minutes. Is there anyone wishing to address the first privilege of the floor? Please step to the microphone and introduce yourself.

Connie Griffith – I am Connie Griffith, and Mr. Chairman, I am speaking on behalf of the food pantries in Northern Chautauqua County. Thank you, Mr. Chairman for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the area food pantries. And all of you have this on your tables. I am a volunteer and co-manage a certified food pantry in Fredonia, called Fred Basket. We serve residents living in the Fredonia school district. This includes residents in Fredonia, Town of Pomfret, Sheridan, Arkwright, and Brocton. In addition, we collaborate with other area food pantries in South Dayton, Cassadaga, Sinclairville, and Jamestown. We share donated food and we share the pick up and delivery by our volunteers. I am requesting the two initiatives be approved by this legislature. One to address the immediate needs for food subsidies, and the second to establish a proactive process to maintain a better budget control of county monies that are spent. First, I urge you to release some unallocated funds to food pantries on a weekly basis until the Federal SNAP benefits are restored. This will ease the immediate surge of additional demands on the food pantries by allowing us to purchase food product as needed. While this does allow the pantries to serve many of your constituents, there is no accountability process set up to determine who has provided the service to whom. And thus, no accountability for the funds being paid. This leads to my second initiative – a request for an ongoing proactive process. And I like tagging onto a system already in place that works. And that is to enter into a contract with FeedMore WNY like Erie County has in place. Under their contract, the Department of Social Services provides a voucher to new SNAP recipients when there is a delay in receiving their benefits, or if a client has a lost or stolen card. The client presents the voucher at a food pantry

and then it is sent to FeedMore. Erie County pays a set fee per client to FeedMore and then the payment is credited to the pantry to replenish what we give out. FeedMore WNY is the regional food pantry organizing agency. They provide nutrition information, volunteer training on food safety and civil rights, and inspect us to certify that we are maintaining safe operations and keeping records as required for Federal assistance. FeedMore is also the agency who secures and manages various local, regional, and federal grants for food. They purchase at wholesale, and they warehouse and deliver to the food pantries. They also operate mobile pantries in Sinclairville, Ripley, Forestville, Brocton Ashville, Sherman and Clymer. I urge you to direct the Legal and Social Services Departments of Chautauqua County to work to develop a contract like Erie County's. This will provide for fiscal accountability and program flexibility for food subsidy programs. The advantage of having this system in place is not only to solve the on-going hiccups in the day-to-day operation, but in times like this we can assure that the County monies are being spent responsibly and that there is accountability for those funds. If it's the will of this body to pursue these proposals, I will continue to make myself available to County staff. Thank you for your consideration.

Marie Tomlinson: I am Marie Tomlinson, I live in Fredonia, 146 Newton St. I'm asking that this group have compassion for the people in our County. Jobs are scarce, money is really tight and people are going to go hungry unless we take some action. So, I am encouraging you as our legislators to do something.

Marcia Westling Johnson: My name is Marcia Westling Johnson, I live in Fredonia, NY. Good evening. I am here tonight because too many of our neighbors – working families, seniors and children are struggling to put food on the table. And while congress argues about priorities, people right here in our County are growing hungry. That is unacceptable. Let's be clear – the recent failure by lawmakers to extend or properly fund food assistance programs like SNAP is not just policy choices – they are moral ones. Cutting or delaying these benefits doesn't just hurt the poor in some abstract sense. It hurts the family down the road who just lost a job, it hurts the single mother who works full time and still can't afford groceries. It hurts the local grocery store that loses business when families can't buy food. SNAP dollars are not wasted money. They are among the most effective forms of economic stimulus we have. Every dollar in SNAP benefits generates up to \$1.50 in local economic activity. This means money spent at local stores, more jobs supported in food distribution, and stronger small businesses across the county. When we invest in food assistance, we are not just feeding families, we are feeding the economy. Now, I know some of you will say we can't afford it – but that's not true. This County has reserve funds that we built up for emergency. And hunger is an emergency. If we can find money for PILOT tax breaks and CCIDA assistance, we can find money to make sure no child in this county goes to bed hungry. This is not a partisan issue, or it should not be. It's a human issue, it's a leadership issue. It's about whether we will turn our backs on people in need or whether we will live up to our responsibility to serve everyone in our community – not just those who already have enough. So, I am calling on the legislature to step up, use the reserve fund to create or expand local food assistance programs until federal support is restored. Partner with local job banks, and I absolutely endorse the FeedMore WNY program. With food banks and schools, show our residents that government can still work for them, not just those who already have enough. I am

calling on you to step up, use reserve funds to create or expand local food assistance. Sorry, I got lost. Because in the end, budgets are moral documents. They show what and who we value. Let's make sure that in this County we value every single person. Thank you.

Sandra Lewis: Sandra Lewis, Fredonia. I just have one comment. I'm not against people going to the food pantry. The only thing is, I know how I value my meals with my family and there are certain things that I care to eat and certain things that speak to me more than others. It's not just the food. It's the goodness of the food, it's the culture sort of things that you are used to eating. So, in addition to maybe going to the food pantry, you know a fifty-dollar gift voucher to one of the food stores may be a good option for others as well. Thank you.

Legislator Niebel: Mr. Chairman, this is a question. Are we allowed to ask questions of the people that have just spoken during the privilege of the floor?

Chairman Chagnon: That's not appropriate, no.

Legislator Niebel: Okay.

Chairman Chagnon: Anyone else for the first privilege of the floor. Seeing no one, I will close the first privilege of the floor. And that brings us to the agenda for tonight, which is an update on the status of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Heating Assistance Program benefits. Status of State funds and local food programs for emergency food assistance. We are honored to have the County Executive and some of his key staff here tonight to address us and help us understand the situation that we find ourselves in. So, I would invite the County Executive and his staff to come down front and they will make their presentation. I will ask that you hold your questions until the presentation is concluded and then I will make them available to answer your questions as you are recognized by the chair. If someone has a burning question that just can't wait until the presentation is concluded, please raise your hand and get my attention. With that, County Executive, please take us.

### **Update on the Status of SNAP & HEAP Benefits and Status of State Funds and Local Food Programs for Emergency Fund Assistance**

County Executive Paul M. Wendel, Jr.: First of all, to get everybody up to speed, so it was last Wednesday I believe, NYSAC, New York State Association of Counties, had a countywide briefing on the current situation. Met with Governor Hochul staff from Albany and from Washington. Also met with Federal officials as to the current status. One of the things we are going to talk about probably some of the things are not what you are going to want to hear. Quote from the State: "This is ours; we own this." What is happening right now, the State can not fund the benefits of SNAP. The Counties can not fund the lost benefits of SNAP. The amount of money is far too expansive for the County or even the State to cover these missing costs right now. So, they are working with the Federal government. We have been in contact with OTDA – Office of Temporary Disability Assistance who has been following this all along. Basically, from the State – direct your residents to resources that are available currently and we

will get through this situation. We need to be poised and ready. Our teams have been looking at this. I'll be turning this over to Carmelo Hernandez and his staff from Social Services. Also, speaking from a legal standpoint as to what the County can and can not fund. So, there are legal ramifications from this, there are other situations that arise. One of the things that came out, is we need to, this is the governor's staff, strictly from their mouths to the microphone – we need to stop the misinformation, the gaslighting, and fearmongering. People still have benefits coming to them. This isn't a halt of all benefits for people. We understand there are situations. Our teams are ready. They are in a position to address this as the need arises. And that's what I will let them focus on. Other counties across the State have done a multitude of things. Some have pledged work with – Albany County has pledged to work with their United Way in a matching fund system. Buffalo, New York, Erie County pledged a million dollars for FeedMore WNY and the Ulster County Executive has instructed her Community Foundation to fund the food pantries. I came out initially and said we need to assist those who have the means to assist our local food pantries. I've seen posts on social media that has been addressed. Some people have been very thankful that we are seeing an influx in their food pantries. So that's really where we are out right now. So, at the present time, we have been informed, and I am going to cease any of the other information right now. Carmelo Hernandez and his team are the ones directly involved with the day-to-day of this. They have been from the very get-go. A lot of what we are doing is the same positions we've taken during COVID. We are ready, we are poised, we are analyzing and assessing the situation as is needed, and it changes day-to-day. But, to reassure, there are still benefits going to our families. There are still those who need, who aren't getting those benefits. So, we don't want it to be known that people are being shut off from their benefits. But I'll turn this over to Carmelo and his staff and explain more of what's happened. This has been fluid. The New York State Association of Counties, all of us have said – be at the ready. Wait and see and act as, and again, our team has a plan, we will direct that plan as is necessary, but right now basically hold tight. Because if, now this was last Wednesday, so if the government would have opened by Friday, things would have been in the completely difference scenario. We've have been told now, and I'll turn this over now to Carmelo, as to what is going to happen from here. So, thank you, and we will be able to address your questions.

Carmelo Hernandez: Carmelo Hernandez, Commissioner of Mental Hygiene and Social Services. So, everything the County Executive said is 100% accurate. And I can tell you what the conversations have been at the State level with the commissioners from across the state and also the commissioner of OTDA. People will get benefits this month. There will be a mass communication that will come out. Now how that benefit is going to be determined is due to the Federal requirements and also Federal regulations that they are given to the State. So, the State is going to go in manually into the system and adjust the benefits that will come out. And they are going to adjust it and once that's done, they are going to send out a mass communication to everyone who does receive SNAP benefits. And they are going to be told what the amount is and what's going to happen so on and so forth. What I encourage everyone to do is come in to one of our local offices if you do have an emergency because what we can do is we can fund that emergency elsewhere with other resources that we have. One of the issues that we have is that we believe that we don't have any resources. And these current resources that we have with OFA with Mental Hygiene with certain funding there and we can get creative, real creative. My

biggest concern is, is that we put a big pot of money out right now and this goes way longer than two days. And then I'll really be concerned if we're in December and now we've got to figure out because we can't get that money back. And this is across the State. I'll be honest with you, what's happening in New York City, what's happening in Westchester County and Suffolk County – we're not seeing that right now here. I was- Monday at the offices at Dunkirk, I only saw one person. In Jamestown we only had three people. Are we receiving phone calls? Absolutely. Are people calling and asking questions? Absolutely. Do we believe people will ask more questions once the State sends out the information, the mass communication they are going to send? Absolutely. Because it's going to confuse a lot of people. It's going to confuse -I don't know what the formula is yet, they haven't shared that yet. Right now, we are meeting every day for approximately two hours. But now it's more steady in the sense of, every day at noon all the commissioners meet along with the State and they give us more information. And that is just SNAP. I'm pretty sure you guys have questions of HEAP – the plan was submitted to the feds – that program is 100% federally funded and as of right now it got pushed back from November 17<sup>th</sup> to November 24<sup>th</sup>. We'll find out more. Every day we find out something new once we have that meeting. I'm open for questions.

Chairman Chagnon: No, no, no. Wait till the end. You're open I know, but...

*(Inaudible cross talk not picked up by microphone)*

Dana Corwin: Dana Corwin, Director of the Chautauqua County Office for Aging Services. Good to see everybody here this evening. As the County Executive has said, and Carmelo, we've been working together as a team for the last seven, eight days, formulating and talking about the potentials. What the possibilities are. From the older adult perspective, we are also receiving some calls. More about information – what's there, what do we do, what do we need to know. We are not seeing calls that are directly saying that they are out of food but we've been planning with the other agencies to address that issue if it becomes a reality. So, we have programs and contracts already in place through our home delivered meal program as well as our congregant meal program which includes restaurant dining. We've formulated a plan that if we need to distribute meals, we've got community partners and we can cover the entire county. We've already ordered some product that can be also used as we go along – many of you remember me talking about the Blizzard Boxes or the emergency bags. So, we've preordered that because we are going to need them anyway, so if we have them on hand, we are ready. So, we're ready with information and support for older adults and our care givers about what they can do if they run into food insecurity. But right now, we have this plan and we have good communication along the group up here. But that's where we are. So, we are just tapping down the anxiety that we are sensing in the community about the change of information that keeps coming rapidly. So, we are hopeful on that. That SNAP/HEAP is also something that effects older adults, oh, and I'll back up for a minute and say, we were able to get some information about the number of adults that might be affected by SNAP – 4,367 over the age of 60. So, if you remember back on some of the times, we've had conversations about 39,000 older adults in the community. So, to give you a reference range. And I know that there are times when people think of older adults getting a smaller amount of SNAP, I would say that's probably just as important giving a fixed income

same realities of budgeting and spending needs for the older adults. So, we'll champion that. And I guess I go to the end of the line.

Ana Morgan: Hello, good evening, I am Ana Morgan, I am the County Attorney. I will just kind of walk you through our thinking of the work group in the last several days or so and I will try to maybe cover some things that Carmelo did not touch upon because there is a lot going on and they are very detailed. We are looking at a situation where we have been, in a situation where Federal funds have been suspended – not State, not local. Can we grab those funds somehow by ourselves and go and spend them the way we think should be spent – no. Can the State intervene? Yes. They have to a certain degree. Other counties, as PJ said took different approaches. Some decided to put money aside, monitor the situation, and see what's going on. Others decided to make money available to them, buy the food themselves, donate the food where they thought would be most useful. Third option is to give a monetary donation to one of the food pantries – support them that way. What we can do in the county is something that from a legal perspective we want to focus on the services and skills we already have implemented. So, for example, Ms. Anderson runs the Temporary Assistance Division with our Department of Social Services. We were not sure last week when we met coming Monday, are we going to have a line of 500 people, 50 people coming into DSS and saying listen, we need help because we are hungry, we don't have food on the table and we really need assistance. The assistance we are talking about through that avenue is cash assistance. People come in, they fill out an application and we help them on a one-time basis. As Mr. Hernandez said, there were a total of 4 people who approached the offices. What we see from that is right now that there is not a huge need to intervene immediately with any sort of food donations because from what we see right now from the numbers is that the County is covered. How long that's going to last, we don't know obviously. We have however, put mechanisms in place and through our staff, to be ready. Because we didn't know if we were going to have 500 people coming Monday, we were ready for overtime, we were ready to ask County employees to volunteer if needed. We were ready to pull different resources to organize transportation of either people to food or food to people. We are reaching out to our communities, they are different, from aging communities, from people who need this sort of assistance or that sort of assistance and kind of trying to adjust I think with all the resources that we do have. We, you know, my department, I think four different attorneys were working on this as well. It's very abstract right now and this is the problem I think I have from a legal perspective, I would love to hear maybe, you know, not particularly specific, but maybe some practical things that the legislature wants to do so that we can, jump in and start researching. Can we do this, how do we get there, what's the goal? Is it donating money is it donating food, is it monitoring the situation for now? I know that the County has also established certain food points where food is being dropped off in our localities – Dunkirk for example, where people can come in and grab it. So, we are trying to fill the gaps between the food pantries and between our residents but what we are seeing right now is that the system works. And the system is covering the needs it should be covering. Jon, did I forget anything.

Jon Anderson: No, I would add that, just to build off what Ana is saying here, and I believe Carmelo spoke to this a little bit too,

Chairman Chagnon: Please introduce yourself.

Jon Anderson: Oh, sorry. Jon Anderson, Deputy Commissioner of Social Services. Thanks for having me here. So, we can help with emergencies too through DSS, and as Ana said we are very prepared for it. We have kind of pulled back from that enhanced staffing level we had earlier this week but right now we are ready to go back any time. If people are in need, they should come see us. If they have an open case, they should come see us, it it's something new they should come see us and explore whether we can help immediately. That would be both with food and heating emergencies. So, we would encourage that to happen. We have had some communications behind the scenes with United Way and some of the private agencies that (*inaudible*) our food distribution sites, and how we can work together with them in coordination. So, we are looking forward to hearing more of that, but that is very early stage as well. So, any questions that you have coming up about some of the specifics with some of things I've touched on or Ana, or Carmelo, we are happy to answer those questions as well.

Carmelo Hernandez: We also spoke with the principals in the schools as well, so we are ready to go if it needs to go that route, so they are onboard as well.

Chairman Chagnon: Okay, now I will open the floor for questions and I see Mr. Niebel, Legislator Niebel's hand go up first.

Legislator Niebel: Only because I tried to ask questions before Mr. Chairman. Folks, I just want to get some statistics down here. And I guess this is for Carmelo or Jon. How many people do we actually have on SNAP? Is it around 23,000? That's a figure that I've heard before.

Jon Anderson: So, we have around 22,325 individuals and that's under 12,743 different cases.

Legislator Niebel: Cases – you mean households?

Jon Anderson: Yes. And that number does vary. Diane can speak to that variance. But it varies day-to-day, week-to-week. That's presently.

Legislator Niebel: Okay, thank you. And Carmelo or Jon again, as far as the food pantries – we have about 46 food pantries, is that it, in Chautauqua County? Or, close to that number.

Jon Anderson: We do have a list, it's a Food Resource Guide and it's about three pages. Dana, do you know exactly how many are on that?

Dana Corwin: I don't know exactly. But we are in the process of keeping in touch with them regularly. I can count them up.

Legislator Niebel: Is 45 or 46 out of line?

Dana Corwin: I would say thirtyish.

*(Inaudible cross talk not picked up by microphone)*

Legislator Niebel: Okay, 30 or 40. And as far as the food pantries, are they low on supplies at this point?

Jon Anderson: *(inaudible)* Social Services in the morning. Our team here, and Diane's team communicates with typical referral avenues that we have for families and individuals. And at this point I think they are; they are seeing a need. And there is a need always for food.

Legislator Niebel: There is a need Jon, but is there a severe shortage at this point?

Jon Anderson: I have not heard that specifically. But we've had the conversation. So, I cannot say that we've heard that.

Legislator Niebel: Okay. Mr. Chairman, one last question. Office for the Aging, okay, of your 4,300 people over 60 that are on SNAP, if you have calls, are you directing them to the nutrition sites if they have food challenges:

Dana Corwin: We've been working as a team about how to message them once we understand what's happening at the State and Federal level. So, a message, they have an internal messaging system that we may be able to work collaboratively on to make sure they understand to contact us because under the Office for Aging Services we have some funds that could be immediately started whether they be, if there are transportation problems, we can start them on home delivered meals. We can point them to food pantries and community kitchens and also our congregant dining sites.

Legislator Niebel: Okay, so you do have some excess funds that could be used for this?

Dana Corwin: We have an Unmet Needs Funds from New York State that we had targeted anyways for addressing the HEAP issue and seeing how that's unfolded and now the SNAP issue.

Legislator Niebel: Dana, thank you.

Jon Anderson: As Dana was saying, we will want to work together *(inaudible)* to get messages out to our system to the right population that is receiving the benefits now.

Legislator Niebel: So, you guys are kind of coordinating between Social Services and OFA?



Carmelo Hernandez: Yes, and what I'm going to do at my level is tomorrow, when I meet with the commissioners and the State, tell them that it might be a good idea to collaborate with the commissioner of OFA for when the message comes out it come out *(inaudible)*.

Legislator Niebel: I think that would be a good idea. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Legislator Gustafson: I know in the past that all of the schools in Chautauqua County were receiving free breakfast and lunch. Is that still the case for the children in our County?

Carmelo Hernandez: Yes, to my knowledge, yes.

Legislator Gustafson: Okay, thank you.

Legislator Nelson: People are still getting their benefits, correct?

Carmelo Hernandez: No, so as soon as the end of day October 31<sup>st</sup> they turned it off. So, then-

Legislator Nelson: But I heard they were getting them.

Carmelo Hernandez: They went to the feds. So, this is what happened. They went to court. They filed a lawsuit. And then when the lawsuit was filed, the feds made the decision, okay USDA, we have "x" amount of funds so how can we distribute these funds? Then they created a formula that I do not have my hands on to provide the 50% and then the State has to go in and do their magic with the vendors so this way the funds could be dispersed.

Ana Morgan: Just to clarify because you did say that they are receiving local benefits, our benefits that we are distributing are not disturbed. From WIC to public assistance to ...

Legislator Nelson: I'm talking about like the EBT card that they get.

Ana Morgan: Yes, it's suspended. Correct. It's not discontinued, it's suspended.

Legislator Nelson: Suspended for this month. What would it cost for the County to fund that for a month?

Ana Morgan: Good luck.

*(Inaudible cross talk not picked up by microphone)*

Legislator Nelson: I'm just asking. For Chautauqua County, what would it cost?

Chairman Chagnon: We can't put funds into it.

County Executive Wendel: We can't put funds into it. It's not our program. Nor can the State.

Legislator Nelson: I know it's a federal program.

County Executive Wendel: Well, you have to understand that, because you can't say is the County willing to use County funds – we are. Can the County legally – no we cannot. The State – I think the number for the State – nearly \$900,000,000 a week. So, the governor herself has not addressed any funding issued for SNAP as well. This is the federal program that we have to rely on. We can offset it by what we are currently doing right now and that is assisting the food pantries.

Legislator Nelson: What is your opinion of Connie Griffith's program that she addressed at the beginning of the meeting. The one on our desk.

*(Inaudible cross talk not picked up by microphone)*

Legislator Nelson: Should we consider it? I understand it is what they are doing in Erie County.

Carmelo Hernandez: I would say this. I would say we need to be mindful and I will use my military jargon here: we need to assess the battlefield and the battlefield right now. We don't have a battlefield assessment in terms of the need and I'll say yes, we don't want kids to go hungry, we don't want no family to go hungry. When it's given to the food pantries, I could tell you this – anyone in need that qualifies is going to be able to get it. Would I be able to guarantee you that those 4,000 SNAP recipients are going to get it – I can't guarantee that.

Legislator Nelson: In her program it mentioned that the accountability and maybe she could even address this in more detail. And I agree, there should be accountability and asking questions. So, okay, I have right now nothing else.

Carmelo Hernandez: To answer your question in terms of the price – it depends on the household. So, it varies between household in terms of what is the minimum and what is the maximum that could be distributed.

Legislator Nelson: But could we figure out what it costs for those 22,000 people in Chautauqua County for one month?

Carmelo Hernandez: I'll try to get that to you by Friday, because I did ask finance yesterday at like nine O'clock at night.

Legislator Nelson: I mean is that, doesn't seem like a crazy question to ask, just what does it cost per month to run SNAP in Chautauqua County. I know it's a federal program, it's not ours but ...

Ana Morgan: But it cannot be called to run SNAP Program in Chautauqua County. That's where legal steps in and says, no, we can't do that. Yes, there can be allocations.

Legislator Nelson: But Erie County can do it?

County Executive Wendel: Erie County is not doing this. They are not funding SNAP. What he's doing, is he's funding an assistance program, truth be told, a million dollars it was declared, still has to go through the Erie County Legislature. Just like you all did. A lot of statements have been made what people want to do, it still has to get passed through their legislative body.

Ana Morgan: And it does not go into their EBT cards. Just so you know. We can't do that. We cannot step (*inaudible*)

Carmelo Hernandez: I can tell you this, USDA was at 6.8 billion so they were short, so that's why when the government shut down, that's why they couldn't run 100% for the month of November. And they needed approximately 8.8 billion to run it for the U.S.

Chairman Chagnon; Legislator Nelson, if I can make a suggestion. The presentation that was made by Ms. Griffith is quite complicated, to use a term. If you would like to request the staff to evaluate that and discuss it with Ms. Griffith and bring a recommendation back to the legislature, I think that would be appropriate.

Legislator Nelson: I would like to make that request.

Legislator Carle: I make a motion to do that.

Chairman Chagnon: I don't know that we need to have a formal motion Legislator Carle. I think that the staff would welcome the opportunity to address that for you.

Legislator Nelson: Well, I think we are all on the same page. We don't want people to go hungry. We are talking about children. We are talking about veterans. We are talking about disabled people. Right? That's why we are here. So, and the best way we can do it is what we should do.

Chairman Chagnon: Thank you. Next Questions.

Legislator Larson: I guess I am learning this evening that the heating assistance program is also frozen at this time – is that true?

Carmelo Hernandez: Absolutely. We've known this, this has been, when the government was open, when the feds was open, every State needs to submit a plan. New York State submitted their plan and then what happened and feds happened. And that's 100% Federally funded, so yes.

Legislator Larson: The failure of the Congress and the President to keep the Federal government open has created a real challenge for Chautauqua County, a real problem. There is no question about that. The origin of the problem should not be overlooked. No County Legislature in New York State or any other State should be meeting this evening, this week, talking about how we avoid people being hungry. The Buffalo News on Tuesday, October 28<sup>th</sup> reported some very distressing news about how economically poor Chautauqua County is. We've heard repeatedly in the national news one out of eight Americans gets food stamps. Call me old fashioned – SNAP is the current name – but it's food stamps. And just as the public doesn't really understand unappropriated fund balance, they do understand slush fund. So, I will refer to food stamps. Nationwide, one out of eight. According to the Buffalo News as of July of this year, Chautauqua County had 23,300 recipients of food stamps. That's one out of five. Cattaraugus County had 10,500 – one out of seven. Erie County had 140,000 – again roughly one out of seven. This is the kind of information that this body and the public tends not to get about the real condition of the economy, the economic situation, the poverty of the people in this County. That is really depressing. One out of five in Chautauqua County gets food stamps. We've got a lot of work to do. I've tried to make that point economic development-wise; job creation-wise. I've tried to make that point for two full years. For better/worse for the rest of you the people on the northside of Jamestown have given me the okay to continue this fight for at least one more year. One out of five, versus one out of eight on average across America, and one out of seven by our two neighbors. We've got to stop pretending that everything is coming up roses in this County and get to work to do a better job than we have done for the last virtually twenty years. I'm not going to be the former County Attorney too much tonight, but in my opinion the County has the ability to enter into a contract for services with any of the food pantries that we deem to be dependable, long established, have a board of directors, have some legal standing. It doesn't mean every single food pantry in a closet in every church in the County is going to have a contract with the County. But, recognize dependable – we can have \$100,000 we can have \$200,000, we could allocate, it doesn't mean it would all be spent. The law department then could solicit proposals from food pantries and on a week-by-week bases, month-by-month basis as long as this disaster in Washington goes on, we can use County local funds under contract, just like we contract with the YWCAs, and the Salvation Army and all kinds of excellent not-for-profit organizations to do good things. I am for purposes of the press reporting to the public, I think I share a bit of legislator Nelson's confusion. 23,000 as of July, 23,000 Chautauqua County folks did not get any food stamp money on November 1. They got zero. To say that well we are on top of this, that there are other benefits. Well, yeah, I mean there is rental assistance, Medicaid, some cash assistance. But I don't think it's a good idea to portray that for these 23,000 there is really no problem. There is no way that for those 23,000 people we have a system in place to give them the equivalent of a month's worth of food stamps that they've lost. Is that a fair statement?

Carmelo Hernandez: It depends on what they qualify for. And I'll say this, so yes, there are 23,000 but these are not 23,000 individuals that don't have no income. So, a majority of our folks that do receive SNAP, that do receive food stamps, do have a source of income. That's one piece, the other piece is, we have a luxury here in Chautauqua County, and I can tell you this because I come from New York City. The luxury that we have here in Chautauqua County, if

any of your neighbors came into any one of our offices, we could triage and get them the help that they need right then and there. I can't guarantee that in New York City. Can not guarantee that at all. So, I'll say this, my staff may not like it, but this is the time where you utilize your local department of Social Services. This is the time where if there is a need, emergency cash, we are still processing applications, we haven't stopped. So, if anybody you know that has a need, they are more than willing to come. Like we said, we have staff ready to go pull overtime. We have staff willing to come in early. We were ready for the 23,000 to show up on Monday. And that I can say.

Legislator Larson: Increasingly I've lost my alleged ability to make myself clear. No one I hope is suggesting that if this part of the government shutdown goes on for months, that it's not a big problem for the twenty some thousand people that have been receiving food stamps. Is that a fair statement?

Carmelo Hernandez: Absolutely.

Legislator Larson: Well, I got some of my persuasion ability back then for a moment anyway, thank you.

Chairman Chagnon. Thank you.

Legislator Carle: A couple different questions, a couple different people. Carmelo, you said they were going to possibly get full benefits for the month of November after the State got involved or is that 50%?

Carmelo Hernandez: It's 50% according to the formula that the Federal government gives the State. The only was that they will get 100% of the benefit for the month of November is if the government opened between today and the end of November.

Legislator Carle: And can I ask you how people will find out about that?

Carmelo Hernandez: That's going to come from actually the State. The State is going to put together a mass communication where they are going to do phone calls, emails, and text messages to the phones on record. And they are going to send it out. That's going to come out, they've been working on it. They are going through legal to make sure they have the verbiage correctly. So, I would say, holiday next week, they got to get it done no later than Friday or Monday.

Legislator Carle: And you just said that it will be the normal means of communication that those people have in the system?

Carmelo Hernandez: Yes.

Legislator Carle: Jon, I had a question for you about the call-ins and the appointments. You know, kind of explain that process. A lot of times you call a government building and you are not going to get right in to anybody.

Jon Anderson: Well, they can walk right in – in Dunkirk and Jamestown you can walk in, you can call we can work with you. We have people that are actually we've set up a system where if somebody can't get in to an application, we'll try to get someone out to help them to their home.

Legislator Carle: Okay, let me follow up with that. Because, there is going to be immobile or housebound recipients and how are we going to make sure that they are getting their needs met?

Jon Anderson: If there are food needs, if we hear about these food needs, what we've already set up internally is a process to communicate with each other. We have different programs like our adult services program has access to vans. OFA, we can work with OFA they have meal programs that we can work through so, as those situations come up, we problem solve and try to get that need addressed as quickly as we possibly can.

Legislator Carle: Great. Do we know the average cost of a recipient per person?

Jon Anderson: Per case? I don't know the current per case cost, do you Diane? We can get that for you.

Legislator Carle: Well, just curious. I mean because ballpark if it was \$200 a month and there is 23,000 people it would be 4.6 million and that's why we can't address it.

Jon Anderson: It's much higher.

Legislator Carle: It's higher than \$200?

Jon Anderson: Yes.

Legislator Carle: Okay.

Diane Anderson: It's based on household size.

Legislator Carle: Right, but a household we have 1,200 households and 23,000 individuals, is that how I am understanding it?

Jon Anderson: Are you asking specifically about SNAP or are you asking in general about a case?

Legislator Carle: Well, I'm just asking about SNAP, because we are all trying to toy with the idea, can we give \$50,000 to the food bank system or do we need a million dollars a month or what is like the ballpark figure that we are all trying to get a grip on.

Diane Anderson: We haven't looked at the average cost for families so... Sorry, I'm short. The lowest amount is \$198.00/month for a single person.

Legislator Carle: Is that for an individual or case?

Diane Anderson: That's for one person. A one-person case.

Legislator Carle: Okay, so if we have 23,000 individuals' chances are the ballpark is about \$200. You know, and I'm no math expert, but that looks like \$4.6 million a month just for our County to carry it. You know – ballparking. So, yeah, we really can't handle that as a legislature but maybe there is something we can agree on if we had a committee working on this or some kind of initiative to be able to join into the FeedMore group or something where it was monitored and it's responsible and people are accountable. I guess the only other question – thank you – I appreciate all those answers. The only thing I guess Mr. Chairman, is that quite possibly could we have an updated report out at our monthly meeting or somehow keep a finger on the pulse of this going forward till we are out of the shutdown Federally?

Chairman Chagnon: I think that's a very reasonable request. Yes.

Legislator Carle: It just seems like, you know, there is an awful lot of information here we have gotten here tonight and we all need to kind of think about that and you know, we've got committee meetings next week and then the following week we are meeting as a group. So, at the very least we will meet two weeks from now and talk about it again?

Chairman Chagnon: Well, I would expect that at least at the Human Services Committee we would expect an update from Human Services, Social Services and Mental Hygiene. And then at the Legislature meeting, if things are still in flux and developing, we could expect an update at the Legislature meeting as well.

Legislator Carle: Okay, and I guess lastly, are you going to follow up and see that we have someone who looks into the proposition that like Erie County is doing with FeedMore, is that actually going to take place or is there something else we have to do to set that in motion?

Chairman Chagnon: I've got several heads here that nodded when I suggested that they would investigate this more fully, and report back to us.

Legislator Carle: Okay. And the person who knows the most who's in the room Connie Griffith is in the back here and she presented, you know, prior to the meeting, and she is the one

who made the document before us so she actually knows more about it than I would in trying to convey that. So, thank you very much for all those answers.

Legislator Penhollow: These are all wonderful services that we have, we know that there is need, I don't think anybody here is against any of these options, I just have a request. Is there a full diagram, a program, what are the requirements in each of these programs if they could be listed – is it SNAP, EBT, HEAP, what are those requirements- it's a veteran, it's a single mother, it's a family of five. Just to identify these are the numbers, this is what the qualifications needed to get those assistance and if we could have that in front of us. Because I hear all these acronyms, you know, I haven't heard WIC I don't know if that still even exists, EBT, SNAP, HEAP, all those programs and if they could be broke down so we have a better understand of how those programs work, what does the County do right now and how are they funded. You know, just a play sheet, a playbook in front of each of us so I can understand it better.

Jon Anderson: We can share that information, what Diane, we put this together before the meeting today. We will share that with Ana and she can dispatch it back here, if that works for you?

Legislator Penhollow: Yeah, you know, the programs and it's already been mentioned that the County programs whether funded by the State or Federal government, can overlap with the 19 or 20 different school districts that offer meals right now. And I know there is collaborative effort and if we know how those all interact and crossover and offer services it's just data and information in front of us so we can better understand it. At least on my behalf. Thank you.

Jon Anderson: Absolutely.

Chairman Chagnon: Legislator Larson, excuse me one moment. We will have a second privilege of the floor after the legislature has finished there questions so if you could hold that until that point, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Legislator Larson: Mr. Chairman, as independently elected legislators from our communities sent here to do County business, we have for our three hundred and some million, well, that's a bad way to start it, we have a lot of responsibility for things that the County is actually responsible for. And most of what we do we pay some or all of the cost of doing those things. So, we have to be knowledgeable to a certain extent about sewers, and public water systems, and roads, and bridges, and law enforcement and jails and meeting the mental health needs of the community, meeting the drug abuse, drug counseling needs of the community. It is just a shame that this evening we are having to try to become knowledgeable about food stamps and HEAP which have always been 100% Federal programs. We have no roll in designing those programs, we don't set criteria for those programs, our employees don't invent how to do these things, there have been food stamps since Lyndon Johnson and I don't know when the heating assistance started – maybe under Jimmy Carter in a cold Buffalo snowstorm blizzard of '77, I don't know. It's a shame that we're trying to be educated tonight about something that we have



no control over, we don't pay toward it with local money, but since we are being educated – that \$198 minimum figure for food stamps, is that accurate? Does that mean for the 4,300 roughly senior citizens, those over sixty, does that mean for those 4,300 the minimum that they have been getting is \$198 a month?

Diane Anderson: No, it's based on income.

Legislator Larson: You want to use the microphone to help.

Carmelo Hernandez: It's based on income.

Legislator Larson: So, for the seniors it could be fifty bucks or something?

Diane Anderson: A lot of them get \$16.00 depending on their income, sorry I don't know if you can hear me.

Legislator Larson: A month?

Diane Anderson: Yeah. And that's based on the income and the budgeting methodology that they do.

Legislator Larson: Like I say, I truly wish that we didn't have to become educated tonight about food stamps because we have nothing to do with them since 1964/1965 whenever under Lyndon Johnson. But here we are with about one out of five of our people on food stamps. And this month that 20% of our population has received zero to go to Tops or Wegman's or wherever and buy food. Is that right?

Diane Anderson: Yes.

Legislator Anthony: I guess a big question I have and maybe we've clarified it and it just hasn't been clear enough, it's probably for legal for Ana. We've talked about funding SNAP benefits but I guess what is our answer as to funding or I guess helping fund HEAP benefits when it gets there, obviously we live in Western New York and it's going to start to get cold here and we've discussed possible donating to food pantries or whatnot, but I guess what is our answer financially there from a legal standpoint.

Ana Morgan: Yeah, especially because they are saying it is going to snow probably in a couple days. So that's also another 100% funded Federally program. And what we can do, is can you hear me now? Is it better? How about now? This is the part where again we come down to our local services. I don't want to drag a different population into this but we do have a homelessness problem as well, which we addressed with Code Blue Shelters, we addressed we are thinking about opening them if we need to during the day as well. But it will probably come down through Diane Anderson when someone who cannot afford to pay their utilities and cannot afford to have heat properly, they will come in and ask for cash assistance. And then we will see,

do they qualify for something else. Do we enroll them in different programs, what age are they, do we send them to Dana, how do we, that's unfortunately how the local government works - they have to assist every single case, and then address every single case, so, if you take anything from the meeting today, please including the public, come to us – come – request services. That's why we are here. This is where your taxes go to. And they are ready. So, I hope that answers your question to a degree.

Legislator Anthony: I was assuming in my head that it was going to come out of cash allowances. It's the only thing logically to me that makes sense.

Ana Morgan: Yes, and it is immediate. And its you know, it is at the same time I think Diane, correct me if I am wrong, the issue with the cash assistance is we don't know how they spend it necessarily, is that true?

Diane Anderson: No, we are talking about emergencies for heating or utilities – that's a grant that we determine enough to meet the emergency and send it directly to the company. So, we do know where that's going.

Legislator Anthony: Okay. Where are we budgetarywise on that unplanned I know you said it's a State funded thing, but as we know, accounts don't go forever and how long can we plan for that before we have to look at going into our fund balance?

Carmelo Hernandez: What would happen, the emergency heating that Diane is talking about, everybody knows SAFETY NET. That's where it goes.

Jon Anderson: That's exactly true. Depending on the family situation or individual situation it would be either a SAFETY NET case or a family assistance case. Which calls into question what level of expense would be for the local government. SAFETY NET being more costly locally. That is the way it is funded.

Legislator Anthony: Lastly, while we are on budgetary, I assume at this point, we don't know anything that has the potential to be refunded back from the feds and/or the State I'm assuming?

Carmelo Anthony: As of right now, from my meeting this afternoon, the feds have not told the State if the State puts up any funds that they will be reimbursed. And, OTVA commissioner told the County has told us that there is no guarantee that the County would be reimbursed for any expenses that we incur.

Legislator Anthony: Okay. Fortunately, we've been fiscally responsive and have a fund balance if it's not going to be refunded to us and we can make up for that.

County Executive Wendel: To that point, it's particularly the reason why there hasn't been any movement even at the State level. But the numbers the governor's talking about is

already appropriated funds to the FeedMore and to other regional food pantries throughout the State. So, there hasn't been an additional amount of money put to it, it's just the appropriation that is already a part of the budget. So, again, the State hasn't moved anything because they're not sure if they were to get reimbursed. So, that's where we are in this little conundrum of waiting and that's across the board.

Legislator Anthony: Thank you guys, thank you Chairman.

Legislator Buchanan: First of all, my apologies for being late. I was *(inaudible)*- Just in case I missed anything here. Has anyone had any idea of what services are provided at the moment to some of these families outside of what the County can offer and the reason why I ask that question because folks have been reaching out to me, they were receiving groceries, free refrigerators, do we have any idea who was doing that? But they've been doing that to several families out in the City of Dunkirk at the moment. I did hear that someone said the Resource Center, I'm not sure of that.

*(Inaudible cross talk not picked up by microphone)*

Legislator Buchanan: Someone to the mic please.

Carmelo Hernandez: Yeah, I'm not sure of how that was even funded, yeah.

Legislator Buchanan: So, we be looking into that? No, I'm just asking.

Jon Anderson: Do you have a contact for us for where you've heard that?

Legislator Buchanan: Yeah, I wouldn't mind going down, some of the young ladies said the Resource Center, so I'll take a trip down and talk to the Resource Center. I just thought maybe if we could get an idea of what they are doing, if it's something we want to do, maybe, not do the same thing they are doing. We'll let the County decide to help provide refrigerators and something if they are already doing it. You know what I'm saying.

Ana Morgan: So, this reminds me of something. So, I don't think we have used it a whole lot in the past six or eight months, but whatever questions may arise, like for example, how do you even qualify, what overlaps, who's giving out what, questions like this, I heard about a program but can anybody identify it, please submit it over to our department. There is a procedure – just write out your question and we'll go through the chairman, then through legal and then we will give it to the departments. You usually will get an answer within probably within a week. And I think it may be helpful then to share that way, have everything in writing, you know, something you can refer to later. To your question, I'm thinking if you can contact the person who said that, get as much information as you can, or at least get us the contact info so we can call and start digging.

Legislator Larson: I want to thank you for calling this emergency meeting formal, legal meeting of the Chautauqua County Legislature. My vague memory would be that it's your call as to whether you call such a meeting. I thank you for doing that. There is great irony though that hit me a minute ago. We are here as elected representatives at a formal emergency meeting of the Chautauqua County Legislature, to discuss a problem that is not of our making. Under my understanding of the way the U.S. Constitution used to be viewed, the House of Representatives initiates all spending bills in our government and the House of Representatives has been in recess or vacation for five or six weeks or so. So, we came here as a Legislature to meet about something that is not our responsibility. And, the legislature that has this responsibility for both food stamps and heating assistance has not met for like a month and a half. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Legislator Pavlock: Yes, thank you Mr. Chairman. Just some thoughts that I've had as I've been listening to everybody and here and even before I came. It certainly is an important topic and that's why we've had this emergency meeting and that's why we are all here caring for our communities. You know, hopefully this shutdown doesn't last. You know – that's the hope, you know, hopefully the government opens next week, right? And our solution is handled. But what if it doesn't? What if it's a month what if it's two months, three, four months? I mean I wouldn't think so, but who knows. You know, from what I'm hearing tonight, our County is in a good position, we are handling it. As Mr. Larson stated, how long will that last, right? Can we get a few weeks out of it can we get a month? I think having the meeting is good, we've discussed it, but I think we have some meetings coming up. We will know a lot more in two weeks than we know tonight. We will kind of see more of a direction this is heading. We are going to be closer to the end of the month where November has transpired. Hopefully, they will make right and it will happen this month and people will get their funds. But you know if it keeps going another month or two, I really do think the body will have to take action and we will take action – somehow way or another. I think you know, moving in that direction is wise in the sense of game planning, which I think you guys are already strategizing toward that "what if". Give us some suggestions and if the shutdown seems like it will be looming around for a while, we will be able to put some of those ideas to fruition in short notice. It might not be out of the realm to have another emergency meeting in December if we need to put those into action. Because, you know, in a couple of weeks we may not have the information in our system that we currently have is functioning and we can let it. But falling on it for a month, month and a half may deplete some of those funds and could we wait until the end of December at that point. I don't know. We will have to just keep our finger on it. Keep close attention and I am just thankful for the work that the staff has been doing already so far and the hard work that they've done in preparation for this because so far, we are handling it and hopefully we can continue to do that. But I expect we can't forever. And, so we'll be prepared. So, thank you.

County Executive Wendel: Just for a moment. This happened about- initial news started about three weeks ago or so, so this group has been working consistently. So, as we've said – this is a crisis management team. This group has no issue with developing the plan, implanting the plan and getting this across the finish line without a doubt. So, as we said, this isn't something that we've been discussing now for a week, this is has been something that has been

discussed for three weeks, and anytime in that three weeks, the government could have opened and we could have been back to where we were. Right, so to that point, this group has been working tirelessly, it's the last week that Carmelo, Mr. Hernandez, and his team have been working with OTDA, NYSAC brought the County leadership involved in it and how we start to manage. It's much, I hate to bring this word back, but five years ago we'd been in the same situation in March where we start hearing little upticks of things and how it affects each and every county. So, we are again watching. When COVID hit it was the same plan. We have strategies, we are listening, we are looking, we are at the ready – that's what this group is. And waiting to see how we pivot and move. There is no question, when that need arises, we will move and pivot. But as we said, if we appropriate everything now, and then tomorrow it opens, then what do we do? So, we are ready. But to the point, this hasn't been a week-long issue this has been going on for about three weeks now.

Legislator Dickey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank all of you for the information you've shared tonight. It's been certainly an eyeopener for me. But I believe I heard that you are checking with various food banks to see if there is a severe shortage or if it gets to that point. Do we have a plan in place, is it legally appropriate for us to make a food donation to those thirty food pantries in Chautauqua County? It's kind of a two-sided question there. At what point will we look at the potential of helping the thirty food pantries in Chautauqua County should it get to the severe shortage level?

Jon Anderson: So, I talk with Diane's staff about every day. Because they communicate and we make referrals on a regular basis. When somebody comes in for food assistance, so we have to know where to refer people where there is resources and when that's depleted, we hear about it. So, up until now, we know that there are shortages that happen, that happen routinely with food need. But as far as an emergency like you are describing, we haven't heard that yet. If we did hear that, I think we would want to be prepared in that event and I would leave that to Ana to talk about the legal aspects of that piece.

Ana Morgan: It is doable, yes. Either a monetary donation or food.

Legislator Dickey: My church has a food pantry and that's why I...

Ana Morgan: It's a legitimate question. And some of the counties have done this. Now, there is also a certain perspective too – how do we make the most out of that money? Do we donate the money and then let the food pantry utilize it properly and buy maybe more than we would be able for the same amount of money? Do we purchase food and then donate? That is something I think that the food pantries input is crucial and that's something we can absolutely help with. But we are just not there yet.

Legislator Dickey: Got you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

County Executive Wendel: (*Inaudible*) the State. That's what they are discussing from NYSAC. They can't tell anybody what the recommendation is. The food pantry knows to get

\$100 out of a single dollar. So, that's really the method that we would look at as how do we get – how do we stretch that money? And they are the experts at that so. Making sure that (*inaudible*)

Carmelo Hernandez: And in terms of the crisis, that's why we are meeting with OTDA commissioner every day – more than I would like to be quite honest. But the timeline that they are giving and it's changing. Today was a little bit positive. Tomorrow may not be or it may be more positive. But it gives us a good idea, it gives me a good idea where I have to get on the horn with the team or call P.J. and say, okay we've got to make a move now, this is what it's looking like – the forecast is here. So, I'll be honest, I'm not surprised we are here now. Because we've been talking about this since August with OTDA. And we've been waiting and waiting and we are here now. So, we've been pretty prepared for because we knew this was a possibility but now, I'm thinking more along the lines like Mr. Pavlock said, what happens if we are here in January? So, this is why we pushed for the meeting and they granted it, so we're meeting every day.

Legislator Carle: Are there any subsidies going to any food banks at this moment from the County?

*(Inaudible cross talk not picked up by microphone)*

Legislator Carle: Okay, I know we all want to hope for the best, but we do need to keep our thinking caps on here and prepare for the worst going forward. But ultimately, I've appreciated all the information that we received tonight. I thank you Mr. Chairman for calling this meeting and I think it was very beneficial for all of us here. I think we shared a lot of ideas and information. And I appreciate all of the providers of the information here. I just think that I am looking forward to the next update and hopefully we won't have to have it because things will get straightened out on the federal level but I appreciate everything you guys did tonight. Thank you.

Legislator Niebel: Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple more question. And this would be for the legal department. Can a government entity donate directly to a 503c organization? And the reason I ask this is because it's possible that some of the food pantries might be 503c's.

Ana Morgan: Yes, and that's on the heels of what Legislator Larson also said. Can we contract with them, can we donate, can we actually have an already existing relationship so we don't have to have these meetings when the need arises? We are looking into that. We are, I'll be quite honest with you, trying to figure out ways of donating to as many entities in the County who could help. There are certain limitations on some of them. I will put it in writing for you and I will get it back to you. Just so that you see...

Legislator Niebel: As far as the 503c's.

Ana Morgan: Correct. Correct. Correct. Including food pantries, including others. Food pantries are just one way. There are other non-profits. People who want to help. Right so...

Legislator Niebel: Understood.

Ana Morgan: So, our job is to kind of figure out how to get the money to them. But this is something honestly that we are kind of looking at input from you guys as well. What are we allocating from which pile of money and who do you think the money should go to. It doesn't have to be specific, but kind of roughly so we can start making some layouts for future plans.

Legislator Niebel: Well, specifically, I'd kind of like to know if we can donate to 503c's.

Ana Morgan: I know. And I told you, I will send you the research on that part. Okay. Because I don't want to say yes or no right now. And I'm telling you we are having issues whenever we look into certain entities that we want to give money to, there are issues with that. And again, we are in a public session, so legal advice is very general tonight.

Legislator Niebel: I look forward to your report. Thank you.

Ana Morgan: Perfect. Thank you.

Legislator Niebel: Mr. Chairman. A couple other points that we haven't hit on. Welfare benefits. Welfare checks. Have they been affected by the government shutdown? Carmelo, could you address that? Or Jon, or somebody? So, in other words, SNAP recipients who are on welfare are receiving cash benefits?

Carmelo Hernandez: Yes, the only thing that has been frozen is SNAP, and HEAP is just because the government shut down and there is no money. So, those are the only two that are 100% out of commission right now.

Legislator Niebel: Okay, so there was a reference earlier to children, possibly starving. What about the WIC program? Has that been affected? Women, Infants and Children?

Carmelo Hernandez: No, WIC has not been affected.

Legislator Niebel: Okay, so those recipients are still receiving funds. Okay, and I guess the last point that I'd like to make is that yes, there is a government shutdown, but I'd like to point out to my colleague from district 12, that the House has passed a Continuing Resolution, a CR, which needs 60 votes in the Senate. That hasn't happened yet. Five more democrats need to vote in favor of the clean CR. When they do, that will end the government shutdown. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Chagnon: Thank you. Any other legislators have any questions or comments for our distinguished team up here?

Legislator Carle: I'll answer Terry back on my own about that last point he was making.

Chairman Chagnon: That brings us on our agenda to announcements. Are there any announcements? Oh, don't go away. There might be questions from the public. I think I know of one. Are there any announcements from the legislators? Hearing none, that's not surprising considering we are in an emergency meeting. That brings us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> privilege of the floor.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Privilege of the Floor

Members of the public may comment on any subject.

A member of the legislature may speak on any subject.

Individual comments are limited to 3 minutes and  
comments representing a group shall be limited to 5 minutes.

Chairman Chagnon: Is there anyone wishing to address the 2<sup>nd</sup> privilege of the floor? Please step to the microphone and introduce yourself.

Connie Griffith: Hello again. I am Connie Griffith and I gave the presentation earlier on the option to look at FeedMore as the agency of contract with the State. This morning, Fred Basket in Fredonia had our first food pantry of the month. And within the first hour of the option, the first hour of the pantry today, we gave away 270 meals to SNAP recipients. At \$6.00 per meal, which \$5-\$6 a meal, I used \$5.00 – that's the average cost of a home cooked meal in Chautauqua County, we gave away \$3,550 worth of food. That is food that we have no way of replenishing other than from the public donating to us or receiving through grants from FeedMore. Now, just keep this cycle in mind. When we receive those grants, many of them are from USDA surplus foods. If you recall back in the spring, the federal government cut most of the subsidies to farmers. Where do you think that food comes from? That's going to be diminished over time. We are going to have difficulty even getting food from those grant agencies that we now receive. And there are no County monies coming to the food pantries. So, we are all volunteers. We source our food from the public. We also source our food from FeedMore. That cycle is right now very tenuous. For us and our food pantry, we have to get deliveries every week in order to keep up with that demand. I developed a voucher so that we know who we are giving food to and how much. That is something I would like the County would at least ask your food pantries to do. We are a certified food pantry so we will do that to keep track of that. But that's something that I think really the accountability needs to be in there. That's where my MBA is coming in to play. So, if you want some, like first-hand, we are right on the front lines, we'll be able to give you information about what we are doing, so that you can consider that as you develop your plan, to how better to handle the County residents. Thank you.

Cynthia Carlson: Thank you for this opportunity to address this body. My name is Cynthia Carlson. I have a question for the committee here. I hear a lot about you know, you are ready, you are waiting for people to you know, if there is a problem, but you only saw four North and South. You know who you service, is there any thought to reach out to those people because what I am hearing from people who have food stamps – they are just eating less. You know, is there some thought to reach out to them to say, if you are in trouble, here are some resources reach out to us. I'm just wondering whether you know that proactive stance has been considered. And thank you.



County Executive Wendel: That's been the message from NYSAC from the very beginning is to reach out. That many of these cases, they have caseworkers, so that contact is being made. As we said, as Jon, Mr. Anderson has said, and Mr. Hernandez, if there is a need – please reach out to Social Services. This is their job, they are here, they are ready. They have teams that can get moving on this in a matter of minutes. So, yes, that's proactively that's their mission. They do that quite often.

Carmelo Hernandez: Also, to answer your question as well. So, the Mental Hygiene staff, the therapists, and the care coordinators, we told them, if you have any clients that you may know of that are receiving SNAP, please inquire and please share the resources and please say the other way we can help them provide services.

Marcia Westling Johnson: My name is Marcia Westling Johnson, from Fredonia, and I would like to say this is clearly a manufactured crisis. Because obviously they are funding other programs, they are funding cash benefits. This is totally political and I think that should be acknowledged here. But I'd like to that you all for your comments and I have a question. I feel privileged to be able to straighten out a controversy that has been all over this country. If someone is undocumented, also known as an illegal immigrant, can they get cash payments, can they get Medicare, can they get SNAP, HEAP, or any of these other programs?

Diane Anderson: No, they cannot. They have to be in a qualified status.

Marcia Westling Johnson: Thank you.

Adam (*Did not state last name*): I apologize. (*inaudible*) Mr. Wendel was nice enough to not kick me out of my seat over there. My name is Adam, I'm from Westfield, New York. I've donated my time and effort at food pantries before and that's why I wanted to attend this meeting. I am also a recovering banker. So, I might be able to help on a couple of fronts there as well. I'm heartened to see that we are currently not lacking in actual food supplies. That we have dedicated local government officials that are working on this problem and that we have volunteers. I didn't hear that you need volunteers but I'm going to give you my card afterwards. I'm glad to see that we are taking some proactive measures and I have some ideas on that that may be helpful. We do find ourselves in an environment where we have longer and more frequent government shutdowns. And these shutdowns are only resolved by Continuing Resolutions that are basically saying we are not going to create a budget; we are just going to borrow more money. It's borrowed money that goes to the USDA, that goes to the State, that goes to these cards. We need to avoid the shell game. I understand that NYSAC is providing some information but based on my research, I think they may be playing a bit of a shell game and not really acknowledging which part of the, which New York agency is actually putting money on those cards. It's my understanding that basically the County pays for some of the administrative – they basically do the loan underwriting, the credit card underwriting of the system. And they are working with the office of temporary and disability assistance. But that is not the department that actually controls the mechanisms of power here. The mechanisms are

controlled by the Department of Health and I understand there might be some subsidiaries – I am not an expert on these things. But ultimately, they send a batch. They send a file that says believe that these benefits are going to be paid. These EBT cards are a net-thirty account. And that Department of Health fluctuates their available credit. And that file can be sent. But the USDA sent out a memo saying do not send that memo. Do not believe that we the USDA are going to ultimately debit that account to balance that credit. Hopefully, I don't lose anybody with the accounting. But basically, this is just a matter of belief. We just need to say that we will pay for these benefits. These are hand to mouth benefits. People are not getting rich off of SNAP. It is supporting our local food systems. And I heard yes, we do have one in five people on this, but we are also an agricultural county. So, we can through programs like Double Up Food Bucks, turn that lemon into lemonade. I don't want to sit here and pontificate too much. But I'm heartened by the work that's being done and I hope to participate and do something to help. Thank you.

Chairman Chagnon: Now, anyone else for the 2<sup>nd</sup> privilege for the floor? Okay, we have a motion to adjourn from Legislator Larson. And we have a question here.

Legislator Niebel: One last question. I promise. Okay, this is I guess for Carmelo or Jon. On the SNAP application, is there even a box to check for U.S. Citizen?

Diane Anderson: Yes.

Legislator Niebel: I should have known that question before I asked it.

Ana Morgan: As the County Attorney and a very legal immigrant to this country, I can tell you that illegal immigrants are generally speaking not eligible for any benefits except if they are in a protected group – due to their age, due to their asylum status, due to whatever determination the federal government says you are protected and you can get it. They are the minority. So, as a general rule – no. We, have had situations where people would come in and they would apply. We “A” denied them and “B” that's a crime to do that. And we are very much aware of that.

Legislator Niebel: Okay. Thank you.

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MOVED by Legislator Larson SECONDED by Legislator Carle to adjourn.

*Unanimously Carried (8:01 p.m.)*

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,  
Olivia Lee, Clerk of the Legislature /Nancy Quattrone, Senior Stenographer