

Minutes
Human Services Committee
May 20, 2026, 5:00 p.m., Legislative Chambers
Livestreamed on YouTube
Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Proctor, Gustafson, Lewis, Harmon

Members Absent: Pavlock

Others: Chagnon, Lee, Ihrig, D. Anderson, Engstrom

Complete video of meeting can be viewed on YouTube

Chairman Harmon called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (04/15/26)

MOVED by Legislator Gustafson, SECONDED by Legislator Lewis to approve the minutes.

Privilege of the Floor

Chairman Harmon: Is there anyone here to speak to the privilege of the floor?

Karen Engstrom: Karen Engstrom.

Chairman Harmon: Okay, Karen. I'd like to limit it to five minutes, okay?

Karen Engstrom: Okay. Representing Chautauqua Energy Watch and a number of other people who are concerned about the laws that are being written regarding industrial wind. The wind laws that are being written out are expiring, the moratoria are expiring. Our concerns are the fact that industrial wind, 600-foot turbines, will affect the entire county. Won't just affect the possibly 6 or 9 towns. Some corrections to be made here, thanks to Mr. Proctor. We probably must say that the land is being attempted to be leased by the wind developer, not has been leased. So, I stand corrected. Adequate wind setbacks, adequate turbine setbacks established by law are what we're most concerned about. These setbacks are key to the health of the human beings and our county health board has indicated a recognition that human health effects are directly related to the proximity of wind turbines. If wind turbines are close to homes, people, not all of them, but some people will suffer from the effects of infrasound, which is a low frequency vibration that is caused by wind turbines. The bigger they are, the more the impact. So, what we're providing is new information tonight and I hope you—it would be good for the towns to know this because obviously they don't since they are passing laws that are similar to the ones passed in Arkwright, Cassadaga, and the Ball Hill/Forestville/Villanova wind projects, which do have—and I've provided you with the transcript today. The people who have suffered from the symptoms of what they call wind turbine sickness. This includes dizziness, nausea, inability to sleep, syncope, which means sudden and unexplained blacking out, and other symptoms that are well-known throughout the world. The World Health Organization, the Canadian Physicians Association, which I provided for you. Steuben County residents who are near Baron Winds, Baron Hill—Baron Wind, just began operation 4 months ago

and they are experiencing these symptoms, adverse human health effects. The towns—the most important information is that there are New York towns that have successfully used adequate turbine setbacks. This does discourage irresponsible, aggressive wind developers. These protective setbacks are recommended by health experts. The Town of Pomfret has changed its wind law to indicate that it will require six times the height of the turbine setback. And then the other towns throughout the state of New York, such as Parishville have indicated a requirement for 5 times the height of wind turbines. Richland's setback is 5,280 feet, Courtland setback 3,280 feet. Cape Vincent setbacks, 3,000. Hammond and Hopkinton setbacks of 2,500 feet. Calling the Clerks of these towns, I have verified that they did have, some of them, approaches from wind turbine developers and that because these laws were put in place with protective setbacks indicated by local health boards and the state department of health, they no longer have proposals from wind companies. Those proposals were withdrawn. They have not been challenged. So, I provide you with that information and the information regarding the fact that this county health board has called for a 1.5-mile setback because of the adverse human health effects. We know that when a town resists, the developer will go like a snake to the next town. They will snake their project around. They will establish a pattern of wind turbine sites based on proximity to—or next to each other in a way and if it, if they can get a snake-like setup of turbines, then they can move forward. If the resistance is sufficient, that there is a gap in between, then they cannot go jump from Ellery to, say, Sherman because North Harmony resisted, they cannot jump from Town of Chautauqua to Westfield—I mean to Ripley if Westfield resisted. So, we know that they've put proposals on the table for Ellery, North Harmony, Stockton, Sherman, Westfield, and Ripley. We are aware of leases being attempted in the towns of Mina, Clymer, and the Town of Chautauqua.

Chairman Harmon: Okay, if you could just wrap it up.

Karen Engstrom: Okay. 3,000-foot setbacks. A recommendation from this body would help our towns make the proper law or more and provide the data that the health department is indicating is essential for them to know when they're making their wind turbine laws. Thank you.

Legislator Gustafson: Karen, could I ask you a question? Could you just please define setback? Is that from property lines, roads, residences?

Karen Engstrom: Property lines, yes. It's detailed here. I try to abbreviate, but in your Chautauqua County Board of Health, here it says, "To this end, the board urges local municipalities to pass a proper wind law that restricts wind turbines to a minimum of 1.5 miles from any property line and a 35 or more—or fewer decibel sound frequency because audible sound is also a burden to people and you have to look at the pilot, the no pilot resolution, your very own no pilot resolution here states, and in the "whereas's," your "whereas" that is so important is the "whereas," industrial wind turbines, "whereas it has been demonstrated that the environmental, economic, and community impacts of large wind energy projects might well have a net negative effect on the county. That was put forward by this particular body in 2019—18. 2018, thank you. I stand corrected. Appreciate it. Please let your townships know that they do have ways to protect themselves and its incumbent on them to protect us all. Thank you so much. Any other questions?

Chairman Harmon: Thank you, Karen.

Proposed Resolution – Amend 2025 Budget for Year End Reconciliation – Department of Mental Hygiene and Social Services—*Presented by Blake Ihrig, Director of Administrative Services with the Department of Finance*

Unanimously Carried

Discussion – H.H. S. Division of Temporary Assistance Report—*Presented by Diane Anderson*

MOVED by Legislator Harmon, SECONDED by Legislator Lewis to adjourn.

Unanimously Carried (5:20 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,
Olivia L. Lee, Clerk of the Legislature/Kristi R. Zink, Deputy Clerk