

**Minutes of Meeting  
CONWAY BOARD OF SELECTMEN and BUDGET COMMITTEE  
January 25, 2021**

The Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Municipal Budget Committee convened at 6:30 pm at the Marshall Gymnasium with the following present from the Board of Selectmen: C. David Weathers, Mary Carey Seavey, John Colbath, and Steven Porter. The following members of the Budget Committee were present: Peter Donohoe, Diane Ryan, Bob Drinkhall, Michael Fougere, Ellin Leonard, Eric Dziedzic, Frank Jost, John Edgerton, Mike Laracy and Erik Corbett. The Recording Secretary for this meeting was Krista Day.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Weathers led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

NON-PROFIT PRESENTATIONS

Mr. Colbath gave an overview of how to use the microphones properly in order to hear each speaker. He requested that each speaker wipe down their microphones with disinfectant after their presentation.

**NORTHERN HUMAN SERVICES**

Valeda Cerasale, Area Director for North Human Services Mental Health Center appeared before the group.

She apologized for the organization missing the non-profit presentations the previous year. She explained that they had a staffing change and were unable to get anyone who could attend. She added that they greatly appreciate the support from the Town of Conway

Ms. Cerasale explained that the Mental Health Center is a non-profit center with an office in Conway that offers an array of mental health services. She explained that they have remained open during the pandemic and continue to offer telehealth and face to face services. She noted that they have seen an increase in emergency services and intakes and referrals during the pandemic.

Ms. Cerasale wanted to clear up the misconception that they receive State and Federal money. She explained that when people are not insured, they provide care regardless of their ability to pay. Because of this, the organization always runs in a deficit and these funds go towards offsetting these costs. She noted that the funding from the Town goes directly to serving Conway Residents.

Mr. Colbath inquired about the salary for the Senior Medical Director which was listed at \$229,237.06. Ms. Cerasale confirmed that this was for one regional position.

It was asked whether there is a waiting period to receive services. Ms. Cerasale noted that they are able to use telehealth to see more patients, however, there is about a 2-3 week waitlist at the moment.

Mr. Drinkhall inquired as to whether they have received any funds from the County. Ms. Cerasale stated that they do not receive funds from the County itself, but instead, they petition for funds from the individual towns within the country.

Mr. Corbett asked if Northern Human Services still works with those with developmental disabilities.

Ms. Cerasale noted that they did in fact have the New Horizons Program in Redstone, but the Mental Health Center was separate from that.

**VAUGHAN COMMUNITY SERVICE INC.**

Jennifer Perkins appeared to represent Vaughan Community Service Inc. She explained that Vaughan provides services for residents of Conway such as affordable childcare, the Town's only food pantry, support groups for survivors of suicide, and they also act as a resource and referral agency.

Ms. Perkins stated that they were asking the Town to help support the Town's only food pantry which has seen increased demand this year which can be associated with the effects of COVID-19.

Mr. Drinkhall noted that they rent a space from the Congregational Church, hinting that while Vaughan does not get a tax abatement, their rent would be higher if the Church did not get an abatement.

Ms. Perkin noted that Vaughan owns the building, but the Church owns the property, so that may be true.

Mr. Jost asked why there was such a large discrepancy between their 2020 budget and their actual income regarding the food pantry. Ms. Perkins explained that they saw a large increase in contributions to the pantry this year. She noted that these funds went directly towards purchasing more food for the pantry as they saw a large increase in demand for the pantry.

Mr. Corbett inquired as to how the demand has grown over the last few years.

Ms. Perkins stated that each year the demand grows about 10-20% each year.

Ms. Seavey wanted everyone to know that without the Vaughan Food Pantry, the Town of Conway would be in charge of providing a food pantry for the area. She thanked Vaughan for all that they do. She emphasized that the demand for the food pantry has increased tremendously.

**VAUGHAN COMMUNITY SERVICE INC. DBA VAUGHAN LEARNING CENTER**

Heather Ouellette, Director of Vaughan Learning Center appeared before the Board. She explained that they are a child care center that serves children from six weeks old to 12 years old. She noted that they are one of the only centers in the area that provide breakfast, lunch, and snack.

Ms. Ouellette noted that they are requesting help from the Town in order for them to help those families who do not qualify for State assistance afford childcare.

Mr. Donohoe asked about their 2020 expenses "reserve" line item. Ms. Ouelette explained that this was due to the fact that they started the year off in the red.

There were no questions.

**TRI COUNTY COMMUNIITY ACTION PROGRAM INC.**

Jeanne Robillard, CEO of Tri County Community Action Program appeared before the group.

Ms. Robillard thanked the Board of Selectmen for their suggestions given at a previous Board of Selectmen meeting. She added that they wrote a letter to the editor at the Conway Daily Sun explaining their funding formulas that were being use this year.

Ms. Robillard stated that they are asking for a \$2.25 per capita from each Town. She explained that this will cover all the services that are available to residents in the Town of Conway.

Ms. Robillard gave an overview of the programs available in Conway. These included dental programs, energy assistance, energy electric assistance, USDA food commodity distribution, Headstart Program, the Tyler Blaine Homeless Shelter, Homeless Outreach and Prevention, Bus Service, Weatherization and Heating Systems and Guardianship services.

Ms. Robillard stated that in the last year, Tri County had served 1,685 individuals and families for a total of \$776,173 in services.

Mr. Colbath inquired about a specific program, Service Link, which is offered in Berlin.

Ms. Robillard stated that Service Link is run by another agency in Carroll County.

Mr. Corbett inquired as to why the cost for the transportation program in Carroll County was more expensive than in other Counties such as Coos.

Ms. Robillard stated that Coos County uses a Flex Route bus system where there is a bus running on a constant route. Contrastingly, Carroll County runs a door-to-door service which may account for the increased costs.

Mr. Corbett asked if Carroll County was the only county in the State without a homeless shelter.

Ms. Robillard stated that she was unsure if it was the only county, but agreed that Carroll County did not have a homeless shelter.

#### **WHITE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER**

Siena Kaplan-Thompson appeared before the group on behalf of JR Porter who was unable to make the meeting.

Ms. Kaplan-Thompson explained that White Mt. Community Health Center provides primary care to men, women, and children, as well as dental care, prenatal care, counseling, and health with substance abuse. She added that patients are seen regardless of their ability to pay.

Ms. Kaplan-Thompson explained that half of their patients live in Conway, and the support from the Town is vital.

Mr. Drinkhall asked if they received a tax abatement on their building.

Ms. Kaplan-Thompson explained that she was unsure as Memorial Hospital owns the property.

#### **THE CONWAY AREA HUMANE SOCIETY**

Tim Westwig, Executive Director for The Conway Area Humane Society explained that they were requesting level funding for \$10,000 to assist with their primary service of rescuing animals.

There were no questions.

#### **NORTH CONWAY COMMUNITY CENTER**

Executive Director Carrie Burkett and Board of Directors President Sheryl Kovolik appeared before the group.

Ms. Burkett gave an overview of the past year, specifically regarding how the pandemic effected their programming. While they are able to run some of their programs right now, they have been able to survive at the moment. However, Ms. Burkett emphasized that the future is so uncertain and that they rely on the funds for the Town to help keep them afloat and able to provide services for the residents of Conway.

Mr. Colbath asked what the status of the bathrooms at their facility was and what they anticipate them to be within the next year.

Ms. Burkett explained that currently they are following the reopening guidelines from the State for gyms. Because of this, only individuals who are scheduled and screened are allowed in the building. Ms. Burkett and Ms. Kovalik emphasized that they need their participants to be safe and that allowing the public in to use the restrooms would be problematic with contact tracing and sanitization.

There was a brief discussion regarding health screenings of those who are involved in their programs. Ms. Burkett explained that all participants are screened by either their parents or the volunteer program coordinators.

There were no questions.

#### **CHILDREN UNLIMITED INC.**

This presentation will be rescheduled due to quarantine issues.

#### **GIBSON CENTER FOR SENIOR SERVICES INC.**

Dr. Marianne Jackson, interim Director of the Gibson Center appeared before the group.

Dr. Jackson explained that for over forty years, the Gibson Center has been providing meals, transportation, social interaction, and other vital services for the older population in the area. She emphasized just how very impacted this age group has been due to the fear and isolation resulting from the pandemic.

Dr. Jackson explained that their budget has so many variables. She noted that grants have been hard to obtain, but this years annual appeal yielded very generous donations, but it cannot be determined whether this level of contribution is going to be repeated.

Dr. Jackson asked the Town for their support while also acknowledging the pressures the Town is under itself.

Dr. Jackson clarified for Mr. Colbath that the two near buses would be replacing the older vehicles as they were no longer deemed reliable.

#### **STARTING POINT**

Director Deborah Weinstein appeared before the group.

Ms. Weinstein explained that they often act as a homeless shelter, but only serve those who are homeless due to domestic violence or sexual assault and are in imminent danger of harm.

Ms. Weinstein stated that over the last year, they have seen a constant increase of numbers in terms of the services they provide.

Starting Point is on call 24-7. They provide assistance to police departments, court advocacy, hospital advocacy, prevention, and outreach and education in the local schools.

Ms. Weinstein stated that they gave 2,153 distinct services last year. She also compared the number of services given during the first quart of last year and this year. The number of services in the first quarter of 2019 was 162 while the number for 2020 was 3,791.

Ms. Weinstein emphasized how large of an increase this was by adding that for all for 2019, they only calculated 6,966 services.

Ms. Weinstein explained that they budgeted for this year based upon last years numbers, and already, they are very much overspent.

Ms. Weinstein stated that because of this increase in demand, they are requesting assistance from both the county and the towns.

Ms. Weinstein noted that they are hoping for the funding from Conway in order to get back to being level funded. She added that they are asking for support for the County as well due to the unexpected increase in expenses since July.

Ms. Weinstein noted that because of restrictions, they were also unable to have their Boots'n'Bling fundraising event that typically brings in approximately \$65,000 in revenue.

There were no questions.

ADJOURN

**At 7:24. pm, Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Edgerton, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Krista Day  
Executive Secretary