

Counseling Service of Addison County, Inc.
Board of Director's Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2021

Board members attending: Sarah McGowen Audet, Vice-President; Joanne Scott, Treasurer; David Roberts, Secretary. Members at large: David Andrews, Matt Birong, Barbara Doyle-Wilch, Len Rowell, Louise Sandberg, Jane Spencer, Ted Tighe. Absent: David Hallam, Gary Margolis.

Staff attending: Rachel Lee Cummings, Executive Director; Bill Claessens, CFO; Alexa Euler, HR Director; Jenn Staats, Executive Coordinator and recorder.

Guest: Elise Shanbacker, Executive Director, Addison County Community Trust

David Roberts called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

Elise Shanbacker: ACCT has 75 permanently affordable homes, 340 mobile-home sites, and 334 permanently affordable apartments. Ten years ago added service coordination to ensure success for residents; partners with SASH to help about 200 seniors to age-in-place.

Addison County's housing crisis is accelerating and increasingly acute. There are zero vacant units in the ACCT portfolio as of April 1. In 2020 there were over 400 applications for housing. Currently about 200 people on the waiting list who have already passed the initial screening. Some people on the waiting list come directly out of homelessness. Twenty percent of the Vergennes Community Apartment residents were homeless; 80% are from Addison County. COVID emergency housing is ending. About 2700 Vermonters living in hotels. Here, the Marriot, Sugarhouse, and Middlebury Inn are full. ACCT has unused housing vouchers because people are unable to find affordable housing—nothing is available.

ACCT's 3-legged stool: 1.Capital dollars; 2.Rental Assistance; 3.Money to pay for services. Housing is a "stacked problem," which will amplify when COVID emergency housing ends.

Successes: Last summer's CRF dollars allowed two projects to move forward to completion: 1. Evernorth: NPO housing developer acquiring Weybridge Street Apartments on Jayne Court. 2. John Graham: purchased zero energy modular homes from Maine to be sited at down-town Bristol location. Also: funding will not cover case management from CSAC. Some housing providers want to hire their own staff and bill Medicare. Stretches finite dollars even more. Yesterday Vermont Congressman Peter Welch said, "*Mental Health cannot solve this problem. There is an infrastructure and political problem.*" For Vermont, the housing issue, coupled with the influx of COVID refugees, has exacerbated the crisis, and now emergency housing will end. Tents will be issued to homeless population—discharging people *back* to the woods.

Decision/Review Items

Minutes of March 8, 2021: Motion to approve: David Andrews. Second: Len Rowell.

No discussion. The vote was called and the vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

Review and acceptance of HR policy regarding private practices, Alexa Euler: Revision to an outdated policy to permit CSAC employees to have a small private practice. Adjusting to current hiring, recruitment, and employee needs. Disclosure and permission are different: permission only applies to Addison County practices. Motion to approve: David Roberts made the motion to approve the policy as presented. Second: Jane Spencer. No further discussion. The vote was called and the vote to approve the policy was unanimous.

Committee Reports

Development Committee, reported by Jane Spencer, chair: Update about Development and Community Engagement position. Pursuing four grants. First grant request focusing on community engagement. This is not just about fundraising but about communication, connecting, and creating a community of wellness. Funding intended to cover 2 or 3 years. Will look to *local* fundraising,

requiring board support. Committee has sent a request to the Executive Committee to go forward with some basic training for the Board at a future Board meeting

Quarterly community newsletter being fashioned: first edition will be launched in June.

Barbara Doyle-Wilch: 2021 Bocce Tournament is cancelled. Might hold an August Bocce Party in collaboration with Special Olympics and The Yellow House. Also: working on Community Conversations project, focused on mending/healing from COVID and isolation across county's socio-economic populations. Ratcheted down to a pilot program: perhaps three smaller-in-scope conversations. Hope other agencies might want to join.

LPSC CRT, reported by David Andrews: Sparsely attended. Nothing consequential to report.

LPSC Y&F, reported by Ted Tighe: Parent and Child Orientation to CSAC is presented in Zoom as either a group or individual presentation, and covers topics like the philosophy, rights, support. Participants learn the expectations for CSAC, parents, and children. Feedback was positive. Cheryl will be invited to present. Y&F calls have increased and the waiting list is longer. Discussion circled back to earlier discussion: *is there a clear understanding in the community about the critical situations in housing, homes families, mental health, trauma, etc.? What is the balance between sounding the alarm loudly and offering the solutions?* David Roberts and Rachel might write an op-ed in partnership with other agencies.

Nominating and Governance Committee, reported by Sarah M. Audet, chair: Board recruitment active, and efforts are showing success. Next meeting is April 29th, then start conversations with candidates. Investigating clients joining the board.

Anti-bias Task Force, reported by Ted Tighe and David Andrews, task force members: Staff are curious about task force activity; Rachel has asked the committee to send update to staff.

Financial/Business Report, Bill Claessens: The financial dashboard shows we are well positioned and strong through February. Operating statement reveals that the anticipated deficit is no longer hovering over us. Additional monies received are sitting in a deferred income account and are waiting for guidance from auditors and the state. "Master grant" now termed "program agreement." Quarterly reports presented. Progress and discussion for the FY22 budget are stalled. Many items on the state level are still undecided. Discussed possible changes with schools, school contracts, utilizing MH dollars. Will utilize agency's new Solver software to create the budget.

Recruiting for vacancies will be critical with all state agencies to meet service demand. DMH director calling for a statewide effort.

Discussion of a cyber-breach. We have insurance coverage; we are employing forensic professionals including an attorney.

Finance Committee, reported by Joanne Scott, chair: Discussed the expected FY2021 gain, and will discuss what amount will be "allowable" as we move toward the end of the fiscal year. Committee discussed potential additional expenditures for FY2021. Service needs are rising, yet staff shortages impact ability to meet service demand and generate revenue. Ability to recruit staff is impacted by limited housing and childcare. We are in a transitional time (COVID and post-COVID). Committee brainstormed bold moves forward to transition to the future, and also recognized the need to balance these against our immediate needs.

HR Report, Alexa Euler: recruitment efforts are at the fore. Major urban centers being tapped.

Executive Director's Report, Rachel Lee Cummings: Information from the recent staff survey about our culture, our needs, how to move out of COVID response mode was enlightening.

Other business: First in-person meeting in July or August? Let's hope! Barbara moved to adjourn. David R. seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 PM.