

## **Commissioners WORKSHOP ON AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING**

**October 20, 2021**

*YORK,ss*

At a Workshop of the County Commissioners of the County of York, begun and holden at the York County Government Building in Alfred, within and for the County of York, being held on Wednesday, October 20, 2021 A. D. at 3:00 P. M.

### **COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Richard R. Dutremble  
Richard Clark  
Robert Andrews  
Allen Sicard  
Donna Ring

County Manager Gregory Zinser and Deputy County Manager Linda Corliss were present at the meeting.

### **YOU ARE INVITED TO RISE AND SALUTE THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES**

Commissioner Dutremble welcomed all.

Sally Manninen from York Hospital Choose to Be Healthy Program-Director of Community Health of York Hospital explained that this program currently runs on three grants that are all youth substance abuse prevention (one Federal and two State). She explained that the State grant pays for a staff person and one of the Federal grants pays for her salary. Choose to Be Healthy has been a program now for over 20 years. Ms. Manninen explained that with ARPA funds, she proposes to use the funds for mental health and would now be serving all of York County. She continued that she would bring in partners and collaborators-Partners for Healthier Communities and Coastal Healthier Communities. She had named this initiative, York County Prevention as her vision is for this program to reduce the impacts of substance abuse and mental health. Ms. Manninen stated that she would be bringing people together to provide training, provide pilot programs, information and data to agencies, schools, law enforcement and families.

Ms. Manninen commented that the reality is that we are not going to have the resources we need to truly address mental health and substance abuse. We need to do the best we can with what we have. She continued that the workforce development is dire. As far as the budget, aside from her salary, stated Ms. Manninen, a lot of the funds are going out to communities to fund their projects based on gaps in their community.

The York County Prevention initiative would be a project of the Choose to be Healthy Coalition housed at York Hospital with free rent and all other administrative items. York Hospital would not have and does not now have any say in how this (program) is run. It would be run by an Advisory Board. The goals are listed in a three year time frame. Ms. Manninen stated that it takes at least 3-5 years to

successfully change a behavior and to get communities to work together. This would be a pilot program to see if this works and could be something that the county continues to fund perhaps.

Commissioner Sicard asked Sallie Manninen that if that grant ends and we do not fund you, will York Hospital fund you?

Sallie Manninen replied that she will continue to write grants. The State has a couple of grants to fund Choose to be Healthy on a much smaller scale, she added.

Commissioner Sicard asked how do Sanford and the other one fund themselves?

Ms. Manninen responded that Sanford does not have the federal funding that her program does. They have more State funding as their population is higher and they show more need, she stated.

Biddeford/ Saco have State and Federal funding, she informed Commissioner Sicard.

Commissioner Clark stated that he had a couple of concerns with one being from looking at the budget presented in that it looks like \$125,000 a year from York County ARP funds is the request and the total showed as going to the communities is less than \$40,000, about 32%. He continued that he would like to see a much larger amount going to service rather than administration. Commissioner Clark commented that he doesn't get a warm feeling about this. He continued that the Commissioners are looking to do one time investments to try and move things forward and that he doesn't see a plan to replace the money after year three. He asked Ms. Manninen would she be looking to the county for continued funding as he thinks that would be difficult.

The third thing, stated Commissioner Clark is that there is a lot of focus on southern York County. It is a county, not just my district. He asked Sallie Manninen what goes to the other sections of the county?

Ms. Manninen replied if one was to do this on this amount of money, you would need to have someone that doesn't make \$30 an hour. She informed all that she has 26 years of experience and a masters degree. She agreed with Commissioner Clark and stated that she would ask for more money and have more of it going to the communities. Ms. Manninen continued that our coalition is successful as she has built up relationships for over 13 years and is good at what she does. She also said that it is hard to find anyone to do this work for any type of money. Addressing Commissioner Clark's last concern, Choose to be Healthy is not all about southern York County but it has served southern York County for over 20 years. She continued that they would bring that expertise to the rest of York County by using her current partnerships and relations. As far as sustainability, Sallie Manninen replied that she writes grants every year and would continue to do that. She stated that she has received funds from banks, rotary and United Way.

Commissioner Ring asked Ms. Manninen does she mean by going to the communities, this would include rural areas and also in the schools?

Sally Manninen responded that they work with every school in our area. She would focus on the ones that have the most need. Commissioner Ring asked does this include elementary schools or just high schools?

Sally Manninen replied that state and Federal funding only allow middle school and high school but added that the ARP funding would not have this type of restriction.

Commissioner Ring asked if part of this proposal is looking into expanding into the more rural areas of York County?

Ms. Manninen replied, if that is where the need is.

Commissioner Dutremble stated that he has worked in a hospital and that there has always been a mental health problem. Since it is now more of a problem, won't the Federal government give your organization more grants? Ms. Manninen replied that yes, you would think so as the stigma has lessened and teens aren't afraid to talk about depression. Unfortunately, prevention is not funded enough in general.

Eric Haram, Director of York Hospital's Recovery Center addressed the Board and explained that he runs the behavioral health department at York Hospital He informed all that this program was referred to as the Cottage Program. In 2017, the department was rebranded as the York Hospital Recovery Center due to the growing epidemic of opioid addiction. York Hospital pulled together a county wide coalition from across all different sectors and had an opioid round table. Some service providers in the Portsmouth NH regions were also included. He explained that he is asking for funding from ARP to fill the many gaps

that have been created. ARP is the road to accelerate our improvement, stated Mr. Haram. Our revenue cycle has been disrupted as a result of the pandemic. We have moved a lot of services to a virtual platform. Virtual behavioral healthcare is here to stay. As we move out of the pandemic, there is a sector who wants counseling and medical services still virtually. Folks that are seeking treatment right now are more seriously ill than they were prior, stated Mr. Haram. People are waiting longer to seek help and they have a “make do and mend” mentality that occurred during the pandemic. These ARP funds would help us accelerate how we dig out from this and reach the folks who are struggling the most. Mr. Haram stated that they are asking for \$226,500 annually over a 3- year period. We do feel that we provide services in a business model and this will allow us to accommodate the increased volume that will be coming through the door. Recovery coaches are a very critical part in improved outcomes. The State does not reimburse this now but we anticipate this coming. We are asking for \$10,000 for prevention and recovery support that allows us to design and deliver in person and virtually, education and training. The larger portion of funding we are asking for is centered around treatment and patient care.

Mr. Haram continued that York Hospital does not have a discreet detox or as it is now called, withdrawal management unit, but, we provide about 400 services a year. Most hospitals don’t admit patients to a medical unit. They sit in ER until they can get to a rehab facility. 34% of the folks that we are treating are uninsured. Detox beds are expensive and there is no reimbursement mechanism, continued Eric Haram. Another issue in York Hospital, he explained is that a lot of patients have Medicare and they will only reimburse if you use a LCSW.

Commissioner Ring stated that she represents four rural towns and she is concerned about them. Would it be possible for people outside of the York/Kittery area to obtain virtual services? Eric Haram replied, absolutely. We currently treat people in all parts of York County and no one waits longer than 48 hours. Commissioner Sicard asked if it is correct that presently, York Hospital is spending this money and not being reimbursed? Eric Haram replied, yes.

Commissioner Sicard clarified that York Hospital Recovery Center is asking for ARP funds to use as a stop gap funding mechanism until you get services reimbursed?

Eric Haram replied, correct, as the last almost two years has made this untenable. The ways we worked around these gaps pre- pandemic are not effective now, he stated.

Commissioner Sicard asked if Eric Haram was familiar with Layman Way Recovery Center that is funded by county tax money at \$1 million a year.

Eric Haram responded that he is and that their services are out -patient with the exception of detox as needed. He continued that they refer patients back and forth quite often. We are seeing patients at Layman Way that are beyond medically what they can help them with at Layman Way.

Dredge- Kevin Roche of SOS Saco Bay addressed the Board. He asked that Mayor of Saco, Bill Doyle approach to say a few words. Mayor Doyle read a statement supporting the importance of the dredge and stating that the City of Saco would pay for the storage of it as well as employees to operate the dredge. Kevin Roche stated that the dredge is a big need for the entire shoreline communities. He went on to say that their ask is simple, a one- time purchase of the dredge. Saco is willing to be the host community. He addressed some concerns brought up about why the dredge cannot be purchased under ARPA monies, and stated that it is vital for tourism recovery and green money. Mr. Roche stated that they understand that the County is not set up to run a dredge. This is just a purchase. Mr. Roche continued that they have heard that these funds don’t follow under the county’s mission but they do fall under your ARP funds. This is a way for York County to be more relevant. This would unite the shoreline communities. Mr. Roche stated that some say this proposal might only benefit a couple of communities but he thinks if we buy it, they will come. COVID has brought a lot of despair to society. People value their natural resources, continued Kevin Roche. This (purchase) would be a real action on climate change.

Commissioner Ring asked how frequently should areas be dredged? Kevin Roche replied that it depends on the area. Dredging can only be done from November to April.

Commissioner Clark asked how much have any of the municipalities committed to this?

Kevin Roche responded that they aren't asking for any money from them.

Commissioner Clark explained that he served on the Wells selectboard so he has a little familiarity. He stated that the Town of Wells is also trying to get a dredge. Every community in this county received some ARPA money and yet you are asking the County to cover the entire cost. He stated that he has some difficulty with that and doesn't understand why there is no buy in at the local level.

Kevin Roche responded that they will have buy in in a sense if they want to use the dredge. If they decide to use another service, that is their prerogative.

Commissioner Sicard informed all that they had received another letter of support from Biddeford Mayor Alan Cassavant. He said to Kevin, that is it correct that he is pretty confident that if the dredge is purchased, they will come.

Mr. Roche, replied yes and that Old Orchard Beach and Scarborough are also interested in using the dredge.

Commissioner Sicard replied so that however it is operationally constructed, the towns could buy in or as you mentioned, they could just call you when they need you.

Kevin Roche stated to provide more comfort for the County, Saco is willing to host it. We are not asking for any municipality to commit any money on day one, he stated and we will absorb the cost of the employees. He said that it is his belief that Saco would like that control as they will use it almost every year.

Commissioner Sicard asked Mayor Doyle if he is confident that Saco can handle this type of operational budget?

Mayor Doyle replied that the city will absorb the cost. He added that your inland community folks visit our beaches. York County beaches are everybody's beaches. It doesn't just help Saco and Old Orchard Beach, it (dredge) helps everybody. It might be a money maker, also commented Mayor Doyle. He added that they would welcome the County Commissioners at the table. Scarborough is already wanting this, stated the Mayor of Saco.

Commissioner Dutremble asked Mayor Doyle if he envisioned this operating in the same way as Biddeford transit?

Mayor Doyle responded that would be their hope but in the meantime, they will absorb the operational cost.

Commissioner Dutremble asked Mayor Doyle if they had talked to the other coastal communities?

Commissioner Doyle responded, some and that they are willing to be part of a working group.

Commissioner Dutremble recommended involving all coastal communities to save money.

Commissioner Doyle replied that if the Commissioners approve (the dredge purchase), they will send out a letter to all areas.

Commissioner Ring clarified that it is her understanding that other towns will have a fee assessed so you can recover your costs.

Commissioner Doyle we hope to have a quasi- governmental agency.

Commissioner Ring asked how long before this program would be up and operating?

Mayor Doyle responded, next year. Mr. Roche added that the dredge is in stock but they would have to get staff and get them trained.

Commissioner Dutremble asked where would they store it?

Mayor Doyle responded at the public works facility in Saco.

Commissioner Chairperson Dutremble closed the workshop.