



HILLTOP MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMISSION

Wednesday, October 19, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

at the High School Library

11 Memorial Drive, Somersworth, N.H.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order – 6:02pm

a. Attendees: Dina Gagnon, Maggie Larson, Don Austin, Suzanne Weete, Spencer Barnes, Mary Boisse-Barnes, Ashley Wright, Todd Marsh, Jenny Holmes

2. Commission Members Approval of Minutes, September 21, 2022

- a. Motion to approve – Don Austin
- b. Maggie 2nd
- c. All in favor – approved

3. Chair Reading of Commission Mission

4. Welcome & Comments by Chair

5. Recovery Friendly Workplace Update/Debrief Joint City Council/School Board Presentation

6. Community Awareness Mural Update & Discussion/Next Steps-- Maggie Larson & Jessica Clay (Guest)

- had the opportunity to speak to the City Council at the RFW presentation last night
- having been able to create the foundation with the facilitators and commission members, it was a reminder that there is work to be done
- Conversation with Mayor Hilliard – he does envision this Commission being more long-term & that this should be a part of a standing Commission & a part of the government – if a separate task force or coalition or community group should be developed, it would be supported
- consider the “Government” as “people” not just the politicians that are a part of the government – don’t view this as a sense of urgency, but a sense of moving forward & accomplishing tasks one check at a time
- representation will evolve, but the Commission can move forward right now with the thought that the Commission will not be ended in the near future; based on our previous discussions, we were at a turning point where we needed to make some structural decisions, and this is the direction that feels the most productive as a part of government
- As the Commission Chair, based on experience and skills, feel that he is here to help move things forward
- A presentation was done for the City Council that was similar to the one given at the last Commission meetings; about the program, FAQs, etc.
 - o Folks there seemed engaged and in favor of moving forward
 - o Next steps were that Mayor Hilliard was passing it off to be reviewed more closely; Superintendent Lane indicated that the Schools will be moving forward with it

Proud past, bright future

- Eileen, the RFW Coordinator for SOS & Amy, the RFW Advisor for the State of NH, were there
 - Mary will be leaving SOS in November to a new job opportunity & will encourage the person stepping into her role & Eileen to take the space as RFW is something that moves forward in the community & will likely align with the role this Commission plays in its implementation
 - Being mindful and aware that there are certain parts of the community that are more ready than others; when implemented across City Departments & schools, we need to be sure that we're taking the right steps and making sure that people understand the initiative and support and buy-into the idea
 - Do view this commission as a role to ensure the fidelity of related initiatives undertaken by the City
 - Making sure that department heads are engaged, bought in & supportive
- Maggie: Would like to see a primary goal of this Commission that this doesn't just fall in the ethers of government – something that has direction
- Could use this opportunity to help push the LOI's forward/expedited so that the hand-off to Eileen & the person stepping into Mary's role has clear steps rather than being "in limbo"
- Being a part of the City, having a vote to support the implementation as the Commission
- Government Operations Committee will be overseeing this initiative
 - Joint Council will need to meet once approved in both School & City so that implementation is simultaneous & coordinated
 - Internally it will function the best
 - Rick Michaud is the chair of that Committee – next meeting on November 3rd
- Commission has the influence to take a vote for a general recommendation to the City and School District – Todd can prepare something – that's the influence this Commission can have that's different than a task force
- Maggie motions to support RFW in the City of Somersworth in all departments
 - Seconded by Don
 - All in favor
 - None opposed
- "Facilitators" shared their recommendations on next steps and what some steps to move forward with
 - Focus on community engagement and involvement in this work; when we have representation from the community in these efforts, from start to finish, the message and the other activities that you support are exponentially more successful
 - Capacity building efforts through professional development, training of professionals and community members
 - Community outreach & education regarding resources, language, information and supportive messaging
 - Be sure that we're focused on what the end goal is, what goals are we trying to reach with the activities and strategies that we're doing; create a mission & vision & identify "to what end" we're doing these things?
- Todd; this is what I was hoping for; these types of recommendations; we will need more assistance & support moving forward, but understand we have that as well; what we've been thinking about "if they don't show up, does it mean that we should not pursue our efforts?" "Does it mean the community isn't ready?" – think that there are people who can still benefit from efforts even if engagement is low – think there's a lot of value with having people

represented on the Commission; not purely an inside-out approach, but it's important to have that

- Don; happy that it's in black & white; it's a great place to start & a great tool; we have to do something with it & this will help us to begin that
- Maggie; the community engagement will be the first steps & "to what end" will be pulling in the community into the conversation; if it's projecting from the inside-out, it needs to also include the outside-in; where that engagement happens is really where this will be a focus of this commission; when and where does this engagement happen, why do they want to show up?
- Think as the charrette was put on hold, the wind was sort of taken out of our sails, so we need to be sure that we aren't just grasping onto activities, but be intentional, strategic and purposeful in the activities that we choose to do
 - o Is there a community initiative that this Commission can engage with to guide the purpose and direction of the activities (i.e. the mural & making sure that we're walking through processes to include people along the way to create buy-in & ownership)
 - o Why, who, where, when – let's put meaningful work behind the initiatives, make sure that it's tied into the bigger "why"
 - o Have something in the part of the city that needs additional support and discussion

7. Media/Social Media Outreach Discussion/Next Steps

8. Charrette Discussion/Next Steps

- See next section

9. Initiatives Progress Check

- Mural: community engagement & involvement is important
 - o Maggie, Chair of Ad-Hoc; meeting with people to discuss and work on building engagement and understanding of how we're going to move forward; Gordon Carlisle (did mural on Constitution Way, which was a community-led initiative), willing to come back & be a part of the conversation; talked with City Manager Bob Belmore was on board to help support communications with partners & support initiatives; it's easy to ignore the issues with mental health and substance use, but it's really hard to bring light out of darkness and get people to engage in conversations, but using art can help with that engagement; we're trying to be proactive moving forward rather than reactive; in this spot to really engage the community – how do we do that in a public space to get that initial involvement & bring them in
 - o Being sure that the message is being developed with feedback and input from the community; asking baseline questions to identify themes "what does healthy look like for you" "what does mental healthiness look like to you?"
 - Timeline – murals would be done in the spring/summer, so development over the winter would happen
 - Identify some goals (i.e. complete mural to accomplish XYZ) and set timelines, etc.
 - o Todd; envisions the Commission to be "slow and steady", that we don't need to be urgent, but we shouldn't be complacent; we know that things take time and we have time to plan and engage & know that one thing (i.e. the mural) is not the big end-goal – it's one piece of the puzzle
 - o Q: What is needed in order to start the process?

- A: Media, call to action about what this is – can't create it without the community coming to the table – hopefully they will with something
 - Will be growing this a little bit & open it up to people
 - The Charrette/community conversations will get the engagement of this
 - Could have the mural subcommittee be a standing agenda item & invite others in
 - Don: You have to go where the people are in the community, you can't invite them all somewhere & expect them all to come; make it easy & go to where the people are that we really want to hear this message
 - Mary: there are a couple awesome opportunities coming up that align with the Commission; the Warming Shelter – reach a lot of people who are unreachable, Toys for Tots in Somersworth - let's take this Commission somehow to those things & using other initiatives, events, etc. to get the word out & pull people in
 - Sporting events, music, theatre, etc. – bringing the message to the events
 - Get extracurricular activity coaches, etc. encouraging involvement
- Needs: stigma trainings & education around mental health, compassion fatigue, etc. in order to get buy-in and engagement with certain areas/departments of the community/City
- How does this look?
 - Taking small opportunities to just make people aware that this group exists & are inviting people to engage at meetings or access resources; potentially resource tables & sharing educational materials; encouraging people to reach out & have conversations; building community ambassadors who are resources; having faces on this Commission that people recognize
 - Government Commissions are not as “vibrant” or “attractive” to community engagement, but we can be steady
 - Do we need more members? If we're talking about engaging & different events – want to be careful about burnout – not everyone who engages is a Commission members; we do need more people, but with a purpose & intention behind it; not everyone needs to be a voting member, but engagement of community members and attendance at meetings
 - Bring in community influencers who can build up numbers of people who will be interested in being involved in this work
 - Going to take time, a lot of education, capacity building & take small steps forward
 - Suzanne/Community Partners would be a resource person & supportive role
 - Elieen as the RFW Coordinator could be either a Commission member or Supportive role/resource person, whatever the group would be most comfortable with
 - Ashley would remain as a Commission member, if the group is comfortable, or could be a resource and supportive partner if otherwise

10. Future Meeting Dates/Suggested Agenda Items

- Where are we/how do we feel about these initiatives and what we're doing?
 - Feel this meeting was productive in moving these things forward – take the next few meetings & take action, outline steps & delegate tasks to start the few projects
 - Mural/Community Conversations
 - RFW
 - Trainings and/or messaging
 - Todd will write a letter in support of RFW
 - Talk to Mayor Hilliard re: structure of Commission
 - Potential of additional members

- Aligning the mural with existing messaging and information that exists; figuring out what to do next; hosting educational information
 - o Defining a message

11. Other

- Suzanne will share an event in Dover on Saturday November 19th – maybe worth coming to hear about work that's been done by a task force

12. Public Input

13. Adjournment

- Motion to Adjourn: Don
- Seconded by: Maggie
- Meeting Adjourned at: 7:43pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Wright