

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES Transcript

3/31/2021

SPEAKERS

Duane Vaughn, Tina Potter, Darren O'Connor, Phil Barrett, John Lant, Eileen Bennett, Tara Gaston, Jason Kemper, Sandi Cross, Therese Connolly, Daniel Kuhles, Michael Prezioso, Several Supervisors, Eric Connolly, Sybil Newell, Tom Wood

Tara Gaston

Welcome to the March 31 meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee. Attendance has been taken? So, first business item on the agenda is approval of the minutes of the February 24, 2021 meeting. Do I have a motion?

Tom Wood

I'll make that motion Supervisor Wood.

Tara Gaston

Thank you, Supervisor Wood, Supervisor Barrett, would you like to second that? I believe that's a yes. Thank you. Any discussion? All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed? All right. Motion passes. Next item on the agenda Mental Health with Dr. Prezioso. You have a few items for us today.

Michael Prezioso

This is definitely a record for me. So I will take you through these things. First up is a request for an updated Memorandum of Understanding with Warren Washington Counties. This will add assertive community treatment services to services that we already operate in conjunction with them. With those services, our home based crisis intervention for youth as well as a youth mobile mental health crisis team. During the course of the pandemic, I got a call from my counterpart up there, he actually is the Director of Community Services for both Warren and Washington, they did not have a big enough population to sustain the program for the money that they were receiving from the State to do it. So they asked if we want it in. So I jumped right on it. And they've been providing the services but this is just to reflect an update of the MOU to include the new services, the assertive community treatment services, and ultimately lead to a new contract that will reflect all three services also.

Tara Gaston

Okay, first, I forgot to mention this the beginning I did ask because the agenda is so lengthy that no printed copies be made. So is everybody on the committee at least good with what? They have what they need? Okay. That way, you know that we all have what you're discussing, we do have copies of all of that, even if we don't have it printed. But for the department heads, 90 pages is an awful lot. Okay, so we need a resolution? Alright, so we do have a motion to support an MOU with Warren and Washington for the assertive community treatment services?

Darren O'Connor

So moved O'Connor.

Tara Gaston

Second Supervisor Barrett, any discussion? These are great programs. Supervisor Lant, do you have?

John Lant

No.

Tara Gaston

All right, any other discussion? All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed? All right, matter passes. Next item.

Michael Prezioso

Thank you very much. This is to accept additional funding for supported housing, they are State Aid increases. The stipend for our senior housing beds were increased to beneficiaries so that the operators of those programs are, formerly Transitional Services Association, now RISE. So new that I can't remember the rest, RISE Supported Housing and Support Services, sorry. And rehabilitation support services, this provides the community based beds with various kinds of support, counseling and connection with other services to help sustain people who are vulnerable in the community. This is just to accept State Aid basically.

Tara Gaston

Okay, is there a motion.

Tom Wood

Supervisor Wood, I'll make it.

Tara Gaston

Thank you, and a second?

Darren O'Connor
Second O'Connor.

Tara Gaston

Thank you, any discussion? This is an annual amount of funding? Are we seeing any changes in the amount of funding that we're receiving?

Michael Prezioso

It was just an increase in the stipend I believe it was by \$200 but I would have to check back the details that you had before you but I can do that if you want.

Tara Gaston

Any other questions. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed. The matter passes. Next item.

Michael Prezioso

Thank you this is to, and this is a topic that's come up with the Veterans Committee and I believe it also came before Law and Finance for discussion a little bit. But this is to accept the release of funds previously allocated through 2020 to December 31 2022 for the operation of the Joseph P Dwyer veterans peer to peer program. So again no budget impact this is all State aid that has been released for use for this program.

Tara Gaston

Do I have a motion to accept this funding.

Phil Barrett

So moved.

Tara Gaston

Thank you Supervisor Barrett. Second Supervisor Lant.

Phil Barrett

I just had a quick question.

Tara Gaston

Yeah any discussion?

Phil Barrett

Is that the full amount?

Michael Prezioso

The total is going to end up being the full amount.

Phil Barrett

Is that the amount we're accustomed to receiving?

Michael Prezioso

Yes.

Phil Barrett

OK

Tara Gaston

Any other questions or discussion I'm just glad, it's an excellent program and I only hear good things from residents in our County about it so.

Michael Prezioso

Terrific. Very good

Tara Gaston

Anything else? All right do I have a motion to accept this grant funding?

Several Supervisors

(Several Supervisors speaking at once)

Tara Gaston

All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed, all right matter passes. All right next item accepting restoration of certain funding.

Michael Prezioso

This is to accept funding that had been withheld during the third and fourth quarters of 2020 when there was much uncertainty around the State budget. This was released and this allows us to accept the funds that have been released that had previously been withheld into the 2021 budget.

Tara Gaston

I presume it won't be difficult to find a motion for that one.

Phil Barrett

So moved.

Tom Wood

Second.

Tara Gaston

Alright Supervisor Barrett and Supervisor Wood. Any additional questions? All right all in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed? The matter passes. And the last one.

Michael Prezioso

Last item is to accept \$13,000 in incentive payment from, it's called the New York State E-Health Collaborative. Basically it's under the umbrella the State Office of Mental Health. The idea was that as there was movement towards establishing electronic health records there needed to be communication with the regional health information organization so that providers would have access to people's healthcare information, provided that the individual is actually opted into that. So because we developed, with the Board support, we introduced the new electronic health record and we've finally established the last of our interconnected links and communication links with HIXNY it's called the Health Information Exchange for New York we earned the incentive payment this is just simply a request to accept the \$13,000.

Tara Gaston

Do I have a motion?

Darren O'Connor

So moved O'Connor.

Tara Gaston

Thank you Supervisor O'Connor, second?

Eric Connolly

Second Supervisor Connolly.

Tara Gaston

Any discussion? Good job, we like incentive payments. Any other questions or discussion? All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed? The matter passes. Thank you alright next Doctor Kuhles, I believe you are up. Right so the first item is regarding contracts for contract tracers.

Tina Potter

Yes good afternoon Supervisors these are three contact tracers whose minor contracts are approaching the limit and a request to transition them into major contracts. All three are doing a great job and we're going to need to maintain this capacity for the immediate the future.

Tara Gaston

Okay.

John Lant

I'll make that motion.

Phil Barrett

Second.

Darren O'Connor

Is this on all three, one motion for all three?

Tara Gaston

Yes. But that's what the notes that are being passed in front of me to confirm that, yes. So one on all three. So who moved and seconded?

Therese Connolly

Supervisor Lant and Supervisor Barrett.

Phil Barrett

John and me.

Tara Gaston

Okay. Thank you. All right. Any discussion or questions on that one? All right. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed? The matter passes. Next item is an amendment to the DiRAD contract. And I believe you will also be getting help from Director Bennett on this one.

Daniel Kuhles

Yes, and probably Jason.

Tara Gaston

Okay.

Daniel Kuhles

So, as Supervisors know, DiRAD is the company that we partner with to assist with our vaccination efforts. They've taken inbound calls to help our residents register for our interest list from which we draw to schedule appointments. They've also helped us schedule appointments, and they are approaching the limit of that contract. We're at a point now, where beginning next week, vaccine is going to, eligibility for vaccine is for every individual in New York State 16 years of age and older. And so we're also at a time when vaccine supplies are starting to increase a bit. So the demand, if you will, for both coming to our interest list and for making appointments, is going to increase. And so having this contract allows our staff to focus more on the nuts and bolts and getting the vaccines in arms rather than doing some of the scheduling work. So they've been a great partner, I'm very appreciative that the Board has given this resource to the Department and would like to continue as needed. Jason or Eileen, do you have some?

Tara Gaston

Can you mention what the amendment is? Can you, hang on use your microphone.

Jason Kemper

Thank you Supervisor Gaston. The amendment is we're looking to, Dr. Kuhles is looking to remove the limit of \$50,000 on the contract. So right now, projecting out this week, we're about 43,000 on our existing bill with DiRAD and I think if Eileen could just give an update on the number of calls of the call center. I think this gives Public Health the ability to be flexible, we really don't know where we're going to be as far as vaccines and calls. The trend is downward, definitely. But I think we're going to be up against a window here or a ceiling before the next board meeting if we don't amend this upward.

Tara Gaston

Okay, so the amendment being done is just to remove the cap, is there a time limit or any other?

Jason Kemper

Don't believe there is.

Tara Gaston

My understanding is the request was to end December 31 2021?

Daniel Kuhles

December 31st yes.

Tara Gaston

Okay. Right. So do we have a motion to move that forward so that we can discuss that further.

Eric Connolly

So moved.

Tara Gaston

Alright, Supervisor Connolly.

Phil Barrett

Second.

Tara Gaston

Seconded by Supervisor Barrett. Okay. So that's the motion on the floor. Director Bennett, do you want to give an update on the numbers?

Eileen Bennett

Good afternoon. My update's going to be in regards to the interest list that we have on the County website that DiRAD has helped us with. We sent postcards out in the early part of March. And from that we have an interest list now of around 26,000 applicants, from that Public Health is pulled around 15,000, almost 16,000 applicants for our Public Health Call Center has been handling and now is going to be moving some of that to DiRAD to assist us. Because the volumes are going to, hopefully will go up with more vaccines. So they have assisted us with that to make sure that the process works in the event we have a large amount of vaccines, we'll be able to give DiRAD a large number and they'll be able to make those calls for us so that we can get those PODs scheduled, people scheduled in those PODs quickly. And so we know that that process works. We've tested it with sharing files getting files back so that we can update this vaccine interest list so that we know people that are no longer interested, people that may have already been vaccinated, and that sort of thing. As we saw the regulations change from age groups, when the age group went down to 30, DiRAD got hit hard again with a large amount of people trying, not trying, to register with the interest list. So that was a really great thing. That's my update if anyone has any questions?

Tara Gaston

I will say for me I know that there's been some discussion about as the vaccine allocation increases potentially using the internet web links like we're used in the beginning etc. especially since the eligibility will be broadened. I do think it's really important though to maintain the DiRAD, the call center, have that ability to both sign up and also schedule people because there's going to be a large part of our population that aren't going to be able to utilize those links. And we all remember what it was like in the very beginning when it was basically hunger games. I don't want any of our population to be reliant on that. Other questions, concerns? How we feel about amending it that way. Anyone need afternoon coffee?

Darren O'Connor

Sounds good to me.

Tara Gaston

Okay thank you and the one thing I would like, I would like a report at each meeting on where we're going and what the amount of money that we're being spent on the contract. I agree, I totally agree that it's necessary but I want to make sure that we're continuing to monitor it throughout. And knock on wood ideally by December 31 we wouldn't need it because everyone would have vaccines but we'll see where that goes. All right all in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed? All right the matter passes thank you. All right Director Cross, Office for the Aging.

Sandi Cross

I have two items. The first is authorizing the Chairman to proclaim May 2021 as Older Americans Month in Saratoga County. Whereas our President and Governor have proclaimed May as Older Americans Month in our County, is fortunate that residents include more than 46,000 individuals over the age of 60. This theme is communities of strength, focus on power of connection, engagement and building stronger communities. For those of you who aren't familiar we do this every year.

Tara Gaston

Do I have a motion?

Phil Barrett

So moved.

Tara Gaston

Supervisor Barrett.

Darren O'Connor

Second O'Connor

Tara Gaston

Supervisor O'Connor. Any discussions or questions? All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye

Tara Gaston

Any opposed. The matter passes. All right next item.

Sandi Cross

Okay my second resolution is authorizing the Chairman to accept stimulus funding under the Consolidated Appropriations Act Title 3C2 which provides supplemental funding for senior nutrition. So we got an additional \$85,315 out of the stimulus that passed in December, and it's designated for the senior nutrition program.

Tara Gaston

Do I have a motion?

John Lant

I'll make a motion.

Tara Gaston

Supervisor Lant.

Tom Wood

Second Supervisor Wood

Tara Gaston

Thank you any questions or discussion? Much like I told Dr. Prezioso yay!

Sandi Cross

Yeah. Thank you very much.

Tara Gaston

We will happily take that. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tara Gaston

Any opposed? All right matter passes. All right Commissioner Potter with an update on the emergency rental assistance program.

Tina Potter

Yes thank you. I just wanted to provide information, a backdrop of information in regard to the emergency rental assistance program which is a Federal program that's set up to assist households to pay rent and utilities that they're behind on due to the COVID pandemic. So I did complete an application to the United States Treasury and we have received the money in the amount of \$6,818,000 for Saratoga County and we do have the ability to utilize 10% of those funds for administration. And what I'm thinking that we will need to do is the local district's responsible for doing education outreach and application assistance when the program opens in the State portal. What I think we would need to do is to bring into my Department two staff, a Senior Social Welfare Examiner and a Social Welfare Examiner to determine eligibility for people that come into our department, and to help them with application assistance. We also were looking to, we've sent out an RFP to do a contract with a community partner that would do the lion's share of this outreach, it's going to be quite a monumental effort to get out into all the communities throughout the county, make sure that we're helping people who need the application assistance, meet with them at town halls, community centers, wherever that might be, even in their homes, where they would have laptops to help them access this State portal. So when the RFP comes back, we do plan to go through Law and Finance to get these budget lines set up, this next month coming up. But I wanted as a matter of information, make the committee aware, because I think I'm either going to have to come back next month, and do the contract request for resolution, or possibly, depending on when the State portal opens, we may have to move it quickly to

Law and Finance. The state of it right now is New York State is in the process of discussions with the Legislature to work out the fine parameters for the eligibility criteria. And as soon as that's done, they will open the portal and applications are going to be starting to be submitted. And then we really need to be ready to go to get those applications in. Because the funds that are not expended by the end of September can be reallocated to other districts. So we need to be ready to move quickly. And I think those are the two primary pieces. And I just wanted to share that with the Committee and see if there were any questions at this point in time.

Tara Gaston

So the 681,000 ish that would cover the positions in the Department as well as the RFP for the outside agency?

Tina Potter

Yes, and a few more ancillary legal services that had to be provided, yes, there'll be enough administrative money to pay for that. The other thing is, we're hearing that there's going to potentially be another round two of this Emergency Rental Assistance Program at the rate of about 85% of what this money was. So for us, it means another 5,400,000. This money in this round one can be spent through the end of 2022, the second round will go into 2025. So it's gonna be some time frame for this program.

Tara Gaston

It sounded like you said something by the end of September, if it's not spent, it can be reallocated?

Tina Potter

There's some discussion about that, but everything keeps changing really quickly with the Legislature. That's why we're waiting till we get that portal and everything's finalized. But yes, there's a possibility if it's not spent by this September of this year, then they may look at reallocating funds that are needed throughout the state.

Tara Gaston

Well, we definitely want to be ready to get spent on our residents and landlords. Supervisor Connolly?

Eric Connolly

Yeah, I haven't had a chance to read a whole lot about the program that they're setting up with rental assistance. If I'm a tenant, in need of rental assistance, could you walk me through how that process goes? Or do we not know all the details yet?

Tina Potter

Do I know what the process is yet? The process is going to be that you would just go on a computer and apply through the State and they'll have to have documentation as far as, the two primary factors are is the tenant has to have a reduction in income relative to a COVID related where they have to be on unemployment, and then they have to have rental arrearages. And there has to be a component with in tandem with the landlord that indicates that they are in arrears. And then they would apply through the State site for the rental assistance program.

Eric Connolly

So the payments would actually go to the landlord, as the tenants and landlord work in conjunction. Thank you.

Tara Gaston

And it could also be used for some utilities? Is that correct?

Tina Potter

Yes. Utility arrearages could also be, I think that'll be very minimal, because there is the Home Energy Assistance Program. And we're already into the second emergency with that program. But it could be yes.

Tara Gaston

And I think the important thing about hiring the outside agencies and hiring the people in your Department is that for those who may not have access to computers, that's part of the reason to hire them so that they have access to being able to get onto the portal. And I think there are also requirements, they can't double up funding from different federal sources. And that's why the State portal is so important to make sure that no one accidentally gets through and ends up having to take any money back.

Tina Potter

Yeah, they can be some interface because there are some other rental assistance programs and they'll be able to cross check that for any inappropriate usage of funds.

Tara Gaston

Any other questions? I look forward to the portal being up so that we can get that rolling. I know that we've definitely had a lot of questions about it at the County, so.

Tina Potter

Okay, thank you.

Tara Gaston

Thank you. Alright, Shelters of Saratoga update from Director Vaughn.

Duane Vaughn

Good afternoon. First of all, this is my second time, I think in this room. And both have been pretty good experiences. So I appreciate that very much. I just want to thank the Supervisors, first of all, especially Supervisor Gaston and Veitch for leading the way for us to be able to use the 31 Woodlawn building. It was a pretty big success this year, and I appreciate it very much. All of you took a risk on leadership that you didn't know. I think I was here two weeks when I got called in here to discuss that.

Tara Gaston

If I recall correctly, you actually appeared before us on your very first day of employment with Shelters. Directly into the fire.

Duane Vaughn

Yeah, I was fairly terrified that day, so it's all good. So a few things that have happened since then, by the way is, first of all, thank you to Commissioner Kuhles for getting our staff and our guests vaccinated. That was huge, especially this latest rounds, were able to get J&J because vaccinating our population is very difficult when you're talking about two doses. So that was a huge relief to us, we were able to get quite a few people vaccinated. The relationship with Public Health, it's been great. The relationship with Commissioner Potter, I can't say enough. That was so helpful in the process. We had a call every single Wednesday, except for today through the whole Code Blue season to discuss how they how progress was going, if we're having any problems at Code Blue. Also, Public Works, with helping us out with a building, it all went just fantastic. So just a few numbers for you. We did do the navigation center at 31 Woodlawn that was open from December 9th till March 10th. So this is where we had an opportunity to open Woodlawn during the day as not only a warming station, where we serve lunch and coffee every day, but we were able to build a lot of good relationships with other agencies in our community to help out one here, you know, RISE TSA. They had their care managers come in and work with some of our clientele some of our homeless to try to help them and their path to get out of homelessness. We had relationships with Salvation Army, Fort Hudson, Captain and an AHI also in those care management duties during the day. So it was open from December 9, 2020 to March 10, 2021 is when the navigation was open. We served guests for 67 days. Our duplicated number was 1,411 people pass through those doors. That's a duplicated number. Average daily was about 22 people. We also did a pop up clothing drive hosted by Captain on March 24 to 25th it was very successful. Code Blue as a whole between 4 Adelphi Street and 31 Woodlawn, we're still in operation obviously, 145 nights so far, with average guests nightly 33.25. So that equates to about 4,821 duplicated bed nights. The one thing that we're extremely proud of is that our total number of police calls were less than 10 this year. Our police calls were down by 95%. So that was quite remarkable. We had 21 staff, 10 consist of volunteers. Total incident reports were 10, seven police calls and three medical emergencies. We fed every single person every night at no cost to the County, that was all done through volunteers, which they did an amazing job. So we're very happy with the way things went this year. And I have all of you to thank for that, for taking a risk on us. Public Health was able to set standards for us where we were able to keep people safe due to COVID. We were at a max of 40 people at Adelphi and 25 at Woodlawn, we are able to keep COVID at bay through the whole season, which is remarkable. So again, thank you very much. And if you have any other questions or needs some numbers thrown at you, please let me know and I'll give them to you.

Tara Gaston

I definitely think the no COVID is remarkable because as we are aware congregate facilities, especially those that serve populations with less economic power are quite prone to it. So that is a clear sign of the job well done. And also just as representative Saratoga Springs, the number of calls I received about Code Blue was down this year about 25 percent. So I also appreciate that. Any other questions?

Darren O'Connor

I do, Madam Chair, I'm very interested to hear the dramatic reduction in the number of police calls, which is very interesting to me having been on the compliance group with the police investigation, because one of the aspects was to try to increase the use of mental health professionals as opposed to

police in appropriate circumstances. Does that, was that a part of the reason for the dramatic reduction?

Duane Vaughn

I think we put a lot more order into Code Blue this year. We put up barriers that were recommendations under Public Health, where people have a little more privacy in the evenings, when they went to the Cots, and we had such so many good. I honestly don't feel like we did the heavy lift with a combination of all the County services and, and Dr. Prezioso also, with some help, he got us a lot of masks, things like that. But to keep the calls down really was making sure that we had the proper staff, the proper trained staff in the facility, and we didn't let things escalate. The previous year's things were, I think it was open pretty much all day and all night. I personally don't like the Code Blue philosophy, I think that it's not, we shouldn't have to take care of our homeless only when it hits a certain degree out. But we did treat Cold Blue like Cold Blue. So essentially, we opened Code Blue at four o'clock the evening, and we closed it at 8am, except for when we were opening Woodlawn during the day. So really, it was a combination between a lot of people here helping us out, a lot of the guidance from Department of Social Services, our weekly meetings to make sure that when we discovered a problem, we changed what we were doing immediately. So we just made sure that while we were running Code Blue it was living and breathing, and that we had to change and move when things started to go sideways, and we were able to prevent any incidents.

Darren O'Connor

Thanks very much. Appreciate that.

Tara Gaston

Supervisor Barrett?.

Phil Barrett

Yeah, I'd like to thank Supervisor Gaston and Veitch for bringing this plan forward. And I was pleased to have the opportunity to support it right away. And I'm glad that it worked out. So I want to thank both of you for leading this effort and making sure that we had as many county residents as possible, as safe as possible during a difficult period. So and thank you to your group as well.

Duane Vaughn

Sure.

Phil Barrett

That's all I have to say.

Tara Gaston

Well, lastly I just appreciate how much Shelters and I know our County departments in general have worked together. I think that's the key to keeping this both where we can help our residents, but also make sure that we're spending money wisely. And being able to work together with Shelters and having those good relationships. I've heard great things about the work together from our County departments. So I appreciate that. And hope we keep moving forward with that.

Duane Vaughn

Yeah. Honestly, the communication with everybody in this room was perfect this year. It really was.

Tara Gaston

Excellent. Good to hear. Thank you. All right, next item on the agenda. At our last month's meeting, I brought up the topic of Social Center for TSA, which is now RISE. So they're going to present their idea, there were some that's in the agenda. Once upon a time, there was something called Friendship House, which is near the hospital in Saratoga, I believe. And so, RISE is proposing a similar-ish sort of program and is requesting some support from the County to this event. And so just kind of talking about the idea. Some of it was in the agenda there are also some copies of just this for anyone. Anybody on the committee want a hardcopy?

Phil Barrett

What is the Friendship house, are you going to explain that?

Tara Gaston

It was sort of a social engagement center for individuals who had mental health or substance use issues. Some of the programs were kind of adjusted when Mental Health moved on South Broadway and so there are now other parts of mental health in the Mental Health programs. So this is sort of a compliment to it.

Sybil Newell

Hi, I'm Sybil Newell, the Executive Director of RISE, formerly Transitional Services, which you may have heard of us as TSA in the past. For those of you who aren't very familiar with us, we've been in Saratoga County for 40 years providing primarily residential services for mental health and substance use. But we also provide housing and support services for individuals who are experiencing homelessness, as well as those with chronic medical issues. Our programs range from group homes, to apartment treatment, to supportive housing, which are more independent apartments. We have residential substance abuse treatment, which is actually the only residential substance use treatment in Saratoga County. We have a large care management program, and as well as rental subsidy programs for those who qualify income wise. Part of the goal of RISE is to identify gaps in services that we see in the community. So to that end, we're creating a few additional programs right now, we're working on a crisis residents to help people who are experiencing mental health crisis to avoid hospitalization, to avoid using the emergency room if they don't actually need to be there. We're also building two affordable housing projects, which will also be supportive housing projects. One is in the Town of Ballston, and the other is up in Corinth. We are also in the process of building a residential rehabilitation program for substance use in Ballston Spa as well. So we have a lot in the works to fill the gaps that we're noticing in the community, but another one that we think is a very big need in our community is a social center. So that's what we really wanted to focus on today. Isolation is a huge concern for people with mental health diagnoses. And there's a segment in our community of people who are too impaired to participate in traditional treatment kinds of programs, day programs, they're too impaired to hold jobs, or really to volunteer in any meaningful way. Many of them don't have the social skills to get out and socialize appropriately. So they have nowhere really often to go that's very welcoming to them or fits

their needs. So as a consequence, we have a lot of folks who are not getting any sort of mental health support, because they can't really tolerate being in those situations. And these are the people, the folks that you see maybe wandering the streets, loitering in places they shouldn't be like Stewart's for instance. And they end up spending time with people who are taking advantage of them in the community or being in dangerous situations. And if they're not doing that, then they are most likely isolating in their apartments. And as we know, being isolated is really detrimental to your mental health as well as your physical health. And I think all of us have seen over the past year with COVID, that it's not just folks with mental health diagnoses that that effects, but all of us are experiencing the effects of isolation, not being able to get out and do the things we normally do. And that impact is really, it's doubled for folks who don't have anywhere really to go and don't have a lot of natural supports in place. So we'd like to create a social center at our current office building. As Tara said, we are going to model it after the old psycho social clubs like Friendship House. And there's one that currently exists up in Warren County run by Washington Association for Mental Health, they have a very similar program up there. So on the handout, you can see, this picture is actually a mockup of the space that we currently have. Right now that space on the first page is filled with cubicles where our care management staff reside. But it's a really nice big open space. We have breakout rooms on the side for computers, library, quiet areas, skill building classes. So we have the space and it's right near the County Mental Health building right off of South Broadway. So it's in a great location. What we're proposing would be open to any Saratoga County resident, not just those that we serve at RISE, but they would have to have a mental health diagnosis and be referred by a provider in order to take advantage of these services. So it would be a little bit different than what Shelters of Saratoga did, where it would be a drop in center and anyone could show up, this would be a little more targeted to those folks who need an environment where it's low demand, they can come but they can also receive socialization, skill building classes, maybe some pre vocational classes, just life skills, sorts of things in general and structured recreations. We've been working with a bunch of community partners on this already. This is an idea that's been in the works for quite a while, but there's not a lot of financial support out there for programs like this anymore. There used to be, through the Office of Mental Health. But the funding is really gone away and gone in different direction. But since that's happened, we've really noticed that people need this. There's a big gap in service right here that we need to figure out how to fill somehow. We have partners in the community who are really interested in working on this with us. The Saratoga County Prosperity Partnership is excited about the possibility of the commercial kitchen that we would like to renovate. We have in our space currently a nice big working kitchen. But we need something a little more robust, where we can teach people skills classes where we can have nutrition classes, we also want to use it as a cafe and a coffee space, serve some meals to people while they're there some lunch and snacks while people are hanging out socializing in the social center. Pitney Meadows is someone else, another organization who is interested in working with us. They have already talked to us about teaching nutrition classes, locating pop up markets there and donating the excess of their vegetables and everything they're growing, that they have nowhere to send, that they're really happy to donate that to us. They have a particular interest in using this space to teach nutrition education classes, for those of our folks who are struggling with substance use disorders. There's a strong push right now for whole person treatment and holistic treatment around nutrition being sort of a strong building block for recovery from substance use. We also want to partner with Create studios, we have a large open studio space downstairs in the social club space. It's a perfect spot for a studio where people can throw paint and have canvases up on the wall. And it's large enough for them to hold art therapy classes,

which they're really interested in doing. There's not a lot of great space that can accommodate that sort of thing currently in the area. We've also spoken to Healing Springs, and they are outgrowing their space for the self-help groups that they provide. Classes, Narcan trainings, any of those things. So we're really open to working with any community partners who might want to take advantage of this space as well, because we all tend to work with the same people, there's a lot of overlap in our services. So this space wouldn't just be for RISE, it would be a really great community resource and a resource for other agencies. So that being said, we've put together a very loose budget, we think that this is going to cost us about \$250,000 a year to run going forward for staffing and operations. And in the first year, what we're asking for is \$75,000, to help us renovate this kitchen, that we can share with the community, and some funding to hire a Development Coordinator. Someone who's going to help us work with the Office of Mental Health if we need license, ensure, get some other funding in place to support this besides County funding. And to really just put the program together from the ground up. So what we're hoping is \$470,000 startup money out of the stimulus money that's coming to the County to support our mental health and substance use programs.

Tara Gaston

Okay, so there's not a resolution before us right now. But I think the idea is, I think the topic is important enough. I know, it's been discussed amongst Supervisors, increasing and bringing up more mental health support. So I wanted to give them an opportunity to talk about it so that we can ask any questions that we need, so that then whatever else in addition, maybe necessary to help support a resolution moving it forward can be had. Are there any other questions? I like the fact it's right next to Mental Health. I know that RISE and Dr. P work together, and some other aspects as well. And I think one of the things, when we were talking about this, some of the funding moving forward actually includes funding that Dr. P is working with RISE to help on getting peer advocate. So that sort of thing would be included in their budgets as you look going forward. Other questions?

Phil Barrett

Is there also a request basically for 250 for the following year?

Sybil Newell

So for this year, Yes, the startup is the 75 we asked for, but we are going to need probably \$250,000 to fund operations for the first year. After that, we're looking to supplement that with fundraising from the community. There are some potential sources of Medicaid revenue for services that we can provide, that we could look to over the next couple of years. But that would take some time to set that up and get licensed and get certified for those sorts of things. But we really think the community is going to support this. I think that the downtown businesses would really love it, if there were places for the folks who are loitering outside of their buildings to go during the day, rather than just sort of hanging out on the sidewalks and having nothing much to do but people watch during their days. So I think that there's going to be a lot of community support around this, and that can help supplement our funding going forward. But that will take a few years to really build that base up.

Tara Gaston

And I think part of the 75 request is for development, which would help figure out how to make sure that that's not.

Sybil Newell

Yes.

Tara Gaston

What else.

Darren O'Connor

And you're talking about reducing the amount that you request from the County in year 2023 and 24?.

Sybil Newell

Yes.

Darren O'Connor

Because you'll be able to get some of your operating revenue elsewhere. Got it.

Sybil Newell

Yes.

Tara Gaston

Yes, the idea, though, as it was discussed, the County would assist in helping to bring this, with the idea that not as much would come from us. But I do think that the ability to get some of these individuals into areas where they can get acclimated to the idea of getting additional services will also be helpful. Any other questions or concerns? Anything that you would like to see any more information prior to considering the resolution on the matter?

Eric Connolly

Supervisor Connolly. Do you have any numbers, demographics in the County, and Dr. Prezioso might have these as well. Obviously, in the City of Saratoga, it's going to serve a lot of folks, but as a whole, what are we looking at as far as numbers of people who have mental health issues who could use a place like this and benefit from a place like this?

Sybil Newell

Off the top of my head, I was envisioning with this social center would probably serve 50 individuals to start, I think that would be our capacity to begin with. But it would be open to any individuals all across the county who would need the support. Dr. Prezioso might have a better idea of how many people this might be, but in our residences alone, there are I can name 50 people off the top of my head, in our apartments in the community and our supportive living arrangements, independently across the county, who could use the support.

Tara Gaston

And it is my understanding that the funding and kind of the budgets that you're working out also includes transportation, to get people from throughout the county to the facility. RISE happens to be located in Saratoga Springs next to it, but it certainly would not be focused only on the City. Dr. P?

Michael Prezioso

You know, honestly, I don't I don't have specific numbers, I can say that there's certainly unmet need. And my concern if I just take a second to go back to the idea of Friendship House. That was the name of a psychiatric rehabilitation program, essentially a social club. Those things were supported by the State years ago, they shifted their treatment model away from that in favor of something called PROS personalized recovery oriented services. The idea behind PROS is that you've got people with impairments and disabilities, but actually they function at a higher level than some of the folks who would be able to take advantage of the social club programs. So what happened, and this is my personal opinion, the baby got thrown out with the bathwater, there's a cohort that's left, whose needs are unmet, because there's not a low demand, semi structured kind of environment, that's a therapeutic one for them to be able to participate in. And as a result, they're lost, they're structuralist, there's not a lot, and I'm speaking sort of quasi psychological terms, but there's nothing to help keep them focused and directed and, maybe on a more therapeutic road to psychiatric recovery. So I think the numbers are there, just in terms of the numbers of folks that I know who are appropriate and make use of the PROS programs, but the numbers of people who were no longer eligible, because they weren't able to function at a high enough level to participate in PROS. So there's going to be use for the program. And, I think Sybil alluded to the fact that there's always some startup costs, part of the process of my office that would be involved in is facilitating, securing licenses, which then makes certain services reimbursable. So eventually, this kind of thing can be sustaining. But initially, as I'm sure you're familiar with it, it's not going to be, but as the reputation builds, I know, RISE has, over the time of my tenure, and for many decades prior to that has really wonderful relationships within the community, lots of community support, and lots of places. So, I think that there's sort of a good growth medium that exists right now. And certainly as was pointed out, the isolation that people experienced did nothing good for anybody's mental health over the course of the last, 16/18 months or so, this is going to be something if we think about it as the foundation, at a level where folks may, we may consider an accomplishment to get through 10 minutes without impact from a delusion or hallucination, we're talking about folks may be at that level, but build on that, and hopefully improve quality of life and then ability to leave a more productive life in so many other ways. And this is the kind of baseline foundational program that's needed for a group of people that just don't have access to it. So sorry, took a little longer than I thought.

Tara Gaston

And Mental Health would be able to refer as well as community providers, if there were someone to come in seeking services, and they weren't quite at the level, is that correct?

Sybil Newell

Yes, absolutely. Mental Health, any mental health professional, other community providers would be able to refer.

Eric Connolly

Thank you, Doctor, for providing that context. Very helpful.

John Lant

You know, to answer your question, I get two or three calls, least a week on my cell phone, people with mental health, alcohol, and drugs. It is a big problem out there and thank you for what you do.

Sybil Newell

You know, it is a big problem. And I also want to say that people being isolated, it really makes their mental health actually decrease and get worse, as well as their physical health. The more people stay isolated without the social supports, and the outlets that they need to be healthy, they end up spending more time in the hospital, for not only medical concerns, but mental health concerns. The more isolated you are, if you have a mental illness, the worse it really gets. So I also see this investment as saving money in the long run for hospital usage down the road.

Tara Gaston

And I will say that when I was approached to discuss this, RISE was very open to when I said, I don't know that the County's willing to take on that entire cost for a significant period of time. And so they immediately reached out to like the Prosperity Partnership, for funding to help see what they could use to help do the kitchen, redo the kitchen and how they could use it to help rebuild and bring in some of those funds. So they're clearly I think, very open and adaptable to seeking how they can assist in that. But what else? So you would like some demographic data? If we have it? Or is that sufficient?

Eric Connolly

No, that was sufficient. I just needed the context for the type of people that were the target of this effort.

Tara Gaston

Anything else? I will say if you see in the mock up, I've already promised to purchase and donate a foosball table, because that is my preference. And they included that in the mock up I appreciate. Sorry Attorney Hartnett if we have to figure out how to do that okay. So that's not going to come out of the budget, because foosball is my favorite. But anything else? If not, my plan is to hopefully work with RISE and the County Attorney to draft the resolution and present at our next meeting, but I did want to make sure that it came before this Committee, if you had any other questions or anything that we needed to get situated before that.

Eric Connolly

And just to comment, the rebranding is really great. It's gonna help you in your efforts.

Sybil Newell

Thank you. Yeah, we're really happy to not be known as TSA anymore, for obvious reasons.

Tara Gaston

I guess there's another similar TSA that like has a bad reputation I've heard of? Anyone else? Alright well, thank you. I want to thank you for your time, both in discussing this and all the work that you've done up to this and I look forward to being able to bring the final resolution up.

Sybil Newell

Absolutely. Thank you very much.

Tara Gaston

Any other business at this time? All right, do I have a motion to adjourn.

Darren O'Connor

So moved.

Eric Connolly

Second.

Tara Gaston

Supervisor O'Connor and Supervisor Connolly. All right. Thank you.