

2/6/24 Opioid Abatement Committee

Present:

Tim Fontneau – Rochester City Councilor

Chuck Creteau – Rochester City Councilor

David Herman – Rochester City Councilor

Nicole Rodler - Rochester PD Juvenile Diversion Coordinator

Todd Marsh – Welfare Director

Michelle Halligan Foley - Rochester Career & Technology Education Director

Amy Malone – Executive Director of Karlee’s Home Team and Director of Willand Warming Center

Warren Helm – Volunteer at Karlee’s Home Team

Phebe Miner – Legal Department Intern

4:36 pm Meeting started

Fontneau called meeting to order and asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves.

Fontneau stated the purpose of today’s meeting was to bring everyone up to date on the status of the committee.

Malone updated the group on what the committee has discussed over the past year and that the money has to be spent on evidence based practices.

Fontneau asked when does the committee receive the money and Malone explained the process. Rodler stated they have two pots that they get money from. Halligan-Foley stated that they are very comprehensive and the ideas they have come up with are backed by data. She stated they have been meeting for over a year and it is now time to react. Malone agreed and stated they also took things off when they realized it wouldn’t work.

Creteau stated that since the money has to be used towards evidence based practices, can it be used toward sharpie containers and Malone stated it can be used towards items if it falls into the evidence based practices. Rodler stated that there is a document called “List of Opioid Remediation Uses” that lists all the categories that you can use the money towards.

Fontneau stated that right now the committee has a recommendation in front of the City Council to use some of the monies. Rodler listed the requests stating there was intervention, prevention, and transportation.

Marsh stated he appreciates the committee not trying to reinvent the wheel. He has been working in social services for 20+ years and many want to reinvent the wheel and it starts to fizzle. From his perspective it is about increasing capacity and expanding services. It takes people and staffing, not just things.

Marsh stated that he was reading the City Council packet and had a question regarding the money requested for transitional housing services and wasn't sure what transitional housing was to this committee. And also, what it meant when it said to help cover gap funding before welfare and other funding sources kicks in because there isn't a long wait for city welfare. Marsh stated he wanted to make sure it's not duplicating efforts, and if it is extra who is administrating it as there would be two pots of money but which one would he use.

Rodler stated the wording was her attempt at describing the requests. Malone stated for an example she had a family with a 10 year old boy at the shelter. It was after hours and not appropriate for them to stay at shelter. Her organization has zero funding for a hotel but paid for a hotel for them. There are people at the warming center waiting for help and it's a month long waiting list. There are days the warming center is not open.

Marsh stated that for local welfare what it comes down to is legal obligations. But then there is also the "story" and it might not be a good situation for someone to go to the warming center where this gap could be helpful. There is always the precedent you worry about so being able to say that was a different type of funding would be helpful.

Fontneau stated from a layman's position it sounds like if there was someone that was just released from treatment and was in jeopardy of relapsing if they went to the warming center, they could use the funding to send them to a hotel. If they save one or two people they we are winning. Rodler stated that is literally the intent.

Malone stated that her organization had no intention of running the warming center. They wanted to open transitional housing, but zoning said it was not allowed where they were looking. Fontneau stated that in the proposal to the council, there was a large portion of money requested for transition housing. However, they don't have a place to put that. Rodler stated that as a committee their job was to make recommendations and from there it was up to the city to figure out how best to place it. Fontneau stated that is where Marsh comes in.

Marsh stated that part of him would like to have it part of welfare but to be able to separate it out with a nonprofit or someone else running it would minimize confusion. As long as there are some criteria.

Creteau stated that the number one thing they need is a low barrier shelter. Rodler agreed and stated not just one that is activated in low temps. Creteau said that part of

him wants to take all the money and make one as it's the highest degree of need that would benefit the most people. Rodler stated that they can't even build a shell for the shelter with the money they have now and there is not a set dollar amount they are going to have to put towards a shelter. Halligan-Foley stated they would then need to maintain it and have personnel.

Fontneau stated that it exacerbates him that a transitional housing project would cost millions to build when he could do it cheaper. Maybe there is a way for them to partner with a private organization that could get it up and running for less money.

Malone stated the occupancy at the warming center is supposed to be for 60 people and they are consistently at over 80. There have been over 200 different people since it opened. Most of her money goes to salary.

Fontneau stated they need to discuss how they can best use the funds

Rodler stated that oral health care is needed to give these individuals an opportunity because they can't go for jobs. Fontneau stated that one of the things that concerns him about that is they could get oral health care here and pay this and then over here pay this. They need to figure out what the rates are. Rodler stated at one time they talked to Avis Goodwin about it. Fontneau stated that the state has added dental to Medicaid and Malone stated no place takes it. Rodler stated that there are other pots of money that can help but it's not enough.

Marsh asked if this committee could make a relatively broad but important recommendation that they should partner with a nonprofit to manage this initiative. Fontneau stated the Finance Committee could make the recommendation. Marsh stated this could be something that goes to the city manager and she navigates it from there. Fontneau stated when he was a state rep they had policy committees which this sounds like.

Rodler stated that they need to emphasize it is Rochester money so it's a Rochester based nonprofit and make sure it is Rochester residents receiving the help.

Halligan-Foley asked if they have to put in place some sort of sustainability plan. Malone stated yes. Halligan-Foley stated the money will dry out eventually and they have to figure out cost analysis how to keep going what was put in place.

Fontneau stated next month Finance Committee will review the proposal put forth to City Council. Next month this committee will think about pushing forward on the housing initiative partnering with a nonprofit possibility. Halligan-Foley asked if a subcommittee would help focus or if they are doing that. She thinks they need to pull in

other members that understand more. Fontneau stated he thinks they can do it as a committee level for now and if they realize they need to pull in they can.

Malone stated that plenty of organizations have come in and soaked up their money and not doing anything. But they have a lot of local buy in on this. Creteau asked if they want community development involved. Malone said yes they should cross over. There is still more money out there and Kay Wright might know of additional funding that can be requested.

Creteau asked if anyone had heard of the 3D houses made out of concrete.

Malone stated you have to make sure any property is accessible by public transportation.

Discussion of when upcoming meetings will be and the committee will stay at 4:30 on the first Tuesday of the month before city council.

Fontneau thanked everyone for bringing the new people up to speed and the committee now knows where they want to go with the funds.

5:43 Meeting adjourned