

6/6/23 Opioid Abatement Committee

Present:

Amy Malone – Rochester City Councilor

Ashley Desrochers – Rochester City Councilor

Michael Scala – Director of Economic Development

Nicole Rodler - Rochester PD Juvenile Diversion Coordinator

Ashley Wright – Strafford County Public Health Network

Michelle Halligan Foley - Rochester Career & Technology Education Director

Nicole Dale-Hogan – Spaulding HS LADAC

Dana Berlin – Rochester City Councilor

4:38 pm Meeting started

Desrochers went over what they talked about at the last meeting which included what their goals are, the mission behind them, and their overall goals and themes

Dale-Hogan stated that since there aren't any funds or committees with funds specifically for children that they want to make sure they are providing basic needs and figuring out what the gaps are as their goal is to provide the care and services needed for the community

Desrochers stated she would like to know from Mike Scala what is coming for work force housing

Scala stated that housing is the focus of many of their initiatives. Economic Development has addressed this by obtaining properties and redeveloping them in ways that benefit the city. There are some work force housing developments coming and they do have a few like Apple Ridge. NH Housing has funded four that have been approved to develop. As the city goes, he has a RFP for the old DPW building and wrote it up to target affordable housing meaning the builder must have affordable housing contingent with their proposal. Easter Seals is coming online but they already have a waiting list.

Malone stated that Apple Ridge has a waiting list for their next section

Scala stated that quality is key. When the opportunity presents itself, they do address it. The NH Housing report just came out with what is needed in the future and it's up 60,000. He stated they are a victim of their own success but have such limited supply. The smaller towns don't want multi-families and they are running out of space to put them. They have some owners who think that their land is worth more than it is so there is also an education piece that they have to work with. He'd like to get more density downtown

Rodler asked if they can build up. Scala stated yes and they can now build up to 75 feet. If you looked at downtown now versus three years ago you can see the difference. There used to be boarded up windows. The density is helping to support the businesses. ED is doing what they can. He understands their needs and will do what he can to help.

Desrochers asked Scala how he sees the concept of focusing on housing that is appropriate for people in recovery. Can he look at it and see this is something they would talk about. How could he meet them in the middle and address those needs

Scala stated there is a need, however his first mission is to expand and protect the taxpayers. He asked if those places pay taxes

Malone stated that some are for profit so they do charge more for the people living there than the non-profit. Desrochers stated that there are people that look and say how can I make money and help people

Malone stated that if they are getting people into the workforce from these houses, these people would work in Rochester because that's where the busses go. There's also the student aspect and being able to get shared student living. They need to do something to step up for the young people.

Halligan-Foley stated that most students who graduate are going into the workforce than college. Desrochers asked if they have a higher percentage of that happening and Halligan-Foley stated they do. Rodler stated that it's the times and that's what happens

Halligan-Foley stated they did a ceremony last week for the tech center where 187 students received industry recognized credentials. She's been pushing for that, but they need to have housing for them to start off. Dale-Hogan stated that kids have parents in jail so that's their only option.

Malone stated that is why some kids leave and don't come back. They find opportunities for shared living expenses, better public transportation system and shared rides. Kids go to Manchester because there are more opportunities. Even to get to Sig Sauer is a bike ride so if they have to live outside Rochester they are not going to work at Sig. It's transitional. The minute a kid turns 18 a parent can kick them out and often they do.

Halligan-Foley asked what the next steps are to move forward

Desrochers stated there is a specific younger population that is affected by the opioid epidemic. Dale-Hogan stated that a lot of parents don't want kids to graduate because

the money will stop for them. Malone stated it just reinforces to these young people that they aren't worth much. It hinders their potential to blossom and show potential.

Halligan-Foley asked if that can be part of the approval. Malone stated yes and her goal is 80% would be Rochester referrals.

Rodler stated they are able to use the funds for housing individuals

Desrochers stated they also talked about transportation

Malone stated that is why they asked Scala to start looking because they need a space to be able to do that. If they can identify in a referral that there is an adult child that abuses substances.

Dale-Hogan stated that in Rochester they have a super low number of clinical supervisors and there are not a lot of places someone can get their hours. It would be great if there was a scholarship fund to get your LADAC.

Desrochers asked if they could cover some licensures from the money. Dale-Hogan stated that if they could get people to commit to work in Rochester, they will pay your licensures / fees if they stay here

Malone stated that they need workforce housing for social workers. She is a social worker and thankfully already owns a house because she wouldn't be able to own a house now on her salary. Most teachers nowadays can't, and a lot have second jobs.

Wright stated there is no reciprocity of licensures either. If someone is a mental health provider out of state, there is no reciprocity to come here. She asked what they can change at the state to make it easier to work here

Dale-Hogan stated it is easier to live here and practice in Maine than to live in Maine and work here

Scala asked how much money was received from the opioid lawsuit. Malone stated they are supposed to be getting money for the next 15 years and at the last count it was around \$150,000. But the math on how you get it is very convoluted. Rochester is considered ground zero for opioid abuse so it is a top contender for receiving the money. They can also apply for additional funds for housing or anything that is opioid evidence based. There are still other pots of money they can request from.

Desrochers asked if there is something they can embed in from another resource if it's coming to the city anyway

Scala stated with the RFP that is going out they could always approach and ask for 12 rooms to be built for recovery

Halligan-Foley asked if they could define recovery so they can include students. Desrochers stated this is a need the city has so she would say yes.

Halligan-Foley stated they are trying to be proactive to help students who don't have any role models. They are seeing kids jeopardize their graduation because they don't want to leave because they have their support in school

Desrochers stated that any transition in life is a higher expectancy for experiencing abuse

Dale-Hogan stated that many don't have credit and landlords charge application fees. Malone stated that many pay the application fee and never got a phone call

Desrochers asked how they can get clarity on if they can work with planning and ED on the housing initiative. Scala stated that working with staff is not a problem, but they should also work closer with Planning because they know where these houses should go. Scala stated what he generally does is look at GIS and look where he would like to build something

Rodler asked if in looking for partners should they be looking at Kay Wright as she would have to apply for the grants. Malone stated that the city can do it, but the city wouldn't run the management of it. The thought is if a place can partner with the city, then yes. There are also other pots of money that are for housing. So yes, she can absolutely can help

Discussion on 501(C)(3)'s and the percentage taken out for admin

Malone stated that the priority is Rochester first and the only way to guarantee that is to put local residents on the board of directors. They have a shelter that has only one Rochester residence

Dale-Hogan stated she has a curriculum question. They have a SAP (substance abuse prevention) position they haven't been able to hire for. They found a curriculum called Millennium that covers support and education and the kids can't skip through it. The schools have a high number of suspensions and it tracks who can come back. The district fee would be \$2500

Rodler stated she has used that one before but she found one that's just as good and cheaper that she will send the information on

Halligan-Foley stated they would like to get something in place for next year. She's already had the high school administration look at it

Rodler asked if they talked about the mental health website at the last meeting. Malone stated they didn't do a ton because they tried to be a little more strategic. It is part of the big picture, but they put a pin in it. Desrochers stated that there is nobody to maintain it. Rodler stated that Celeste Plaia was going to, but it didn't fall under her.

Wright asked if it's not manageable what else can they do to meet those goals. Social media is easier than a website. Rodler stated that that is where she is at and to just keep going as to what they are doing

Malone stated she wondered if they could get a page on the regular city website. Rodler stated that the challenge is who manages it. Scala stated if this is a mayoral group then they are fine. If the boss gives them the okay, they should talk to Matt Wyatt

Halligan-Foley stated that the main thing would be how many clicks it would take to get to it. Malone stated she agrees. They as the opioid committee are doing the same things as Rochester Mental Health and do need a landing page for all of it

Wright stated it doesn't need to be right now but more of what they can manage with social media. As they develop and grow and have events and more information to share then they will need to expand

5:40 adjourned