

COMMISSIONERS WORKSHOP ON AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING

October 6, 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 6, 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

10-06-21 ITEM

1 PUBLIC COMMENT(S) ON ANY ITEM(S)

None

2 TO HEAR FROM THE FOLLOWING:

- a. Donna Dwyer-My Place Teen Center- County Manager Zinser explained that he and the Commissioners visited the teen center in Westbrook. The request is for \$1.5 million. Their packet is attached as record. Donna Dwyer, President and CEO of MPTC addressed the Board and explained the history of the Center. Commissioner Ring commented that she was extremely impressed with the Center (in Westbrook) that she visited. She added that it would be a wonderful center for York County. Guy Gagnon from Southern Maine Affordable Housing addressed the Board. He explained that they are an “arm” of the Biddeford Housing Authority and that they are a non-profit and have their own Board. He assured the Board that funds will be managed efficiently and accurately.

Commissioner Dutremble stated that he also had visited the facility in Westbrook and it was well done. He added that as a former employee of the City of Biddeford, he knows the Biddeford Housing Authority does a great job. Commissioner Sicard commented that he saw that the Center has received \$400,000 in donations. He asked Mr. Gagnon if he still feels confident (about the project)?

Guy Gagnon responded, yes. He continued that they always try to hire local people and have lots of buy in from the community.

County Manager Zinser asked Donna Dwyer to explain the regional impact the Center will have.

Donna Dwyer explained that My Place Teen Center has been in Cumberland County for almost 23 years. We impact a dozen other towns and cities in the greater Portland area. Ms. Dwyer added that the same will be true once they open in Biddeford. Any kid is welcome. During COVID, she explained, the Center was one of the non-profits that never shut down. Within 48 hours, we galvanized our staff. We turned into a mobile food pantry and were curbside. Donna Dwyer stated that they served hot meals for 9 months for free. We served anyone a meal free.

Reverend Tim Higgins, Chairperson of the Board of Directors at My Place Teen Center commented regarding Donna's leadership over the past 10 years and her ongoing commitment. He added that some, including himself have been on the Board of Directors for 10-12 years.

Commissioner Sicard commented that sometimes when the Board makes a large investment we take a seat on the Board. Are you open to that?

Reverend Higgins responded, absolutely. We would love that.

Commissioner Ring asked Donna Dwyer with the funding from ARP, when is your projected date of opening? Donna Dwyer replied that 2023 would be a target date.

County Manager Zinser pointed out to all of the participants that they don't have to stay but that the Commissioners cannot make any decisions until the meeting. He continued that he doesn't know if they will be voting tonight but that there will be a process and no one will just be handed a check.

We haven't gotten that far yet as to how we will fund the projects we approve, stated the County Manager.

- b. Emily Flinkstrom-Fairtide- County Manager Zinser introduced Emily Flinkstrom, Executive Director of Fairtide who explained that Fair Tide is a non-profit located in Kittery ME that provides housing for those who are homeless or at risk to be homeless. She went on to explain that they own property and work with landlords to provide housing and have been in existence for around for 23 years, expanding in the last 5 years. Her proposal is two part: to be able to provide a resource hub of social services as well as affordable housing. This vision started about 3 years ago when social service agencies got together, stated Ms. Flinkstrom. The current system is disjointed and not at all client-friendly. This vision would be for a household in need to go to just one place. This, explained Ms. Flinkstrom, is in line with some Statewide services that are happening now. We envision a shared office or two for mental and physical health and dental agencies. She added that she does have letters of support from many of these agencies. Fairtide assists over 1,000 households a year but not sure how many of these are duplicate numbers. She continued that it is intimidating to try and figure out how to get help. With COVID many more

households need help. We have created a shared application for those impacted by COVID. We are asking for \$750,000 to acquire a site. We have one in mind and we have been talking with the owners who also own a non-profit. Ms. Flinkstrom continued that they would have to spend some additional money to outfit the property for their needs. All of our agencies already pay rent and have overhead, so shared space would save all money.

The affordable housing would be administered through Maine Housing. We would be asking for money for site acquisition. Community Housing of Maine would be a partner, Ms. Flinkstrom stated. She continued that they have been working with them for four years to try and find a potential site.

Commissioner Clark replied that he is not entirely clear where the other funds would be coming from and that he would want to see that before acting upon the request. These are the issues that he would like a lot more information on. He added that he would need more detail on what other partners would be contributing.

Ms. Flinkstrom commented that the hope is that they would have a site acquired within a year and also be raising the funds while the property is developed. She informed all that they will be losing the current Fairtime site so they are motivated to find a new site. As far as the affordable housing piece, the timeline is a bit longer as they would be counting on tax credits. Ms. Flinkstrom stated that she would be happy to write that up with more detail.

Commissioner Ring commented that she was not clear on what Ms. Flinkstrom is asking for.

Emily Flinkstrom responded, to acquire a site. One site we are looking at could work for both pieces. Both of those projects could come to fruition. For the resource hub, they are also exploring a different site and the \$750,000 would be used to purchase that.

Commissioner Sicard stated that the document provided stated an amount of \$3 million for site acquisition.

Ms. Flinkstrom explained that is for the site that could work for both. We are also talking to potential investors.

Commissioner Ring asked for Ms. Flinkstrom to provide the Commissioners with a little more detailed sheet as there really isn't enough information here for them to make a decision.

Commissioner Clark asked Emily when she could have the information for the Commissioners. She replied that she can have it for them for their next meeting. Commissioner Clark added that he doesn't want Ms. Flinkstrom to have to let us know in public where the property is.

Emily Flinkstrom replied, yes, neither of the properties are on the market.

Commissioner Clark replied that they could meet in executive session for that.

County Manager Zinser asked Ms. Flinkstrom what towns Fairtime impacts?

She replied, Kittery, Eliot, South Berwick, York, and to some degree, Berwick.

County Manager Zinser asked Ms. Flinkstrom if she had approached any of those towns for funding as they also received ARP funds? She replied, not yet. Commissioner Clark requested that Ms. Flinkstrom be put on the agenda for an update as he thinks time is of the essence.

Commissioner Sicard reminded all that they have other projects that they have already discussed that they need to revisit.

c. Transportation discussion with Barbara Crider and Thomas Reinauer from

YCCAC, Paul Schumacher from SMRPDC and Al Shutz from STSolutions. Paul Schumacher addressed the Board and stated that his organization doesn't have a dollar proposal but it's (transportation) a critical issue in the region. We are working on a number of different projects in the area looking at transit. We are finishing project right now with PNSY and the Town of Kittery. Sanford has the highest number of residents that commute to the Shipyard. Waterboro, Shapleigh and Alfred also have a lot of residents who work at the PNSY. Transportation in York County is a fragmented system. The new courthouse in Biddeford, stated Mr. Schumacher, will have there will be an issue to getting people to court.

Tom Reinhauser, Director of Communication at York County Community Action addressed the Board and stated that this is a broad topic. A lot of the services they provide, he explained, depend on the funding sources they receive. WAVE provides (transportation) services that are more flexible than a route schedule. Commissioner Clark stated that his observation is that the Board has talked about wanting to make a one time investment. He continued for example, a fleet improvement or something as I do not think the county wants to be a part of an annual investment. This State has the oldest average age in the country. We have a significant amount of rural people who want to age in place. It will become more and more difficult for them to drive to the doctors and grocery store, etc. It is a serious issue. Commissioner Clark stated that he has heard of programs that can't find drivers. He asked Mr. Reinhauser if this was an issue?

Mr. Reinhauser replied that they are constrained and it has been a challenge. He added that they have had to curtail services because they don't have enough drivers.

Commissioner Ring stated that rehabilitation and housing, is of no value unless we can get people there. If they do not have transportation, they can't continue with their counseling. She suggested that maybe they could all get together and come up with a plan for the rural areas, too.

Commissioner Sicard stated that he agreed with Commissioner Ring.

Al Shutz, business agent for STSolutions addressed the Board and referenced a PowerPoint he had given the Commissioners. His transportation system would be run by York County to get people in rural areas. In order to deploy enough busses to meet countywide demand, 6 to 8 buses would be needed, commented Mr. Shutz. We would need to find out where the underserved areas are and have a flexible system with buses running through. Commissioner Dutremble asked what the cost of the buses would be. Mr. Shutz replied that he would lease them. Commissioner Dutremble asked who would be responsible for paying the employees? We have to spend the (ARP) money by 2024. We need a plan in front of us, stated Commissioner Dutremble.

Commissioner Sicard asked Mr. Shutz if \$2.5 to \$2.7 million was an accurate estimate?

Al Shutz replied that was a rough estimate and that he could pare it down to work with the County. He added that they could coordinate with other companies that already have transportation like YCAC.

Paul Schumacher asked when do you need to spend the money?

County Manager Zinser replied that there area lot of issues here. The money needs to be committed by 12-31-2024 and needs to be spent by 12-31-2026. The County Manager added that other questions include: Can we buy non-profits vehicles instead? Who needs to be at this conversation to make sure

everyone is served? With STS's proposal, the county would run the program. He asked the Commissioners, if they want the County to be a transit provider? Or do you want to fund the busses? A broader scope of people need to be here, stated the County Manager.

Commissioner Ring stated that she felt the county was not interested in going into a transit business.

Paul Schumacher responded that there are consultants who are working on transit with the shipyard project. There has to be proposals and ideas. He added that he was just trying to figure out timing.

Commissioner Sicard stated that Al Shutz has experience with Biddeford, OOB and Saco and Al brought Scarborough in. There are models out there where you bring in a larger governing system.

Tom Reinauer stated that his agency is also available to talk about providing more services. He added that long term sustainability is the hard part.

ADJOURN

Workshop adjourned at 4:30 p.m.