

Meeting Minutes

Village of Downers Grove
Human Service Ad Hoc Committee

Committee Room

08/25/20

7:00 PM

I. Call to Order

Village Manager Dave Fieldman called the meeting of the Human Service Ad Hoc Committee of the Village of Downers Grove to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Committee Room of the Downers Grove Village Hall.

II. Roll Call

Committee Members Attendance (Present): Samantha Aycock, Becky Campbell, Tom Connolly, Chris Gilmartin (arrived at 7:10 p.m.), Kimberly Nagy, Azizi Marshall

Absent: Stephanie Williams

Staff: Village Manager David Fieldman, Administrative Secretary II Rosa Berardi

Guests: Patty Johnstone, NAMI DuPage

Manager Fieldman asked for a motion to permit electronic attendance by Samantha Aycock, Becky Campbell, Azizi Marshall, and Chris Gilmartin

Ms. Nagy moved to approve the motion. Mr. Connolly seconded the motion.

Manager Fieldman declared the motion approved by voice vote.

III. Approval of July 28, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Manager Fieldman asked for a motion to approve the July 28, 2020 minutes.

Mr. Connolly moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Nagy seconded the motion.

Manager Fieldman declared the minutes approved by voice vote.

IV. Presentations by NAMI DuPage

Manager Fieldman introduced Patty Johnstone of NAMI DuPage to discuss the services NAMI provides to individuals and families in need of assistance.

Ms. Johnstone started by stating that NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, has been in existence since 1985. It was started as a support group to parents of children with special needs. The organization has grown over the years and now has over 1,000 members. Ms. Johnstone used a PowerPoint presentation to explain all of the programs, services, and support offered through NAMI DuPage including:

- Resource and Support
- Education and Community Training
- Supported Employment
- Social and Recreation
- Youth Programs

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Mr. Connolly asked how people go about getting help from NAMI.

Ms. Johnstone spoke about the resources and support offered by NAMI. She started with the Peer Counseling Program. Peer Counselors have recovered from their own crisis and have undergone intensive training to provide members and/or their families with the mentorship and guidance they need during their road to recovery. Peer Counselors also speak at local hospitals, community outreach, as well as general educational settings.

Mr. Connolly asked how people go about getting help from NAMI.

Ms. Johnstone responded by stating that anyone in need of assistance can start by filling out a Peer Counselor Request Form. The form can be found at <http://namidupage.org/resources/peer-counselor/peer-counselor-request-form/>.

Mr. Connolly asked if the Peer Counselors are paid.

Ms. Johnstone said that they are paid a minimal amount.

Ms. Johnstone went on to describe The Living Room, located at the DuPage County Building, providing individuals experiencing an increase in mental health symptoms an option to seek help on a walk-in basis as an alternative to visiting an Emergency Room. When coming to the Living Room, individuals are screened by Peer Counselors who determine whether it is safe to continue talking with the individual about their situation and develop a plan for recovery. Additionally, Ms. Johnstone said NAMI offers other support group options such as NAMI Connection, Weekly Drop-In Family Member Support Groups (for siblings and spouses) and Support Groups for Parents (with children under the age of 18 or up to the age of 22, if attending college)

Mr. Connolly asked about the number of people that seek assistance from NAMI and if many of those people are involved in the Peer Counseling Program.

Ms. Johnstone said that the total numbers in the program are down, but the number of members looking for phone support is up. Many members are participating in Zoom meetings. Depending on their comfort level, some may even meet their Peer Counselor at parks and other open spaces.

Ms. Johnstone went on to discuss the education & community training offered through NAMI and spoke briefly about educational classes available to individuals seeking assistance, their families, spouses, partners, and friends. The education programs offered include WRAP, NAMI Basics, Family to Family, and Mental Health First Aid. A complete list and description of the programs and classes can be found on the web at <http://namidupage.org/programs-and-services/education-community-training/educational-classes/>.

Ms. Johnstone then touched on the Hospital Recovery Connections, normally offered at 6 area hospitals, now takes place only at Good Samaritan Hospital in the ER for a limited number of speaking events. Ms. Johnstone said that community training is offered through the Community GUIDE Program and NAMI P.D. She said that retired Naperville Police Officer, Mike Hoffman, has joined forces with NAMI DuPage and speaks with families and refers them to other resources that can assist with a plan on how to deal with a family member suffering from mental illness.

Mr. Connolly asked who can attend the speaking events.

Ms. Johnstone said that anyone that would benefit should attend.

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Ms. Johnstone explained that once members are ready to prepare for employment, NAMI offers employment support, including job readiness classes and one-on-one job coaching. NAMI also prepares members for the workforce with volunteer opportunities in the NAMI Rise & Shine Café and the NAMI Print Shop; both offering products and services to the public. Volunteering in either location helps members to “get their feet wet” before applying for jobs.

Ms. Johnstone then spoke of the social and recreational programs/events offered by NAMI. Under normal circumstances, programs and events are offered during the day, the evening and on weekends. She said Friday night Bingo, now offered virtually, and Trivia nights are good gateways for people to ease into NAMI. Other NAMI programs/events include personal fitness, art classes, a choir, book clubs, and bowling events.

Ms. Johnstone talked about the NAMI Drop-In Centers located in Wheaton at the DuPage County Community Center, and in Naperville at the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association (WDSRA); neither are open due to the pandemic but normally take place on Wednesday evening for 2 hours and involve dinner and activities. Under normal circumstances, people age 30 and over can drop in at the Naperville location and those age 18 and under can drop in at the Wheaton location.

Lastly, Ms. Johnstone spoke about the Youth Programs offered by NAMI which include Ending the Silence for School Staff, Ending the Silence for Students, Ending the Silence 101 for Middle Schools, Teen Resiliency Workshops, and Teen Support Group. Ms. Johnstone said that educating students about mental illness and how to cope at an earlier age helps them later in life.

Mr. Connolly asked if there is a charge for Peer Counseling and if NAMI receives any funding from DuPage County.

Ms. Johnstone said the support groups, educational classes, and the Living Room are free of charge, but there is a minimal charge for Peer Counseling one-on-one sessions. The charge is on a sliding scale and depends on the individual’s income. The maximum charge is normally \$25 for the first visit and \$10 for remaining visits. Ms. Johnstone said that NAMI does not receive any funding from the County or the State. NAMI always welcomes donations but most funding is raised through fundraising events. The NAMI Gala and the Run/Walk events are great fundraisers, but the pandemic has put a stop to both events.

Ms. Aycock asked where the Rise and Shine Café and the Print Shop are located and Ms. Nagy asked if they are open to the public.

Ms. Johnstone said they are both located in the DuPage County Community Center Building. The Rise and Shine Café is currently closed due to COVID but the Print Shop is open. She spoke of a man she counseled that volunteered at the café and during his shifts, he would “hear voices in his head” and suffer from bouts of anxiety. The man would take breaks and use the coping mechanisms taught to him during his counseling sessions. It took nearly a year and a half to get through his shifts with no extra breaks but he is a success story and is now employed. He has come back to NAMI to train and become a Peer Counselor because he wants to help others the same way his NAMI Peer Counselor helped him.

Ms. Aycock said the purpose of the Human Services Committee is to find services that can help the people of Downers Grove. She asked if it is ok for the group to refer people to NAMI for assistance during this time of financial hardship for the organization.

Ms. Johnstone said to send anyone that needs assistance their way. She went on to say that she is looking to bring on more counselors to work with individuals and families. She said that even though many in-person services have been put on hold, there are a good number of members benefiting from using Zoom.

Ms. Aycock stated that she did not know about NAMI until about a year ago when speaking with Azizi. She mentioned shortly after learning about NAMI, she was asked if she'd like to donate to NAMI while she was checking out at the grocery store and that excited her.

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Ms. Nagy asked how people that need services usually find out about NAMI.

Ms. Johnstone said that because of the financial hardships NAMI has faced, there isn't enough funding for marketing. She said aside from webinar presentations, there aren't many set ways to get the word out about their services. She is hoping the NAMI PD program will be a good avenue to market the organization.

Ms. Nagy said some time ago a family member of hers was hospitalized at Linden Oaks and she was never notified about NAMI.

Ms. Johnstone said that is unfortunate because she has done presentations at Linden Oaks. She said it is hard to market with limited funding, but she is trying to get their information out through local hospital emergency rooms.

Ms. Nagy said people are reluctant to head to the emergency room, so those in need of the support and services NAMI has to offer may never find out about it.

Ms. Marshall added to the conversation by asking what advocacy work is being done. She asked if doctor's offices are referring people to NAMI and if there is a staff member or volunteer to advocate for the organization.

Ms. Johnstone replied by stating that the NAMI organization does not get the support you would think they should get from clinical psychiatrists and therapists. She said that they do not embrace peer sponsorships. During the 14 years Ms. Johnstone has been with NAMI, the organization has always had more work than the staff members could handle. This makes it hard to find the time or finances to get out and advocate. She said at this time the organization does not have a Volunteer Coordinator and they have been trying to recruit college interns, but they do not stay around for too long.

Ms. Campbell stated that since the 1990's she has seen first-hand how cases of mental illness have grown. She asked if NAMI had additional funding, what services would the funds be used toward.

Ms. Johnstone stated that she would like to see more peer-run services and bridge the gap with the clinicians. She also said many times family can be enablers. She wants NAMI to be able to prove that Peer Counselors can work with experts to give the "how-to" to those individuals that need it most. She said there are Peer Respite Programs in Wisconsin and that is something that would be wonderful to bring to Illinois.

Mr. Gilmartin asked if Ms. Johnstone could share a little about how things have changed during the pandemic and if there they are expecting a "boom" when things start to open up.

Ms. Johnstone said things slowed down initially, but the phone calls have slowly started rolling in and have picked up again. She said they are starting to see walk-ins again in The Living Room. The support groups used to consist of approximately 23 people (in person) and now average about 11 people per Zoom session. She said while many people don't feel comfortable sharing their emotions on Zoom, others that were hesitant to join meetings in person prefer having the Zoom option. Ms. Johnstone went on to say the peer support is needed and is being used. If the numbers stay are they are, with the hybrid of in-person and online sessions, they will be able to handle larger numbers. The organization is looking to expand the NAMI P.D. Program in the future. Lastly they would like to bring on a counselor with a Master's Degree, so they can have a Peer Counselor and clinician combination internally.

Manager Fieldman thanked Ms. Johnstone for the relationship NAMI has with the Downers Grove Police Department.

Ms. Johnstone said that the Downers Grove Police Department was a big part of their pilot program and most of the police department referrals they receive come from the Downers Grove PD.

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V. Review of 2019 HSAHC Report and Discussion of HSAHC 2020 Report

Manager Fieldman reviewed the presentations that were given to the Committee during the 2020 meetings:

- January - Downers Grove Police and Fire Departments
- February - Downers Grove Library and Downers Grove School Districts 58 and 99
- July – DuPage County Senior Services and Downers Grove Township
- August – NAMI

Manager Fieldman said in the 2019 HSAHC Report to the Village Council the following questions were answered:

1. What role shall the HSAHC serve in the Village?
2. What can and should an appointed standing HSAHC do to assist the Village Council in promoting the function and mission of the Village on an on-going basis?

Manager Fieldman asked the committee to take a look at the 2019 HSAHC Report and turn the group's goals into more specific tasks/projects, itemized by priority.

Ms. Campbell said that it would be easier for the committee to prioritize tasks/projects if they knew whether or not the Village would be able to provide the group with funding.

Manager Fieldman responded by stating that before COVID the Village was as strong as ever and was even looking at constructing a new building that would consist of a combined Village Hall and Police Department. However, at this time the Village is projecting a 9 million dollar shortfall; twice the impact of the Great Recession. The impacts of this shortfall have included: the usage of capital funds to pay for operating costs, salary freezes, hiring freezes, job vacancies, and the use of reserve funds. As a result of the shortfall, the Village's response includes an increase in the food and beverage tax by ½ a percent, an increase in ambulance billing, and using up to 2 million dollars of capital fund money.

Manager Fieldman said that last week the Village Council agreed to shift dollars to respond to the community during these difficult times. He went on to say that the 2020 HSAHC report and the 2021 Budget will both be ready for Village Council to review at that same time.

Ms. Campbell said that she only knew of a few of the programs that have been presented to the group over the past several months. She said she has learned a lot.

Ms. Nagy agreed and said the Village has to find a way to put all of this information out there to the public. She knows of someone that has been suffering from mental health issues and didn't know about NAMI or she would have referred them long ago.

Ms. Aycock doesn't want Village employees to have to take on these issues; the Police Department and Fire Department should be alleviated from responding to calls from people suffering from mental illness. She wants the services they've learned about to be bundled and put out there for anyone in need - i.e. the blind, the elderly, and the homeless.

Ms. Marshall replied to Ms. Aycock and said that this was already done through the DuPage County CRIS (Community Resource Information System) program. She said she thinks it would be beneficial for the Village to appoint one person, "a concierge", to direct people to the CRIS program.

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Ms. Campbell agreed that would be a great idea and would alleviate calls to the Police and Fire Departments.

Manager Fieldman spoke about CRIS and how the Village worked in cooperation with DuPage County to get the program up and running.

Mr. Gilmartin asked if someone were to call the Fire Department, rather than responding to the call would the Fire Department personnel connect the caller with the Village Concierge.

Ms. Aycock said it may be that way at first but suggested the Police and Fire Departments could compile a list of people for the Village Concierge to reach out to.

Ms. Nagy suggested that the group have magnets made and Ms. Aycock added that they could also create flyers and have the pizza places hand them out with pizza orders.

Manager Fieldman said the Village uses marketing to connect with people. He said in 2013 when the Village implemented the stormwater utility fee to property owners in Downers Grove, the marketing was so extensive that residents called to say “enough” and that was the Village’s goal. He said the Village has been very effective at getting the word out with short films on the Village website.

He recapped what the group has gathered from the 2020 HSAHC meetings:

- There are many services available for our residents through other organizations.
- There is a lack of awareness of these services and organizations.
- There is a need to start using the Village of Downers Grove as a resource and for referrals.
- Find a way to bundle information to make it easy to understand and market it.
- Have a social worker hired by the Village to act as “concierge” to residents.
- Focus on the residents that are most “at-risk” and hard to reach.

Manager Fieldman concluded by stating that one part of the HSAHC report to the Village council would include the items noted above and the other part would be about “Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity”. He asked the members to bring 2-3 items to the table to be included in the other part of the report.

Ms. Marshall listed off a few ideas for the group to consider: bystander training, micro aggressions, gender bias, sexual identity, cultural de-sensitivity, religion.

Manager Fieldman said that he would reach out to the Youth Outlook Organization for a future presentation

VI. Public Comment

There was none.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosa Berardi
Administrative Secretary II
Village Clerk’s Office