

# Meeting Minutes

Village of Downers Grove  
Human Service Ad Hoc Committee

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Committee Room

02/25/20

7:00 PM

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## 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 (chair), Chris Gilmartin, Tom Connolly, Azizi Marshall, Becky Campbell

**Absent:** Stephanie Williams, Kimberly Nagy

**Staff:** Village Manager David Fieldman, Deputy Village Clerk Village April Holden

**Guests:** Dr. Kevin Russell, District 58 Superintendent; Dr. Hank Thiele, District 99 Superintendent; Julie Milavec, Director, Downers Grove Public Library; Cindy Khatri, Public Relations Manager, Downers Grove Public Library; Octavia Neyland, Social Work Intern, Downers Grove Public Library

Mr. Fieldman reiterated that the goal of the Ad Hoc Committee is to update and add to the report presented to the Village Council in 2019, specifically with respect to recommendations and actions in prioritized order. This is the second meeting of the Committee and will consist of presentations from the school districts and the library.

## III. Approval of January 28, 2020 Minutes

Mr. Fieldman asked for a motion to approve the January 28, 2020 minutes.

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

Mr. Fieldman declared the minutes approved by voice vote.

## IV. Presentations by School District 99, School District 58 and the Downers Grove Library

Mr. Fieldman introduced Dr. Kevin Russell, School District 58 Superintendent and Dr. Hank Thiele, School District 99 Superintendent to discuss services provided by their schools.

Dr. Kevin Russell, School District 58 Superintendent, said he and Dr. Thiele would jointly discuss all the services the schools offer as they develop services together. He said schools take on more social leadership services each year. They will discuss what they are doing and how services and resources can be combined. We can raise awareness and services.

Dr. Hank Thiele, School District 99 Superintendent, spoke of health and wellbeing professionals in schools. Schools picked up services that dipped during the recession and there was a huge ramp-up of services provided in public schools.

Dr. Russell spoke of wraparound services, home to school and access to services. Schools are teaching to the “whole child” a term that includes social, emotional and academic aspects of a child.

Dr. Russell then addressed the variety of professionals in schools including:

Social workers and counselors to support all students.

Psychologists who address special needs. They are specialized educators and there is a shortage of psychologists in education.

Nurses - a blend of registered nurses and certified school nurses. Certified school nurses (CSN) can attend school meetings. He addressed allergy issues and life-saving medications. He said certified school nurses are almost impossible to find.

Dr. Thiele said there are tiers in each of these roles, which amounts to a lot of staff.

Dr. Russell noted that it has also resulted in the need for space.

Dr. Russell said schools try to operate as a unit school. In preschool through eighth grade, the primary focus is general education. He addressed intervention in academics, social issues (behavior) and emotional issues (well-being). Schools today help kids socially and emotionally.

Dr. Russell addressed legislation. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on disability, requires that a student with a disability have access to accommodations. This could include Type 1 diabetes, food allergies, etc. Special education/Individualized Education Plan (IEP) provides special education in the least restrictive environment. It is available to students ages 3-21. It includes support services, such as speech; resources, such as academic; specialized programs, such as programs addressing developmental delays or autism; special placement. He also addressed the School Association for Special Education in DuPage County (SADED).

Dr. Russell noted that some students, such as autistic students, need multiple services. The schools must provide services to students as of three years of age. He said there is a need to talk about services to those over 21.

Dr. Thiele spoke of the multi-tiered levels of support to students. Tier 1 support is available to all students and includes academic, social/emotional and post-secondary services. Tier 2 includes additional support such as co-teaching and problem-solving teams. Tier 3 is the highest level of support and is specific to a particular child. It includes assist teams.

Dr. Thiele addressed Transition 99 (T-99), which offers services to students with special needs from 18 until the day before they turn 22 with respect to jobs, life-skills, etc.

Dr. Thiele then addressed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a federal law for the last 20 years, that ensures the right of students to go to school even when they are homeless or do not have a permanent address. This allows students to enroll in school and remain in school even if they lose their home. It gives them the right to receive transportation and the right to receive support for academic success.

Dr. Russell said the schools partner with the Bridge Communities, Family Shelter Services, district partnerships regarding shared transportation, and the DuPage Regional Office of Education (ROE) Regional Homeless Liaison.

The definition of someone that doesn't have a permanent home is very broad. It is a problem in Downers Grove and across the State. He provided homeless student enrollment data that shows the post-recession impact. The majority of homeless live with someone else but also in hotels/motels, unsheltered or in women's shelters. The

numbers continue to grow. Dr. Thiele said four years ago, District 99 had 50 homeless students; last year was 85. Dr. Russell said in District 58 there were 83 homeless students. The total US homeless student enrollment in School Year 15-16 was 1,304,803.

Dr. Russell said they see children doubled up. Many children are raised by grandparents. In many homeless families, both parents are working. Existing students can become eligible for assistance under the homeless law. The law requires schools to provide services for 18 months after leaving Downers Grove.

Dr. Russell then addressed programs to address mental health crises. The Self-Harm and Suicide (SAS) program includes screening, assessment and support services. Also available is the Family Service Program of the DuPage County Health Department, Downers Grove emergency responders, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) DuPage, and school safety updates.

Dr. Thiele spoke about Anonymous Alerts – an online tip line. He said students are the best set of eyes at the high school level.

Dr. Russell spoke about Trauma Informed Teaching, which includes learning about adverse experiences and putting programs in place to deal with those adverse childhood experiences. Dr. Russell also spoke about other health and wellness programs, including the DuPage County Health Department with respect to disease reporting, Stop the Bleed training sponsored by the American College of Surgeons, Delegated Care Aide for diabetic support, gender spectrum training and the Emergency Seizure Response training.

Dr. Russell said he and Dr. Thiele love what they do. He spoke of the support from the community.

Mr. Connolly asked how many people coordinate these services.

Dr. Thiele said District 99 has 20 counselors, 20 psychologists/social service workers, 1 drug and alcohol abuse counselor, 1 504 coordinator and 35-40 special education specialists and 30-45 aides.

Dr. Russell said they all have to be certified and have a master's degree. District 58 services are coordinated through the Assistant Superintendent for Special Services.

Dr. Thiele said the total number of staff in District 99 is 1000; 1/3 is support.

Dr. Russell said the total number of staff in District 58 is 700. He said the school districts are Villages during the day.

Mr. Connolly asked about year-round programs.

Dr. Thiele said it is a wraparound school year, which includes summer programs.

Ms. Campbell asked as to the number of students receiving lunch services.

Dr. Thiele said 20-25%; Dr. Russell said 10-15%. They discussed school boundaries.

Ms. Marshall asked about staff training.

Dr. Thiele said suicide prevention training is yearly. Training for other services is on a rolling basis or on an as-needed basis.

Dr. Russell said there are a number of on-line training programs. He said training can be offered during teacher institute days or early release days. It may be necessary to send a team for training for a specific student. He noted that one of the toughest jobs of a superintendent is building a principal.

Mr. Gilmartin asked as to the most pressing issues.

Dr. Thiele said homelessness is a pressing issue. He also said an individualized plan for each child puts stress on the system.

Mr. Gilmartin asked as to connections the districts provide to families.

Dr. Thiele said usually that is through the Regional Office of Education.

Dr. Russell spoke about the concept of community schools, whereby all services are through schools. He spoke about language needs and bilingual committees. Schools are slowly offering more to parents.

Ms. Aycock said the purpose of this Committee is to make recommendations to the Village Council. She asked what the superintendents would outsource to the Village.

Dr. Thiele spoke of off-hours crises issues. Staff is staffing the tip lines all hours. He is interested in a way to partner with local police and emergency services.

Dr. Russell said the Village provides services they do not want to see taken away.

Dr. Russell said District 58 is seeing issues trickle down to the middle and elementary schools.

In response to Ms. Aycock, Dr. Russell said the District 58 Foundation sponsored a social media program.

Dr. Thiele talked about Red Ribbon and Mental Health Awareness weeks. He said it is essential to keep the partnership with the Village.

Dr. Russell spoke of the power of all human service organizations working together and coordinating efforts around thematic issues.

Mr. Gilmartin asked about drug issues.

Dr. Russell said vaping is a huge issue, but is on the decline. He said the police support has been great in that students are issued tickets. Prescription drug abuse is also an issue; he is not seeing opioid or heroin drug abuse. He said they are seeing some marijuana use with its legalization. They do not see cigarette smoking/tobacco use.

Dr. Thiele said there has been a sharp decline in vaping. They see marijuana use and prescription drug abuse; opioids are not a high school drug. He said there is not a lot of alcohol use.

Ms. Aycock asked about outreach to the larger community of those people who do not have students in school.

Dr. Thiele said the focus is on parents. They are also on Facebook and Next Door. There is not a lot of other outreach.

Dr. Russell said the annual newsletter is designed for the taxpayer. They value those without kids in the schools, but most of their outreach is to their parents.

Ms. Aycock suggested a liaison with the schools, library and Village.

Ms. Aycock asked about support services for the LGBTQ community.

Dr. Thiele said it is much more supported now in District 99 than in years past. Support is basically one-on-one.

Dr. Russell said the districts reach out to marginalized groups; he is very proud of this.

Ms. Aycock asked what the superintendents do to help staff morale and prevent burnout.

Dr. Russell said staff is asked to do more and it weighs on them. He has made a shift to staff self-care to promote a work-life balance. He stresses mental health services and giving access to those services.

Dr. Thiele he has a focus on unnecessary stressors. He changed evaluations to take stress and risk out of the process. He looks at ways to make things more flexible. He expects to see additional changes in the next couple of years.

Dr. Russell said they are looking to have a good balance with respect to having all activities at night.

Dr. Thiele said there are changing expectations with respect to work-life balance.

Mr. Fieldman addressed the partnership with the schools in traffic and school safety.

Following the presentation by Dr. Thiele and Dr. Russell, Mr. Fieldman introduced Julie Milavec, Director, Downers Grove Public Library.

Julie Milavec, Director, Downers Grove Public Library, introduced Cindy Khatri, Public Relations Manager, and Octavia Neyland, Social Work Intern.

Ms. Milavec said the purpose of the library is to be a place for everyone to discover, grow, play and learn. She addressed access to library resources. The library is open seven days a week, there is no expectation that you have to buy anything, anyone can enter and anyone can get help finding services. The library is hosting social work interns. Their intern, Octavia Neyland, will work on a resource guide for librarians.

Ms. Milavec then referenced the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. She outlined the strategic focus areas: Excel in delivering service and managing resources; engage with our community and the world; empower individuals at all ages and stages of life; and evolve with our changing community. She asked Ms. Khatri to address homelessness.

Cindy Khatri, Public Relations Manager, said she works with the homeless population. The library is one of the last true public spaces. Homeless people are treated as any other member of the public and she looks at the homeless in the same way as any other patron. She said Downers Grove has a high population taking refuge in the library. The staff saw a huge need in terms of homeless people asking where to go when the library closes. Ms. Khatri said she visits PAD shelters to offer information and library services. Homeless people are offered limited use library cards allowing people to check out two items at a time and only for use in Downers Grove. Ms. Khatri said she realized many people did not know about services. In conjunction with PADS, the library offered a “Lunch n Learn” program to encourage use of the library and social service agencies, such as Bridge Communities and Hope’s Front Door. These programs have shaped and changed lives. Another element of the “Lunch n Learn” program is relationship building. PADS can better inform library staff of needs. She further spoke of the West Suburban Community Food Pantry and employment programs. These programs have been growing.

Ms. Milavec said the library sponsored a Month of Homelessness Awareness in October 2019.

Ms. Milavec then addressed additional library services. These include access to technology and training; a jobs listing board; a new website – DGLibrary.org; expanded services to seniors, including senior living facilities and senior health insurance and Medicare programs; outreach to School Districts 58 and 99; expanding specialized services such as book clubs for individuals with disabilities. She said serving youth is a huge part of what they do. The library teaches kids how to learn and offers programs to make learning fun. The library is a place where teens can be. Librarians are trusted adults. Libraries connect people to other organizations. Ms. Milavec said the library features an organization each month and hosts events such as the Service Fair. She said they work to make connections and build a community of inclusiveness.

Ms. Aycock said the library’s services are very impressive; she may reach out in terms of a liaison. She said the community outreach is diverse. The presentation was very thorough.

Ms. Milavec said everyone is welcome at the library. They try to have something for everyone.

Mr. Gilmartin said he had no idea of the breath of programs offered.

Mr. Khatri said she has a team of three people. They are building a new marketing plan to express that the library is not the library of the past. She said Downers Grove loves its library.

Dr. Thiele noted that Downers Grove North students report out on the resources of the Downers Grove library.

Ms. Milavec said the library has a special relationship with School Districts 58 and 99. She said a public library-wide issue is that the brand of libraries is books, but that is not what a library is anymore. It is access.

Ms. Aycock said we need to find a way to help get the word out.

Ms. Khatri noted that it is hard to get people in the same room at the same time.

Mr. Gilmartin asked about overlap of services, such as with homeless people.

Mr. Khatri said we are all partners, but we didn't know it.

Ms. Aycock addressed the need for a coordination of partners.

Dr. Russell said we keep learning more every month. He thanked Ms. Milavec for her work and her energy.

Dr. Thiele said the facilities are lacking for community partnerships. There is not a facility for a huge fair. Local government facilities have been neglected. This has hindered community partnerships.

Mr. Fieldman said the library has been transformed under Ms. Milavec's leadership.

Mr. Fieldman then said that the Committee has had two meeting. We heard from Village staff and tonight from the school districts and the library. Next month representatives of Downers Grove Township and DuPage County will address the Committee.

## **V. Follow-up Items from January Meeting**

Mr. Fieldman said there will be two or three guest speakers for the April meeting. Non-profit organizations suggested to present information are NAMI, Hope for the Day, DuPage Senior Citizens Council, Ray Graham Association, Ride DuPage, and Youth Outlook.

Mr. Fieldman said he sent out information in response to questions about the Narcan program, homeless population and resource guides.

Ms. Aycock thanked everyone for their time.

## **VI. Public Comment**

There was none.

## **VII. Adjourn**

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
April Holden  
Deputy Village Clerk