



## OBSERVER REPORT

**BOARD OF HEALTH - 3-22-23**  
LWVM Observer - Thomas Krueger

Members in Attendance - BOH : Andrew Petty, Todd Belf-Becker (chairperson), Joanne Greer Miller, Helaine Hazlett

### **AGENDA**

#### **1. Marblehead Counseling Center**

Ruth Ferguson, president of the board for MCC, and Ron Grenier, board member, came to thank the BOH for the support with the funds (\$145,000) from ARPA. The MCC works collaboratively multiple town organizations as well as the Health Department. They gave the following update: staffing -in the past 4 week they have hired a manager, senior therapist and clinical supervisor; the information systems - they have a board member with strong technical background who is advising; further improvements on telehealth in order to work more smoothly; capital improvements - they are in consultation with the Town about exterior work and ARPA funds are being used for structural improvements and a new boiler.

Asked about telehealth currently, they responded that a hybrid model is continuing. Some clients and some clinicians find that telehealth is much more efficient. A side benefit occurred when the center had to be closed for weather reasons, allowing some visits to continue via telehealth. There is a question whether or not insurers will still pay for telehealth visits now that the COVID emergency regulations are over.

Ruth gave some statistics about the visits at the MCC over the past year. There were 6000 hrs of therapy for 500 clients, of which 80% are MHD residents. The age breakdown was as follows: 8% age 9-13; 21%, 14-21; 24%, 22-40; 36%, 41-70, and 11% >70. Some clinicians are not comfortable treating children and scheduling can be difficult at certain hours. Currently there are 247 people on a wait list with 100 of these MHD residents. NOTE MHD residents get priority. The clinicians both full and part time work certain hours which may not always match those of clients.

Ruth reviewed the intake process which immediately determines those in need of a) hospital services, b) serious - urgent, and c) less immediate. The MCC receives about 5 calls a day for new services, about 100 per month. They have received calls from "far away" in state as well as some from out of state.

In more general comments Mr. Petty noted that we are in a new era and the stigma is now being broken. The HD and BOH understand the need and hopefully more funds to fix it can be found. Numerous other organizations in MDH (MHTF, police department, schools, etc.) are trying to fill gaps and help. The MCC often coordinates with other organizations, e.g. MHD Female Humane Society, Making Ends Meet, etc. to help with more social service needs. Organizations such as the Gerry 5 ran a fund raiser, and the Select Board with sponsor a golf tournament with proceed to go to the MCC this May.

Mr. Petty talked about the FY2024 budget in which departments were asked to reduce spending by 4%. He stated that there will be NO reduction in staff, salaries or benefits which leaves only a few line items that can be reduced. This would mean that the MCC would receive from the HD a reduction from the usual \$60K by \$10,400. Upon hearing this the Board moved and passed the decision that this would be made up from the remaining ARPA funds.

## **2. Tobacco Control Discussion**

Mr. Petty presented to the Board a draft of a local regulation that would ban the sale of Delta 9 and Kratom in MHD. There is a state regulation via the Department of Agriculture already but this is not enforced. By passing a local regulation this would allow inspection and enforcement by the tobacco control officer as well as HD and police. Mr. Petty asked the board members to read over the draft, ask questions, etc. The tobacco control officer could bring in some of the products so that board member could view them. If the regulation is passed by the board, then the next steps include review by the town counsel and how it would fit with other regulations.

## **3. Mental Health Task Force Update**

Ms. Miller gave an update from the MHTF. There will be a Healthy Kid Day at the YMCA on 4/25/23 at which the MHTF will be present along with Child and Family Services, other groups, private clinicians, etc. There may be an opportunity for quick assessments and some other activities, such as, mindfulness practice, bar, etc.

Will Dowd from the Marblehead Current has offered the MHTF a monthly article for mental health awareness.

Ms. Miller updated the board about the ARPA funds request. This included a number of items - website improvements and maintenance, a tent for marketing, a brochure, etc. The total request was \$2650-3000.

## **4. Transfer Station Facility Update**

Mr. Petty gave an update about the progress of the TS facility renovation. There are number of steps that still need to be done; a major one is MA DEP permitting, a process that can take up to 4 months. Hopefully this can just be a notification which would speed up the process. Mr. Petty gave a proposed month by month timeline beginning in May and ending with bids by September.

Aspects of the project include: 1) the need for a new compactor (a Cram A Lot CO-12) that is equal to the current one. This would have to be built and needs a 30 week lead time. The cost would be \$257K. This request was moved and passed by the Board. 2) powered motorized gate with keypad along the main residential entrance. 3) a new front gate, etc. Mr. Petty is trying to separate some of the smaller projects from the larger contract, so that they can be bid on separately with some cost savings. There are number of elements where timing is crucial, e.g. work on the scale and compactor, where if one is down the other cannot be used.

## **5. Director's Report**

### **A) BUDGET**

For the health department the BOH has already approved a level funded budget for FY2024. The HD (as all others are) are being asked to prepare a reduced budget by 4%. Mr. Petty stated up front that there would be NO salary or benefit decreases nor reduction in staff. This leaves only a few line items to reduce: \$2300 in legal, \$10,400 to the MCC. The reduced FY2024 HD budget would be \$303,879.

For waste management, he stated again that there would be NO reduction in salary, benefits or personnel. This likewise left only a few line items that reduced: maintenance \$10K, hauling \$4,500, landfill maintenance \$500. The reduced budget would then be \$2,625,804.

The budget will be presented to Fin Com on 4/3/23. Mr. Petty and Ms. Miller will be presenting the budget.

B) COVID - there is still Covid in the community but the numbers, deaths, and percent positive tests are all down. At this point the best measure of COVID is via the wastewater.

C) Leave collection will occur the weeks of 4/24, 5/15, and 6/5. JRM tries to collect on the same day as trash, but this not always be possible. It will be collected by the end of the week.

D) Household Hazardous Waste - the firm, ACD, that did curbside pickup was bought by another company and is no longer doing this. There are no other vendors offering that service. Future HHW will be done on a Saturday at the transfer station. Only two firms offer this service.

E) Textile ban - with the textile disposal bans in the waste, more is being recycled. CMRK has new larger bins at the transfer station which can take an expanded number of items. They offer home pick up if there is a large amount.

F) Accreditation - the HD cannot be accredited because the department staffing is too small. For a town of the size of MHD there would need to be 17.9 full time employees.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - the chair said that "reasonable" time for comment would be 4 minutes, and there would be no "back and forth" with the board.

Next meeting is schedule for 4/11/23