



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

WORKING SESSION

September 15, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rabhi at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room, Administration Building, 220 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Comms. Judge, Rabhi, Conan Smith, Dan Smith,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Comms. Bergman, Gunn, Peterson, Ping, Prater, Sizemore, Turner

OTHERS PRESENT: Verna McDaniel, County Administrator; Kelly Belknap, Interim Deputy County Administrator; Brian Mackie, Prosecuting Attorney; Tina Gavalier, Finance; Ken Schrader, ITS; Cheryl Perry, County Administration; Jason Brooks, Clerk's Office; various citizens; and members of the press.

Roll Call

Citizen Participation

Lei Dee stated that she is concerned about coordinated funding. She expressed worry about the fact that United Way cost money. Dee went on to remind that board that as a government body they have a responsibility to take care of the people.

Commissioner Follow-Up to Citizen Participation

None

Discussion Items:

Health Care Reform – The County Response – Washtenaw Health Plan, Executive Director, Ellen Rabinowitz
Ellen Rabinowitz, Marianne Udow-Phillips, Bob Guenzel, Norman Herbert and Robert Laverty gave the presentation (on file in County Clerk's office).

Comm. Dan Smith summarized the presentation saying, it sounds like you're trying to connect people who need services to those who provide services. Marianne Udow affirmed that that is the goal of the Washtenaw Health Initiative and then she added that the Initiative also works to expand capacity in some instances and to use capacity in other instances. Udow went on to say that one of the key goals of the Initiative is to get people to treat the underprivileged, many physicians don't treat patients who rely on Medicaid because Medicaid pays so poorly. Udow reported that the excitement around this project has spurred the V.A. into getting involved. She finished by saying that an increasing number of people involved with the project meant more opportunities. Bob Guenzel added that safety net providers are able to put patients directly in touch with the people they need to see while other health service providers may only be able to provide a reference.

Comm. Dan Smith thanked Marianne and Bob for their input then asked "Why hasn't this been done before?" and "How did you get it done?". Bob Guenzel responded saying that the first step to forming the Initiative was to get Cyndi (Maritato) and Ellen (Rabinowitz) in the same room together talking about these issues. Marianne added to Bob's contribution by saying that she thought that many organizations operate within their own silos. As an example, the Department of Human Services operates within a very tight structure. She added that she knew that both she and Cyndi felt that there was an opportunity for something to happen in Washtenaw County because everyone had the same goals and excitement. Udow said that the next step was for them was to identify the need and start determining which groups could satisfy that need. Cyndi Maritato stated that the problem they run into in the Department of Human Services is that staffing is directly related to case-loads so the idea of taking people away from cases is not a welcome idea in the Department of Human Services. She said that it occurred to her that if the DHS worked more

closely with community organizations then we could help keep people from losing benefits or receiving benefits that don't match their need then we could help them better. Maritato reported that the Initiative already has people reviewing cases. Ellen Rabinowitz stated that she and Cyndi Maritato have worked together for years and as the health plan emerged as a central place for people to get their health issues figured out it occurred to us that we could improve that process.

Comm. Dan Smith stated that in the presentation it had been stated that the financials had not been figured out for this Initiative. Bob Guenzel responded to Comm. Smith's query by saying that one of the reasons for the Initiative's success was an incredible amount of volunteer time. Bob added that the Initiative was going to need to ask organizations that were a part of the Initiative for a charter or a commitment. He continued by saying that the Initiative will need a small budget over the next year. Bob stated that he was unsure what the Initiative was going to develop into in the next year and that there was going to need to be more communication regarding how the funds to support the Initiative will be attained.

Norman Herbert responded to Comm. Dan Smith's question, "Why hasn't this been done before?". Herbert stated that it had been an interesting experience because everyone came to the table with the best spirit in mind and they said how can we do this. He added that the goal of the brain storming sessions was to do a better job for the uninsured and low income in this county. Herbert stated that what they had found was that they have the opportunity to not only do a better job for the disenfranchised, but for everybody in the county and that that is the reason that the program is worth sustaining.

Comm. Judge thanked the presenters for sharing how government and private sector people can work together to get things done. She went on to say that it was a really exciting project and she encouraged the presenters to share their work with the Michigan Association of Counties. Judge stated a belief that there are other counties in Michigan who could benefit from having a program like this. She asked if there was anything in the Health Care Reform Act that would require physicians to have to maintain a certain percentage of their clientele as Medicaid and Medicare. Marianne responded that there was nothing in that act that would require physicians to take on those types of patients, there are incentives but no requirements.

Comm. Conan Smith thanked the presenters for coming out to speak to the board. He went on to ask, what the investment level was, could the presenters quantify it, how much would the presenters project need to continue the program in the future? Marianne stated that there had been 4 committees who met every two weeks. The Center for Healthcare Research and Transformation provided staff to facilitate those efforts. She estimated that each committee had between 10 and 12 people volunteering their time. Every organization involved in the Initiative provided the same sort of support that The Center for Healthcare Research and Transformation provided. Marianne then thanked re:group for building the Initiative's website pro-bono. Bob estimated that the Initiative received around \$100,000 in services that they would normally have to pay for. He also believed that the Initiative would need to hire someone in a coordinator type role. Comm. Conan Smith inquired about whether or not the organizations that the Initiative worked with understood the value of the service that was being provided to them, he also wanted to know if the organization had made any attempt to quantify the value of the services that they provide. Bob Guenzel agreed with the Comm. That it would be important to determine the value of the services that were provided. He added that the hospitals have provided support because of the potential cost-savings. Norman Herbert indicated that it would be important to attain community support for this initiative in order to imbue it with credibility. Comm. Conan Smith noted that 70% of the residents of Washtenaw County have some form of health insurance. He asked who was responsible for that coverage. Marianne responded that Blue Cross Blue Shield and Medicare were the two largest healthcare providers in this county. She went on to say that Blue Cross Blue Shield is happy with the effort that has been made, but that the population the organization has been focusing their efforts on is served by Medicare and Medicaid. Comm. Conan Smith stated that in his experience with non-profits it is easiest to raise funds for groups that provide services. He encouraged the presenters to start building endowment funds that will enable this work to continue forever. Smith went on to say that he would be happy to participate in that effort.

Comm. Rabhi raised the question; what would this organization do if health care reform does not pass? Bob Guenzel responded by saying that what this organization does will be relevant whether or not that act passes.

County Administrator's Report

None

Items for Current/Future Discussion

None

Pending

None

Citizen Participation

None

Commissioners Follow-up to Citizen Participation

None

Adjournment

Comm. Judge seconded by Comm. Conan Smith moved that the meeting be adjourned until September 22th, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Yousef Rabhi, Chair

Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register
By: Peter Simms, Deputy Clerk

APPROVED: September 22, 2011