**Columbia County Community Healthcare Consortium, Inc.**

**Executive Committee**

**Notes from the meeting of March 3, 2021**

*Note: This meeting was held virtually on the Zoom web platform.*

**Attendance**

Committee Members: Robin Andrews, Art Proper, Chelly Hegan, Linda Tripp

Staff Members:Claire Parde, Lisa Thomas, Ashling Kelly

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m.

**Update on Roya Consulting Contract**

Claire reported that the agency has contracted with Roya Consulting for six months, beginning March 1st. The terms are $1500 per month ($9000 for six months) with an additional $600 for expenses, with no more than $100 per month. The first meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 12th; Anne Leiber from Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood will also participate; Claire expressed her appreciation for Anne’s assistance and Chelly’s support and encouragement.

**Report on Board Member Recruitment and Retention**

Claire and Linda Tripp have met with several potential new Board members and anticipate nominating four people to the Board at April’s Annual Meeting. Dorothy Urschel of Columbia Memorial Health and Raina Cashdollar from Columbia Opportunities are in the process of submitting their paperwork. Dan Almasi is the newly appointed Director of Community Services and Tina Yun Lee is the new Executive Director at Twin County Recovery Services; additional discussions are scheduled with each of them.

Linda Trip sent letters to all members whose terms are expiring; no members were asked not to return. One member received a note regarding meeting attendance; the individual expressed a willingness to continue to serve and was asked to give notice if unable to attend a meeting.

There was a brief discussion about the number of Board members. Claire pointed out that there are upcoming retirements in the next 12-18 months, and noted the importance of balancing newer and longer-tenured members to maintain continuity.

It was reported that the Corporate Compliance Committee currently has only two members; the group agreed to wait until the new members join the Board in April to revisit committee assignments.

**Update on State and Federal Advocacy**

Claire updated the group on her recent state and federal advocacy work. At the top of the state platform is restoration of funding to the Rural Health Network Development and Rural Access Hospital Programs; funding for healthcare workforce programs including AHECS (Area Health Education Centers); creation of the Rural EMS Task Force; rural broadband expansion; maintaining post-pandemic reimbursements for audio-only telehealth; and, empaneling the Rural Health Council (about three years ago, legislation was passed that caused the existing Rural Health Council to disband in order to be empaneled anew; aat the time, Claire had been asked by the Governor’s office to serve on the Council, but there had been effectively no motion since then)Claire has met or spoken with numerous State officials, including Senators Michelle Hinchey and Persaud, and Assembly Members Didi Barrett, Aileen Gunther, Richard Gottfried, Phil Steck, and Speaker Carl Heastie.

On the Federal level, advocacy has focused on support for the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, which is part of Health and Human Services; formation of the Office of Rural Health at the CDC; funding for and implementation of the National Healthcare Workforce Commission; 340B, Medicare sequestration relief; the Paycheck Protection Program for Rural Hospitals Act; and, the Rural Hospital Closure Relief Act. Claire met with the offices of both Senator Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand.

There were good connections made during the advocacy period. Among them, CMH CEO Jay Cahalan introduced Claire to Gary Fitzgerald of Iroquois Healthcare, who Claire then introduced to colleagues at NYSARH. As a result, Iroquois offered support on some of NYSARH’s key advocacy items, including empanelment of the Rural Health Council.

**Executive Director’s Report**

***Program Updates***

RHN

On March 1, The Department of Health requested that we submit the RHN budget for the contract that started on January 1. While there is no word yet on the withheld monies, Claire stated that she expects to be reimbursed the 20%.

Tobacco Free Action

Tobacco Free Action’ s vouchers are now being paid. We are now able to submit a work plan and budget for the current period, which began on July 1, 2020.

Navigator

Rachel Cole is now .6 on Navigator and .4 on NYConnects. The agency just hired a new Navigator. He is motivated, has a good attitude, and speaks Bangla, Hindi, and Urdu. Past experience has demonstrated that when the agency has a Bengali-fluent Navigator, there is a significant increase in the number of people from that community seeking the Consortium’s assistance.

Emergency Response Work

Claire shared the agency’s efforts in assisting individuals with vaccine registration. In January she received permission from the State DOH to utilize Navigators to help people in registering for the COVID-19 vaccine. Claire offered assistance to Columbia and Greene Counties. Greene County was better able to utilize the Consortium at that time; Claire coordinated with Greene County Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dan King to develop a protocol for assisting people who live or work in Greene County with registering. The first call was received on February 16th and the program has been going strong since then, with multiple staff, beyond the Navigator Team, registering people not only on the Greene County Vaccination Notification list, but with pharmacies and the New York mass vaccination sites as well.

Claire noted that she continues to participate in the Capital Region Vaccine Network’s Health Equity Task Force, and advocates for approaches that consider rural populations and their differential access to the vaccine. This has been challenging; most of the conversations about health equity are focused on race and ethnicity and overlook factors such as rurality.

Insurance Renewal

Claire advised the group of the difficulties the agency faced when renewing its business lines of insurance this year. Our traditional carrier, Philadelphia Insurance Company, sought to reduce the abuse and molestation coverage to nominal levels unless the agency implemented a number of provisions, including background checks on all new and existing staff; abuse training for all staff; and, creation of a new abuse and molestation policy. The new policy will be brought to the entire Board at the April meeting.

Policy Update

The state has offered no further guidance on New York Paid Sick Leave. We are now consulting with an attorney at New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON), utilizing support provided by the Foundation for Community Health. The goal continues to be bringing policies for approval by the entire Board at the April meeting.

Paycheck Protection Program

Claire and John Ray consulted with the auditor from the Bonadio group regarding the Paycheck Protection Program, who sent an engagement letter with an estimate of $2000-$3000. The auditor observed that the Consortium is farther ahead and more knowledgeable regarding the PPP forgiveness application, and doesn’t expect there will be a great deal of work needed. John and Claire believe the PPP’s money was well spent, and are confident in the forgiveness process.

After brief discussion, the committee gave Claire the discretion to execute the contract if she feels it appropriate to do so.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 a.m.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Executive Committee meeting will be on **May 5, 2021.**