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

**Executive Committee**

**Notes from the meeting of May 6, 2020**

*Note: Due to Covid-19 requirements, this meeting was held virtually on the Zoom web platform. All voting was done via computer audio.*

**Attending Committee Members:** Robin Andrews,Jack Mabb, Art Proper, Beth Schuster, Linda Tripp

**Staff Members:** Claire Parde, Lisa Thomas, John Ray, Ashling Kelly

**CALL TO ORDER**

*The meeting was called to order at 9:06 a.m.*

**Fiscal Report**

Given the economic dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential impacts on the fiscal health of the Consortium, Claire thought it important to provide more expansive fiscal reports than the Executive Committee typically receives. Toward that end, John Ray attended the meeting and provided the Committee with the Grants Receivable Aging Summary, the Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet), Statement of Activities (Income Statement) for the agency and transportation program, respectively, the Statement of Revenues, Supports and Expenses, and his “Fiscal Highlights” report, all current to April 30, 2020.

There are currently $330K in receivables, compared to $265K at this last year.There are currently two outstanding vouchers to the NYSDOH from February about which John has inquired but not received any information. Claire suggested that payments might slow down due to the state’s cash crisis; a member reminded the group that there is traditionally is a pause of payments in April and it may show up in the system this week. John reported that cash on hand is $175K; at this time last year there was $268K.

As of March 31st, the investment account was down by $22K. Claire mentioned that TJ Pelliterri, the Consortium’s investment manager, will be speaking to the Budget & Finance committee on May 26th. In the meantime, it appears that despite the volatility of the market there has already been some recovery and the downward trajectory isn’t expected to last.

John reported on the statement of activities. Due to the shutdown of the office, there has been a slowdown of expenditures other than payroll. While salary expenses are up due to the Healing Community Study (offset by revenue from a contract with the CCDOH), the rest of salary expenses are down due to layoffs of two regular staff and drivers and other temporary casual employees not working. Because of changes made in response to the pandemic, there are fewer rides and riders; Medicaid revenue is down by $14K, and the cost of service delivery has increased. Claire was able to procure a $15K grant from Berkshire Taconic Foundation to bolster the Transportation program and to support new aspects of the program, which have included working with DOH to transport individuals to quarantine houses and some small food deliveries for the Salvation Army. Claire has also reduced expenses in the Transportation Program where possible, primarily staff.

There are several factors that raise concern about the agency’s fiscal health: a loss of earned income from Medicaid due to decreased Transportation program service delivery during the COVID-19 crisis; state contracts experiencing significant budget cuts already and potentially facing additional cuts in the Governor’s upcoming spending proposal; and, resulting impacts on county budgets which could impact subcontracts with the Consortium. The Consortium has approximately 4 – 5 months’ cash on hand, which would include cashing in the investment account; it also has a $100,000 line of credit from the Bank of Greene County.

**Paycheck Protection Program**

Claire introduced discussion about applying for the Paycheck Protection Program. She had been reluctant to apply in the first round of the program because the agency’s cash position was strong and she had been uncomfortable competing for a limited resource with organizations and businesses already in a cash crisis. However, during the current round of the program, being aware of and concerned about possible issues with the rate of payment from the state, Claire believes it is an action to carefully consider. She and John have prepared the paperwork in order to move forward should the committee decide to do so. The maximum amount that can be borrowed is $197,400; Claire recommended a conservative approach, applying for $135,412, which can be comfortably expensed in eight weeks for payroll and utilities. She advised the group that there would be potential issues with forgiveness since the agency reduced staff from 36 to 24, and will likely not be able to bring them back by the program’s June 30th deadline. Given these doubts about forgiveness, she recommended conceiving of it as a low interest loan rather than grant. Claire noted that the 1% interest rate would be less expensive than drawing on the existing line of credit.

The committee discussed the more conservative approach versus applying for the maximum amount, citing the importance of building the strongest wall possible against the extensive cuts expected on the state level, as well as the forecast of a potential resurgence of the pandemic later in the year.

Jack Mabb made a motion to proceed with the Paycheck Protection Program application up to $200,000. Chelly Hegan seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

**Personnel Policy Revisions**

The proposed personnel policy revisions were emailed to the committee members prior to the meeting to allow time for review. Claire was asked about the changes to Policy 1013: Employment Termination, specifically the addition of ‘furlough.’ Claire explained that, when employees are furloughed, the employer continues to contribute to health benefits. It is important to be careful about the language; our staff was, in fact, laid off, not furloughed.

Claire noted that in this same policy, the current version stated, “Employees will be provided with as much advance notice as possible, but not less than two weeks.” In the recent COVID-19 layoffs, we were able to provide that notice, but the policy as written limits our control over expense management. The revision removes “but not less than two weeks.”

A motion to recommend the Personnel Policy changes to the Board for approval was made by Linda Tripp, seconded by Jack Mabb and unanimously approved.

**Executive Director’s Report**

Claire’s written report was sent to the committee prior to the meeting (and is also attached) so Cliare used this time to discuss the agency’s return-to-work plan, currently in progress. Claire and staff have watched numerous webinars on the subject and have created a three-page outline, which will now be fleshed out. Returning to work will be a process, not a single event, and will need to be implemented very gradually over time. It will be absolutely necessary to accommodate employees and their preferences regarding working in the building, and physical space issues will need to be addressed and factored in. There will be staff who don’t want to return to work within the office. The liability concerns are enormous; as an employer the agency is taking a defensive position to mitigate our risks. The plan is being created with a great deal of energy and care. Claire offered to share the plan outline, as an added value to Network members.

**The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m. The next Executive Committee meeting is Wed., July 1st at 9:00 a.m**

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**Executive Director’s Report to the Executive Committee**

**May 6, 2020**

**Current Program Updates**

All programs/services continue to operate.  The two most critical at this time are Navigator and CARTS.

**RE: Navigator**

* In a way, the state took some of the wind out of our sails in Navigator because they extended so many deadlines for enrollees that it actually diminished the work there was for them to do (good for consumers, not so good for agencies trying to keep their Navigators busy)
* And so…we have the Navigators contacting all of their clients to see if they’ve had any life status changes (i.e. income) and if we can help in any other way (i.e. food); this is 100’s of clients a piece, so it is filling their time
* We are seeing some new clients who have lost their jobs and health insurance
* We are assisting some clients who typically get assistance thru DSS, but are having trouble reaching someone
* We have volunteered to help on a statewide basis, but we haven’t seen new business from this

**RE: CARTS**

* Service delivery is significantly reduced.  Between 3/16 and 5/1, completed rides were 62% less and unique riders were 55% less than in the same period last year; in short, we are transporting significantly fewer people and completing significantly fewer rides. This is particularly striking in Medicaid service delivery, for which the reduction in rides and riders is 85% and 74%, respectively.
* Of those that we continue to transport, most are dialysis patients (we started at 15, gained three, and lost one, so right now, it’s 17) and a handful of additional riders who are seeking essential services.  The protocols have been adjusted to ensure that we transport only one client per vehicle, equip drivers and clients with PPE, and thoroughly disinfect the vehicles between every transport.
* One of our main sources of revenue to the program (aside for grant dollars) is Medicaid revenue, and that, predictably, has tanked. For the period starting 3/16 and ending 5/1, our year-over-year loss of Medicaid revenue (that is, the sum of our variances for the same time frame last year) is $18,679. We had some good weeks in the first quarter that help offset that a bit, but we’re still about $16K behind our earned income from Medicaid at this time last year.
* On the expense side, our vehicle fuel costs, drivers wages, and program management staff wages are somewhat reduced, which helps to offset the revenue loss.
* To a small but important degree, we have been utilizing the transportation program for other purposes, including delivering food from the Salvation Army Service Center to homebound clients, and transporting individuals being managed by the Columbia County Department of Health to and from testing sites and the quarantine house.  Jim Funk has been notably flexible and accommodating, often personally making these transports.

**RE: Rural Health Network Program**

The State Budget passed on April 3rd pooled two rural health programs together, the Rural Health Network (RHN) program and the Rural Health (Hospital) Access (RHA) program. Total allocation is $9,410,000, which represents a 31% cut from the combined allocations for these two programs from the 2019-20 budget. Meanwhile, there was a second allocation of $1,100,000 through a Senate Appropriation which will also be split between RHN and RHA programs. We are awaiting guidance from the Office of Rural Health about how we must modify our current program year budget (that is, Jan-Dec 2020) to reflect this cut.

**RE: ICAN**

We have been advised that the Community Service Society will renew its contract with the Healthy Capital District Initiative (HCDI) for the Independent Consumer Advisory Network (ICAN), and HCDI will, in turn, renew its subcontract with us in the amount of $25,714 per year.

**Other Updates**

**RE: PPE**

We have been fortunate to receive 80 homemade masks from Ancram’s Neighbors Helping Neighbors, 200 procedural masks from Hudson Rotary, and 250 procedural masks, plus gloves, gowns and hand sanitizer from Columbia County EOC. All drivers are wearing reusable cloth masks and all transportation clients are provided with disposable procedural masks. Also, we’ve set aside 40 cloth reusable masks to provide staff when we return to work

**RE: Return to Work planning**

We are currently working on a written Return to Work Plan.  You cannot imagine how complicated this will be; Lisa Thomas and Ashling Kelly have participated in and digested countless webinars, from a variety of sources, to inform our planning and have developed a comprehensive outline that is now being fleshed out. We will, of course, share our work with any network members who may benefit from it.

**RE: County relations**

We have been having good exchanges with folks at the county level.  Besides Jim Funk’s coordination with Bubba Harrison around procuring PPE (no doubt helped along by their long working relationship), I have been in touch with Rob Lagonia about face coverings. There’s a chance we may partner with the county to purchase and distribute face coverings for individuals and businesses. We’ll see what really shakes out, in the end, but according to Jack, Rob Lagonia sees the Consortium as "a great asset to call on during these tough times to fill in the gaps where [the county] can't."  (Meanwhile, it was Jack who suggested I call Rob in the first place—he’s very good about connecting the dots between the county and the Consortium). Making this connection gets a new supervisor up and aware of what the Consortium is and does.  Also, Jesse DeGroodt, who is writing the Chairman’s daily update, put us very prominently in a recent update.

Similarly, we had an opportunity to position ourselves as the County’s resource for General Inquiries and Resource Navigation on a recent list of support services that was compiled and circulated by Melissa Scheriff in Michael Cole’s office. This helps us to keep our staff engaged in meaningful pursuits that are both *responsive* and *relevant*, my two new favorite words.

**RE: Funding cuts**

As I am sure you know, when the State Budget passed in early April, it provided the Governor the authority to periodically revisit revenues and expenses, and adjust the budget accordingly. The first period he will consider ended April 30th and we expect the Governor to propose his changes on May 15th. The Legislature will have 10 days to reply. In the interim, we expect to be heavily engaged in advocacy.

Currently, the projection is for a 15% budget shortfall, 10% of which the Governor has pledged to recover in a cuts to state operations, and the balance of which will be borne by localities. Therefore, we anticipate cuts on the order of 20 to 30% at the county level, which may have implications for some of our state contracts, such as RHN, which rely on aid to localities, and to discretionary county contracts. This dynamic has the potential to be extremely challenging for the Consortium and a number of our network members.

One variable is whether CARES 4, which is expected in the week of May 12th at earliest, will provide for federal financial support to states. If federal funding is pledged in sufficient quantities to offset the cuts to localities, it may mitigate some of the pain. Delgado indicated that it is not a question of “if” but “how much” federal funding will be committed to states. He also indicated that there is attention to some portion of this going directly under county, rather than state, control.

**RE: Funding opportunities**

There are some modest funding opportunities from the foundations serving this area (Dyson, Berkshire Taconic and the Foundation for Community Health) that are currently available. Although they are designed to support new programs and services as part of COVID-19 response, rather than to fill revenue holes, there is an opportunity to “recast” some of our work as responding to the needs of the moment. For instance, last week, I applied for $15,000 from the Berkshire Taconic Foundation’s Columbia County COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund, on behalf of CARTS, arguing that the changes we have made to service delivery in response to the pandemic cause us to incur greater expense. The application was promptly approved. These funds will be helpful in offsetting losses to the program.

**RE: Personnel**

* As has been previously reported, we laid off two regular employees and reduced to zero the hours for numerous temporary casual employees. Consequently, for the payroll period ending March 14th, 36 employees received a paycheck, totaling $44,262, whereas in the payroll period ending April 25th, 24 employees received a paycheck totaling $31,149, a difference of $13,113.
* We have had our first experience with an employee attempting to claim two weeks of paid leave, under FFCRA, for the reason of having COVID-like symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis. Jack Mabb assisted us in facilitating this employee’s access to a test. We are awaiting the result of that test and whether this employee will pursue his claim.

**Board and Community Relations**

* Most, but not all, of the “regular and usual” business that used to consume my work days in the office has gradually resumed online
* I am part of several efforts to “reimagine” conferences, such as the annual NYSARH conf. in September
* I continue to participate in Congressman Antonio Delgado’s Healthcare Advisory Committee, which now meets every other week