

**Porter County American Rescue Plan
Sub Committee Behavioral Health and Social Services Subcommittee
Thursday, May 5, 2022, 5 p.m.
Commissioners' Meeting Room Chambers
Porter County Administration Center 155 Indiana Ave., Valparaiso IN 46383**

Voting Members Present:

Jim Biggs
Greg Simms
Robyn Lane
Mike Brickner
Mitch Peters

Citizen Members Present:

Jesse Harper
Brendan Clancy
George Topoll
Edward Morales

Presentations:

Each presenter will be given 15 minutes for their presentation and 15 minutes for Q & A

Porter Starke Services -

Matt Burden presented. He was joined by Mary Idstein and several staff. They have four requests. Their total request is approximately \$1.8 Million Dollars. Recovery Center Valparaiso. It is a certified opioid treatment center. They want to move this center into a building they just bought two doors down the street. Outpatient clinic remodel. This is at 601 Wall. They are moving a department out to create 12 more counseling offices. Integrated care. They bought a practice from a doctor in Hebron. They work with primary care providers and do some primary care themselves. A 24/7 crisis center will be new.

The current staff is 320. They are a 501 c 3 with a \$35 Million Dollar annual budget. Their requests are to address the most pressing issues that have been identified. In their business it is rare to find someone who will fund a brick-and-mortar project. Anything they can pay for with these funds is more they can invest in staff and programs. Last year they had 624 individuals that received medication assisted treatment. There were over 8,000 people that received services from them on the mental health side. That was a 12% increase over the prior year. These projects would allow for a third dosing window and twice as many counseling offices. It would free up an area where they would install a crisis center. They are on track to meet the ARPA deadlines and the cost of this project is \$848,000.

The outpatient center is at 601 Wall Street. They are moving some people out and building offices. They expect this to be completed by Spring of 2023 at a cost of \$120,000.

The building in Hebron has primary care. They are looking at doubling the square footage of the building. They have \$540,205 from ARPA for a \$1.1 Million Dollar project cost. \$595,000 is the remaining cost and they expect this to be done by Spring of 2023.

A new program will be the 24/7 crisis center. An example of this use would be if the Police have someone that needs help. Instead of arresting them, they could take them here. They have applied for grants for this project. Indiana is working on implementing a reimbursement model which would sustain this type of program. They would like to have this done by Spring of 2023 and the estimated cost is \$312,500.

Q – Would people with withdrawal etc. go to the hospital first or come directly to the crisis center?

A – They will work with the hospital. A lot of cases do not need the medical clearance.

Q – How far along are you with any of the four projects.

A – We have not done construction. They are just getting ready to submit bids.

Q – Can you meet the 2024 and 2026 deadlines?

A – Yes

Q – If offered less would you accept it?

A – Yes.

Q – Is the crisis center dependent on the other department moving?

A – Yes.

Q – Is this part of the crisis intervention team?

A – It is related. It is a route to educate law enforcement.

Q – This is going to include all the police departments throughout the County.

A – Yes.

Q – The biggest issue in mental health seems to be the issue of staffing. Will they be able to staff these expansions?

A – They hope so, but it will take time.

C - The Commissioners and Council had a study done on mental health issues in Porter County.

Q – Is the crisis center something citizens can utilize if an issue happens at home?

A – Yes. It is for anybody.

Q – You mentioned this will eliminate 150 people from the jail and 250 people from the emergency room. Over what time period is that?

A – That is over a year. They hope to get grant funds for staffing.

Q – What type of matching funds have you put towards these projects?

A – They bought the building and are currently renting it back to Kids Alive program. They have gotten a HERSA grant for the Hebron expansion.

Q – The State program. Is that something you are counting on to sustain the additional operational costs?

A – In part. Porter Starke is one of 18 pilots in this program. The Federal Government is really pushing for this program. They feel there will continue to be grants.

Q – Have you received any covid or pandemic funds?

A – Yes. The funds they received towards Hebron. They successfully received funds and all of that money is past history and qualified.

Q – If there was another pandemic how do these projects help the organization service the public?

A – If there were to be another pandemic there would be an end to it and people would come back for services. They can do a lot more in telehealth than they used to. Porter Starke has never closed its doors. Staff that wasn't comfortable coming in to work, did telehealth.

Q – These programs are results of the pandemic? Everyone of them would continue to work through another pandemic?

A – Absolutely.

Family Focus

CC Payne presented. She was joined by Spencer Leznik. They began in 1989 as a non-medical home based family crisis medical program. They provide services for crisis intervention, prevention services and parental education. They employ 70 people. They are partners with The Kids Program in Newton County. They have an MOU with the LaPorte County Courts. Their strategic plan is to grow their partnerships. This year they have partnered with The Caring Place. Healthy Family program is the only evidence-based home base preventive program in a five county area. They are accredited. Family Focus Service started last year. This is a counseling center. They are addressing an unmet need for counseling services. They are headquartered in Valparaiso. Valparaiso has a designated tracking area. The bulk of their revenue comes through contracts with the State Department of Child Services. Their main source of revenue is with contact hours with their clients. This is face to face interaction. This has been negatively impacted by covid. The contact hours were severely limited.

Elevated levels of stress, anxiety, fear, and isolation have been related to the pandemic. Parental burn out is high. This can affect the health of children. There are barriers to mental health care such as costs and coverage limits. The greatest barrier is access.

Family Focus can help fill gaps by partnering with Porter County Agencies. They can provide extra therapists, education, or peer support groups through their counseling center. They would reach out to the seven school districts. They would seek to strengthen partnerships with the Court system. They would like to increase their classes for parents. This builds on their existing services and would only support and supplement existing services. Needs would be prioritized, and long waiting times eliminated. Their funding request is \$333,950 to support education groups and therapists. This is a two-year timeline. Recruitment and hiring would occur in the fall. Training would occur in the fall of 2022. Direct counseling services with clients would occur between the fall of 2022 through the winter of 2024. Groups and parenting education would occur over that same timeline. After the grant funds end the programs will continue through partnerships with agencies in Porter County. Over the past three years they have provided the parenting course to 1,200 parents. They can meet all ARPA deadlines.

Q – You serve 12 counties?

A – Yes.

Q – Have any of those counties awarded you any ARPA funds?

A – No.

Q – These funds will be invested into programs?

A – Correct

Q – The programs are servicing the 12 counties?

A – They could designate the programs for just Porter County residents and continue other classes to the other counties.

Q – Have you received any pandemic funds from anywhere?

A – They applied for and received PPP Loans. They did not lay off anyone during the pandemic.

Q – Do you do traditional talk therapy? Is there someone on staff that can prescribe?

A- They do not have anyone on staff to prescribe. There are a lot of different evidence based models they are trained in.

Q – Do you have any type of matching funds? Or are you totally relying on these funds for these programs.

A – The programs are already developed. They have the space and facilities. At this point they are trying to grow the counseling center to be a part of their growth strategy.

Q – Are these self-sustaining programs?

A – Yes

Q – If you were awarded these funds and then go out and make the programs larger that you have in place, when the monies are spent, they are spent. How will you sustain yourself?

A – As a non-profit they are aggressive grant writers.

Q – As far as Porter County who have you collaborated with?

A – The juvenile court system.

Q – Are you competition with other agencies in the County? We want our people cared for but don't want any overlap.

A – First Things First is a group their Director has begun to collaborate with. They don't see that as a competition.

Q – EMDR therapy is more than just mental health? How will this be marketed?

A – As far as marketing, we all know people who have struggled through the pandemic. There are a lot of people who have not had access to help. They will work on building a referral source.

C – Comment from audience. Did not go to the microphone so inaudible.

C – They would like to reiterate they are here and want to be a part of Porter County.

Housing Opportunities

Jordan Stenfeld and Cheryl Sharp presented. Their request covers two projects: Providence Commons 1 and Providence Commons 2. Housing Opportunities is the developer and property manager for the project. Housing Opportunities is a 501 c 3. They provide affordable housing, supportive housing, shelter and wrap around services to low income, homeless and people with disabilities in Porter and LaPorte counties. They have been doing this for over 20 years.

Cheryl Sharp is with Milestone Ventures which is a housing development consultant organization. They assist not-for-profit organizations in the development of affordable housing.

Providence Commons 1 is currently under construction. It was funded approximately one- and one-half years ago. It is slated to be finished by the end of the calendar year. It has a total of 50 units of affordable and supportive housing and is at 5 different sites. Part one is to rehab the existing apartments they have owned and managed since early 2000. They had land donated on Evergreen Avenue in Portage. They have new construction going on there. The resource center will have services for the entire community. Partners will be Porter Starke Services, NEO, Portage Township YMCA and others. Phase 2 of Providence Commons is new construction also on Evergreen. It is a 36 Unit apartment building serving singles and families with the majority being open for low-income residents of Porter County, and nine being supportive housing for those exiting homeless and have a diagnosed disability. They will be studios, one and two bedroom units.

Today's funding request is for Phase 2. They are talking to other funders as well. Rental Housing tax credits will be awarded in November. Phase 1 should be completed by the end of this year. They anticipate starting construction by September of next year and completing within a year. They will meet the ARPA deadlines. They can accept less funds than their request, but it will mean the Housing Opportunity investment will increase by that amount. Rental Housing Tax Credits is the primary source of funding for these two projects. This is a Federal program through the IRS. This stimulates private investing into affordable housing. Through the pandemic they have seen that housing stability and affordability has decreased. There is a crisis need for affordable housing. Construction costs are up 20%. Construction contracts now have escalation clauses. Interest rates are higher than they expected. They are meeting the ARPA priority considerations. Both projects are highly leveraged. Over 30 years they will be able to help 6,500 residents.

Q – If they get the funds and phase 2 is opened, what guarantees are there that they will go to Porter County residents and not others?

A – They do verification checks on requests.

Q – What is your role once the facilities are built.

A – They own and operate. They are a service provider. They see the residents every day.

Q – So you maintain the property?

A – Yes

Q – What if there is a resident that becomes a problem.

A – We will work to resolve. Ultimately if they cannot resolve, they will remove them from housing and get them somewhere that would be a better fit.

Q – How long is the lease?

A – They are required to have a 12-month lease. A typical stay is 3.5 years. In supportive housing it is closer to 6 years.

Q – The Resource center is a collaborative project.

A – Yes. The YMCA will do nutrition and cooking classes. NEO will provide adult education. Porter Starke will help with the mental health side.

Q – The resource center will serve the homeless and the residents in the development?

A – The citizens and the residents.

Q – If the County does a funding reduction, do they need to know how much is to go to each project?

A – It would be helpful.

Q – Are you requesting the funds because of the increase in costs?

A – Yes and no. Phase 1 needs additional funding because of the increase in costs. Phase 2 is anticipated costs they know are coming and to leverage their local funds to increase the chance of getting State funding. For Phase 2 they are maxed out at the amount they can request on the Rental Housing Tax Credits.

Q – Did you get anything from the City of Portage from their Federal money?

A – No. But they are supportive of us in getting the project to this point.

Q – Will you support all 12 townships?

A - Yes

Q - Does this tie in with the presentation made by the two Trustees?

A – They have met with Mr. Harper and Mr. Clancy. Housing Opportunities falls into the area of long-term stable housing.

Q – So the dollar amounts are not overlapping services?

A – They are doing the best to make sure they are not duplicating services. All met to discuss what they offer.

Q – The homeless issue seems to be a big impact of the pandemic. Is that true with Housing Opportunities?

A – Yes.

Q - There seems to be a big piece missing for those coming from shelter or mental health treatment of addiction treatment.

A – That is a nationwide problem. Records show 88% of the low income are rent burdened.

Q – Is this the only affordable housing provider in Portage?

A – At a level like this. Habitat does a house or two at a time. Their plan is to outreach where it is lacking.

Q – How long have you been in operation.

A – 25 years.

Q – Do you require people to take budget management classes if they are in your housing facilities.

A – That is not required. Housing Opportunities is a HUD certified housing counselling agency. They have two staff members who are certified. They offer that service. It is not a requirement for the low-income residents who just need affordable housing. If the people have trouble on making their rent and are always late, they will offer the counselling service to them.

The Board will score the requests. They then go to the Steering Committee. Those results go to the County Commissioners and then to the County Council.

Vicki Urbanik emphasized that the County has made the deadline July 1, 2024 for obligating the money and July 1, 2026 to have the money spent. Any money not meeting these deadlines

must be returned to the US Treasury. Moving the deadline up for the County timeline gives them time to come up with another plan so the money does not have to be returned.

Public Comment –

None

There being no more business the meeting adjourned.