

Observer Report

Committee: Mental Health Board

Date: March 14, 2019

Observer: Pat Blumen

Meeting Began: 7:04PM

Meeting Ended: 8:43PM

Members Present: Jessica Sales, Chair, Jackie Haines, Irene Zaya, Sandi Johnson, Becky Feiler, Gnathan Carpenter, Heather Perkins (late), Karin Ruetzel (½ hour late). Absent: Mike Pierce.

Staff Present: Jessica Wingader

Audience: Agency representatives, NU student

Aging Well Conference set for F 5/3 program and T 4/23 film (Mayor Morton documentary)

Minutes of 2/14/19 approved.

Panel Discussion on Community Needs:

Susan Cherco (Aging Friendly Task Force)

Ellen Cushing (Housing & Homeless)

Michael Nabors (2nd Baptist Church)

Indira Perkins (Evanston Health & Human Services)

Panel Members Responded to 3 General Questions:

1. Pressing Mental Health Challenges:

Cherco re: Elderly: no specific Evanston data; seniors do not seek treatment for depression (“tough it out”); ex. 85+males suicide rate 6X general population; higher in general 65+; significant losses; self-medication leading to substance abuse; Treatment trickier due to body changes. There are 839 65+ males living alone in Evanston and 2200 65+females .

Perkins from HHS: no insurance, no transitional services prior to need for long-term care; access to substance abuse services; wait list for services; hoarding & mental health issues.

Nabors: need fluid consistent unified system of care with comprehensive services (cited his model from Wayne County, MI where he had been board Chair); problems: crime, violence, homelessness, lack of access.

Cushing: affordable housing not just for MH.

2. Underserved or Completely Missed Populations:

Nabors: undocumented, those involved in criminal justice system, marginal populations with associated stresses of being “other”; referred to “broken system”: suggests targeting the 115 houses of worship and training members to be ambassadors for mental health.

Cherco: isolated elderly.

Cushing: refugees, poverty, training for family members of mentally ill; education re: mental illness; addressing stigma; lack of information re: existing services (don’t know about services until suddenly needed & don’t know where to find same); advocacy. need earmarked grant for advocacy and education

Perkins: homeless, marginalized populations e.g. growing Arab and Muslim populations; isolated seniors.

3. What Factors Need to Change

Perkins: need to understand family dynamics; addressing marginal communities, minimize hoops to get services; educating about trauma monthly instead of annually at MH Fair; addressing mental health holistically; collectively address problems.

Nabors: overhaul of Evanston MH Service System.

Cherco: break down silos.

Cushing: says Housing Commission basically just “vets” staff proposals now.

Panel after being thanked.

There was a brief discussion among the board members about limiting MHB funding to mental health programs because it is such a high priority on every survey in the community. (Sandi said that Human Services asked MHB to do funding for other essential services 20 yrs. ago.) Perhaps could earmark a portion of funding for an RFP for a specific new high priority of MHB (Human Services would need to approve.)

Jessica Sales suggested inviting Mayor Haggerty to a meeting to discuss use of Northwestern monetary donation to Evanston, possibly some for specific MH purpose.

Developing a Scoring Formula for Award Recommendations:

Following a lengthy detailed discussion of various recommendations to develop a permanent funding formula, it was agreed that MHB is not ready to pursue this at this time. One item of agreement was if a certain number of members vote to not fund a program, program will not be funded (3/9, 2/8, 2/7). Jessica Wingader to summarize ideas discussed on other funding recommendations issues to be held in the future.

Liaison Report Becky Feiler:

Center for Independent Futures (for MH & DD): 8 Ev. Residents in conflict resolution group; Transition house social hour 10/monthly (14—22) 22+ has separate social hour; have ongoing staff development training.

Books & Breakfast: Expanded from Dewey, Kingsley and Lincolnwood to Lincoln; have 20 students; hired 1 FT staff; expanded Bd. To 11.

Chair Report:

Mike Pierce resigned due to personal reasons and there is another vacancy on the Board. There are other applicants in the cue.

Mayor Haggerty gave a shout-out to the MHB at his last town hall mtg.

Staff Report

Jessica W. mentioned City is having ongoing broad discussions about Equity and the current review of Social Services by the Asst. City Manager.

Should have voted in new interim Vice-Chair (Mike’s position). Becky Feiler will do.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 11, 2019.