

Hilltop Mental Health and Wellness Commission Meeting

Minutes from November 17, 2021

High School Library

Attendees: Ariel Marquis, Todd Marsh, Don Austin, Mary Boisse, Ashley Wright, Suzanne Weete, Jenne Holmes, Nancy Michaud and Maggie Larson

- Call to order 6:06 pm
- Approval of minutes from previous meeting, 1st Don and 2nd Maggie, all in favor.
- Todd reread mission of the meeting:
Mission/Objective: To examine, study and implement systems which foster, promote, and support mental health, wellness and recovery support to all city and school employees, students, and citizens of the Hilltop City. While creating a mental health, wellness, and substance recovery friendly Somersworth.
- Suzanne presented summary thus far & mentioned that some components in the summary might not sit well with the whole committee, but it is important to look at our barriers so we can move past them
 - Summary identified a need for more social services in more education surrounding Mental Health and SUD
 - We need to do more than just talk about it, we need to take action
 - Is Somersworth ready to do the work behind the change talk?

RECOMMENDATION FROM SUMMARY: summit to hear more layers of the community represented—people are missing from the conversations (important community members that don't sit on this current committee)

Opened floor up for discussion—

Don: feels there is a high level of perception of the issues w/in City Council and School Board, but maybe not enough understanding of it to know what truly needs to be done.

- Stated that he feels money is not the issue
- EDUCATION is the big thing here.
 - Need to further educate leaders and decision makers in community
 - Potentially formal presentation to the school board and city council
 - Different understandings from different community levels

*** Brought up folks at Willand Pond as an example, questioning if now that the clear-out has occurred, have higher level officials forgotten about the people that were displaced? Not top of mind anymore.

- Feels that a deep dive into the issues would be helpful to move the process forward.

Maggie: “Out of the darkness, into the light”

- Feels we need a social connection in the form of a listening session

- Feels there is a disconnect between what people need and the help that is offered to them, are we really listening to those we are trying to help?

Jenne: Feels a community forum is a positive solution

- Hearing from real people, somebody from the public
- Brought up drug taskforce work
 - Stated master plan is being followed
 - K-12 drug education
 - Reality is though, government doesn't run fast, things are happening

Todd: made point that he doesn't feel we have barriers, we just have these lines we need to figure out how to cross passed.

- Stated that a smaller, actionable agenda is important
- Leadership's willingness to absorb & listen is something to note here
- Bring the two (leaders and general public) more closely connected
- Social services want things done too quickly, things take times
- He liked the idea of a forum or summit, need the community's thought and desires listened to!

***Should we be making bigger actions in this group? Or is that the next bigger group.

- ➔ Suzanne posed the question, is the Somersworth local government driving decision making in this community or is the community driving the decision making?
 - Todd- it usually comes from inside, clarified that inside meant the government. Then stated, that is actually is both, the government comes up with decision making based off of what the community brings forth to them.
 - Don- joined in stating the public really does come and say we need to do this and he feels the local government strongly supports things brought forth
- ➔ Ashley clarified what the group is stating, we are working to lay the foundation for community members to stand on. Bring community in and let it switch to them being in charge. We are working on buy in here from more than just an awareness level. Capacity building is the next step—to hear the message and make a real change.
 - Noted that she is still on board to do a presentation to update school board and city council but also felt a summit of some sort was a natural next step.

Maggie: brought up concerns surrounding equity of a summit & gathering people. Concerns of not collecting too many people in one space with COVID-19 spiking

- Feels sharing lived experience is essential
 - But how do you ask for that level of vulnerability from others?
 - Asked if it might be useful to have a specific session in the summit where people share their story from our community

Suz: A messaging campaign could be useful to reach vulnerable populations

Ashley: How did Dover captivate that audience and get buy in from people that attended?

Suz: 1) Used NH Listens, 2) provided exit tickets, 3) take \$ off the table→ we can do a lot with a little, \$ isn't always a valid excuse, there are services that don't cost \$, priority of the community demanded by the city.

Todd: there is a pause and think by local government where there is a push in a certain direction from the community.

Example provided my committee: who cares about Kelsey documentary—resulted in teachers following students more closely through their time in the school, social emotional learning, tracking of individual students, etc.

Next steps...

Nancy: Need space in school to start these conversations to create a safe space where we can then amplify voices from.

Don: If we put a framework together for summit for funding and he will bring it to Dana

- ➔ Next step: really planning summit
- ➔ Maggie is looking into facilities
- ➔ Red's Good Vibe as potential caterer
- ➔ UNH or NH Listens
- ➔ Everyone beef up list of people!
- ➔ Our next meeting will be Wednesday January 3rd

*** 7:35 Adjourn, Don 1st, Maggie 2nd, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Weete