

**MINUTES, HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**December 21, 2011**

**PRESENT: Ethel Mantzaris (YSB), chair; Jane Blanshard (Disabilities), secretary; Sara Anderson (Advocates for Children); Kevin Grunwald (ex officio); Matt Hart (Town Manager); Kathleen Krider (Coordinator, Early Childhood Services); Bev Korba (Senior Center); Victoria Nimirowski (WAIM); Joan Terry (Commission on Aging).**

**ABSENT: Dexter Eddy (Housing Authority); Lorraine Kenowski (at large); Frank Perotti (at large), Vice Chair.**

Meeting called to order at 2:06. Jane should have signed the minutes. She said she did and it didn't fit on the page. Minutes accepted.

Kathleen Krider was next on the agenda, but we skipped over to Matt Hart. Kevin pointed out the last page of the packet included a draft of planning and work plan.

Matt Hart talked about strategic planning for the department. He has asked Kevin to work with his staff and various other "stake-holders" to review our operations and develop a strategic plan for the department. He wants to make sure we are deploying our resources in the most efficient and effective way, and as part of this we need to look to see if there are any gaps in our services. We must look at every level, nonprofits, etc. Do we see unaddressed needs that must be addressed? Some shifting of funds might be necessary. We will be asking you as a committee to advise us. This may take as much as a year because it takes time away from regular tasks.

One example of analyzing need is the combination of our fire departments, which has made the whole fire system much more efficient. Another example going on at present is our police study. We have taken a critical look at several options as to how best to provide police services.

Kevin has attempted to put the outline into a format for a reasonable work plan. Which amounts to strategic planning. Initially, this is mostly collection of information. People who would be responsible include an intern in the manager's office, who could work with him on "bench-marking."

The committee pointed out that we need to know what other towns our size are doing so we can see if we are lacking in anything. We are at a standstill until we can make comparisons. Do we need to do more than we are doing? We need to know what services are available to us in other towns. Are we making sure that people are aware of services available to them in this difficult economic period?

Kevin: we don't ordinarily collect information about income. It is difficult to determine how to prioritize services. Should something have a higher priority than something we are doing now? We may need to do a lot more outreach.

Ethel pointed out that groups are competing for resources, i.e. youth and elderly. The great middle group may have no advocates. Victoria said that our top priority should be people losing jobs, homes, heat. Then we think of other services.

Kevin: our mission has to be to the people with the fewest resources. But the town ultimately needs to come to an understanding of what we should be doing. Jane: How are you going to find out how the town feels? Kevin: a couple of different ways to do this. The advisory committees can speak for some people. Surveys can be costly and not very effective. Focus groups are an easy way to get information. Websites are good, assuming all the people we want to reach have computers. Matt: conversations with service providers are valuable.

Sara: Could we look at towns outside of CT? There are plenty of other university towns. Matt: We do belong to a college town network. That might be worth looking at, but the state comparisons are important because of the funding issues.

Someone asked why we can't ask how other college towns handle the town-gown relationship. Matt: College towns are unique in that they have a large number of temporary residents. Ethel: How to initiate conversations with other similar towns? Matt: Perhaps a brief survey, telling them what we provide. Ethel: You and Kevin will do this? It would be a good starting point.

Victoria: Have you looked at Willimantic—after school programs? Also a college population. The income level is totally different. But we should look at it as something we are part of. Kevin: the data is very skewed when we compare.

Victoria: set goals, and then look at the map. Kevin: we have pretty simple work measures we submit as part of our budget, pretty similar from year to year. Not necessarily tied to any larger strategic plan. We do actually have goals but not necessarily ones that are well developed.

Matt: we are better off addressing needs as a region, especially in dealing with nonprofits. Bring in regional network. Kevin: that's why we need performance standards. Ethel: should we ask local nonprofits what services they are actually providing? How many from Mansfield? Age range? Income? Victoria: some of this information is not being recorded. But first we identify who we want to be. What is the current goal of Mansfield Human Services? Victoria: It is always helpful to bring in a facilitator who knows about strategic planning who can guide you in the right direction to identify your goals. Ethel: You have to look at the needs first and then come up with a vision. To say we want to provide best services possible is meaningless if we don't know what the needs are. Kevin: but we might see limitless needs. We should think what we are really good at and how that helps prioritize. Kathleen: You do have data available and could you use it first in the direction you need to go in? Kevin: some data, yes. Kathleen: so data collection would be a first step of your department? You probably will find some holes in the data, which will enable you to identify more partners. If there are holes, you need to know why. This would help establish a plan.

It was pointed out that people who have received services all their lives know where to turn, but those who have suddenly lost a big job and never had to

ask for help don't know where to begin. But the town can't be all things to all people. The whole prioritization process is key: we need to establish what is out there now. Ethel: we need to find out what services are available to us from outside agencies.

Bev: is there anything we as a committee can do? Kevin: you represent various aspects of the town, Glen Ridge, the Commission on Aging. Perhaps host a focus group at Glen Ridge. We must acknowledge that the Storrs population is aging rapidly.

Matt: this committee can take helping us out as a primary goal.

Kevin will email committee members to let us know where he is going to start collecting data, and we can offer suggestions. Victoria: we might find people in the area to help with specific areas of need, such as heating assistance.

Kathleen Krider was urged by committee to continue to attend our meetings. She has replaced Sandy Baxter as early childhood services coordinator. She has lived in the community since 1971.

Kevin: 66 food baskets for Thanksgiving, 20 of which came from Storrs Cong. Church. We were able to respond to all requests. Roughly the same number as last year, but quite a few are new. We probably will have helped close to 70 families, including Christmas. We got a thank you letter, a poem, from a recipient. Kevin will email it to us. About 40 of the families will get some cash from the holiday fund. They collected around \$12,000, including one anonymous \$2000 donation.

Quarterly report on July-October. Frank Perotti is resigning as an at-large representative. If we know anyone, contact Peter Kochenberger, chairman of the Committee on Committees. Kevin contacted him and Mary Stanton, and if she hasn't yet had a letter, it will be forthcoming.

Kevin: future agenda items—review some applications from private agencies for funding. Many provide services regionally. Ethel: email them before the meeting? The deadline is the 20<sup>th</sup>, just after our next meeting. But some will get in early, so he will distribute them.

The applications will be divided up among Youth Services, Commission on Aging, etc., but there will be some for us to review.

**Next meeting January 18<sup>th</sup>.**

Adjourned at 3 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jane Blanshard