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Regular City Council Meeting
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MINUTES

JOINT MEETING

Wasco County Commission, City Council, Mid-Columbia Center for Living Board (MCCFL)

October 26, 2020

5:30 p.m.

VIA ZOOM
LIVESTREAM VIA City website

PRESIDING: Mayor Richard Mays

COUNCIL PRESENT: Linda Miller, Darcy Long-Curtiss, Tim McGlothlin, Rod Runyon,
Scott Randall

COUNTY COMMISSION: Scott Hege, Kathy Schwartz, Steve Kramer

MCCFL BOARD: Joan Bird, Sherman County Commissioner; Karen Joplin, Hood
River County Commissioner; Scott Hege, Wasco County
Commissioner

NORCOR Representatives: Sheriff Brad Lohrey, Jail Commander Dan Lindhorst, MH
Supervisor Kathleen Green

MCMC Representatives: Dennis Knox, CEO, Don Wenzler, Chief Clinical Officer,
Dr. Serene Perkins, Chief Medical Officer,
Jayme Mason, Emergency Department Director

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Julie Krueger, City Clerk Izetta Grossman, City
Legal Counsel Jonathan Kara, County Administrator Tyler Stone

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Mays at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call was conducted by City Clerk Grossman. All those in attendance noted above.

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Mayor Mays said that there would be a special meeting on Wednesday, October 28 to discuss pallet home location options. He said Council would determine exact time at the end of this meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Relationship between local police and mental health services

Mayor Mays said the purpose of the meeting was to have an educational opportunity for Council, other agencies and the public.

He turned the meeting over to Councilor Long-Curtiss.

Long-Curtiss said the meeting would be on the public policy level, to gain education.

She asked if anyone from the Center For Living board wanted to address the group.

Karen Joplin, Hood River County Commissioner, and member of the Center For Living (CFL) board said she worked with CFL and NorCor for 10 years.

She reported:

- Oregon is 47th in the nation for adult access to mental health care
- Very few acute care facilities remain
- Top down systemic problem in Oregon
- CFL looked into Crisis Center – a place to stabilize; no funding available
- Pacific Source is defunding CFL services
- CFL funding in general dropping

Long-Curtiss asked if anyone from MCMC wanted to speak.

Dennis Knox, CEO said he was with Don Wenzler, Chief Clinical Officer. He introduced Jayme Mason, Director of Emergency Services and asked her to speak.

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Mason said the process when patient arrives at the emergency room are:

1. Identify and treat any medical issues
2. Coordinate with CFL if there are mental issues to obtain a “director’s hold”
3. Patient stays at MCMC until an appropriate facility can be found
4. Police called if patient is violent

She reported:

- Crisis situation – worse since COVID-19
- Vicious cycle – everyone doing the best they can under the rules they must follow
- MCMC cannot hold if “in right mind”- if not under the influence even if on a director’s hold
- No resources to help
- MCMC hired additional security; full team not yet in place; following law enforcement guidelines

In response to a question Mason said MCMC averages 2-3 patients per day from mild depression to suicidal or homicidal.

Al Barton, CFL said that all clinical training indicates evaluations should be done when the person isn’t under the influence of drugs or alcohol. He said if the patient needs a high level of care, their health issues need to be addressed first, because the facilities for higher level of care do not have the doctors and nurses that are trained in health issues.

Sheriff Lohrey said NorCor had 8 beds for mental health. He said these were designed for those who were incarcerated to be moved to, when it became evident they needed that type of help. He said they had medical staff for mental health staff 10 hours per day. He said there were currently 25 people in jail with mental health issues by default.

Joplin said no other jail in the state has mental health beds and separate staff.

Sheriff Magill said the beds at NorCor were set up for inmates identified with serious persistent illness.

Sheriff Lohrey invited the elected officials to come out and tour the facility after COVID was over.

Long-Curtiss invited neighbors to ask questions.

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Breanna Wimber, Stratton Agency said as a business owner they have to call the police. She said the police were compassionate and always come when called. She said staff had witnessed people breaking down, hurting. She asked if there was another tool available to them in those situations.

Lisa Farquharson said at the Chamber office they are never alone, for the reasons Wimber stated. She said it was hard to know when to call the police. She said it was affecting the economy. Visitors pull into the Chamber parking lot and right back out when they see the police on site, or a person acting out.

Councilor Miller said she is on the board of Old St. Peter's Landmark and people who work in the area alone are considering arming themselves with pepper spray and the like.

Rodger Nichols said he was on the board of the Old Court House. He said passengers from the cruise ships don't feel safe getting off the Hop on Hop off buses. He said they get paid by the ships by the number of visitors they have, therefore, they are losing funds.

There was some discussion about no public restroom for people downtown, causing business's and home owners to have to clean up feces.

Long-Curtiss turned the meeting back over to the Mayor.

Mayor Mays said he was impressed with the level of care he heard. He said he thought there should be a monthly meeting of all parties.

Kathy Schwartz, Wasco County Commissioner thanked Karen Joplin Hood River County Commissioner for her overview and Councilor Long- Curtiss for championing the needs.

She said with winter coming, the immediate needs are a warming shelter/food/safety. She said we was willing to work on long term solutions as well.

Joplin said ride a longs and tours are a great way for the elected officials to get firsthand knowledge.

Barton said The Cottage had been closed during COVID-19. He said it was a balancing act meeting the needs and the guidelines for social distancing. He said housing was a big challenge.

Long-Curtiss said a question she received was are specific support services available at NorCor for a 24-hour period.

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Sheriff Lohrey said he would provide the City Clerk with a form for questions that could be returned to him to answer.

Long-Curtiss asked about placement from the emergency room. Barton said there were very limited number of beds available in Oregon for detox and mental health.

Steve Kramer, Wasco County Commissioner said his family had personal experience with the topic of the meeting. He said Kathleen Green at NorCor, the police department and CFL were very helpful getting his brother in law back. He said there was an advocacy piece missing. He said the elected officials need to get together and go to Salem to get some movement on this issue.

Sheriff Magill thanked the Council for being invited to the conversation. He said the conversation was important. He said Oregon Law Enforcement had done all they could do to find solutions.

Sheriff Magill said there was a team working on solutions. He said a Stop Center where stabilization and mental health/addiction issues could be addressed was being worked on. He said Pacific Source was part of the group. He said they have a draft business plan for the region. He said political horse power in Salem was needed.

Judy Merrill thanked everyone for their compassion. She said she had been studying the need for public restrooms downtown. She said COVID had amplified the issue.

Long-Curtiss said Merrill and Widge Johnson had worked on a LOO few years ago. She said she would like to see Council look at that again.

Mayor Mays said he would look into starting a group meeting with NorCor, CFL, MCMC, and local law enforcement to further discuss the issues.

Mayor Mays asked City Manager to talk to Council about Pallet Shelters.

City Manager Julie Krueger said Legal Counsel Jonathan Kara was working on an emergency resolution for temporary shelter. She said that she felt a site had been located. She said the emergency resolution needed to be done quickly to proceed. She asked if Council was available Wednesday, October 28, 2020 at Noon for a meeting.

All Councilors were available.

City Manager Krueger said the agenda would go out tomorrow morning, and the resolution

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would follow.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

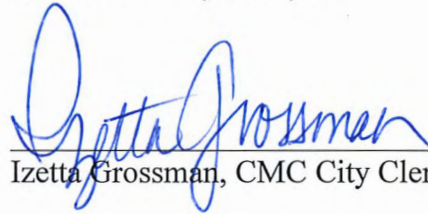
Submitted by/
Izetta Grossman, CMC
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Richard A. Mays, Mayor

ATTEST:



Izetta Grossman, CMC City Clerk