

Open Work Session

Poplar Hill Facility – Drug Rehabilitation Center

July 17, 2018

Mr. Bob Culver, County Executive, Mr. Wayne Strausburg, Director of Administration, Mr. Weston Young, Deputy Director of Administration, and Ms. Lori Brewster, Health Officer, came before Council. Executive Culver said while they are here today he would like to brief Council on what they have been working on. He said he knows it has been out in the public a little bit on TV and in the newspapers. He said last year they started going from community to community, fire hall to fire hall, to talk to people about the opioid problems that not only Wicomico County is having, but the whole State of Maryland is having. He said in Pittsville he met Mr. Joe Holloway down there, and they also have been to Hebron, Westside, and the Civic Center. He said throughout all of those meetings there was a common theme brought to them that there were not enough beds, and not enough facilities to treat the people who needed to be treated. He said, in the interim period of time, he called Secretary Moyer, who is the Secretary of Corrections in Annapolis, to ask him what the potential was as far as utilizing Poplar Hill Correctional Facility. He said Secretary Moyer said he felt like there was no way they would ever move anybody back into that facility, and, actually, the prison population has gone down by about 6,000 people over the last year or so because of the Justice Reinvestment Act. He said, with that, they started talking about converting Poplar Hill into a treatment center, which would give them longer-term care for people. He said it seems that some of the places only offer a seven-day period, or some up to a 28-day period, and then they are just kicked out and have to go back on the streets. He said they are trying to create a longer-term treatment facility where they could stay for a while. He said, in the meantime, they have also gone to all the Counties on the Eastern Shore. He clarified, when he says all the Counties, they have gone to Worcester, Somerset, Wicomico, Dorchester, Talbot, Queen Anne's, Kent, and Caroline County, and all of them have shown an interest in participating in this because they all have the same opioid addiction problem. He said Wicomico County is fortunate to have the COAT program with Ms. Brewster as Wicomico County is the only County in the State of Maryland whose numbers have gone down in overdoses and deaths, and that is something they should all be very proud of what she and Mr. Matt Maciarello developed. He said, at the same time, any death is too many, so they want to try to be able to help their County as well as the other Counties on the Eastern Shore. He said, in doing so, they have started working with Clay Stamp with the State. He said Mr. Stamp was going to come down today, but he just got back off vacation, and, unfortunately, he had to be up in Cambridge because they are having a Governor's Cabinet meeting, so he is there, but will come down whenever it suits Council to listen to him tell them what the goal is. He said one of the biggest goals the Governor has had is to get more beds in the State of Maryland, so they are not only fulfilling their own needs, but fulfilling the Governor's wants and desires too. He said there is money in the State and in the Federal Government, and they have gone so far as to contact the USDA about this. He said Mr. Nick Rice, Purchasing Agent, has sent out a Request for Expressions of Interest to people who know how to run these facilities asking what they would need, and what they would require. He said they have gotten some interest already, but it just went out a couple of weeks ago. He said, with that, they are hoping to get more people who have an interest in this. He said they have a local facility, Hudson Center, which has shown interest also. He said they feel very confident that somebody will come and take this on. He said the ask he will be asking of the County at a later time is not so much the running of the facility, as they do not want anything to do with being a provider of a service, but are trying to be the facilitator, and make this happen for their community as well as the Eastern Shore. He said, after treatment, they need something so the people can hold their head up, go back into society, and be proud of themselves. He said, with that, he is going to ask the County to help in offering jobs to some of these people. He said some of the

jobs will be through Parks and Recreation as they have part-time people there, they have part-time people at the Civic Center, and they have part-time people in the Roads Department. He said it could be anything from helping with the ditches to helping with concession stands. He said they want to give these people a job and be able to help them out, get a fresh start, and go on from there. He said that is part of what they have heard about the TROSA program where they work in the community, and they still stay at the facility for up to a year, or something of that nature. He said they have not worked out all of the details, but they are working very hard with the State now, and they have a six-month plan already, which he believes was sent to Council, to show Council what they are actually working for. He said everybody is on board, Mr. Stamp is on board, the Governor is very much on board with this, as well as the Secretary of Health, and the Secretary of Corrections, so they are moving forward with this. He said they are at a very early stage of this now, but this is something down the road they are going to need. He said they need the detoxification center, they need 24-hour observation, and then they need long-term care. He said with that, he would like to ask Ms. Brewster to tell Council what that entails, as she can tell them better from a health point of view.

Ms. Brewster said this entails a lot, including access to treatment on a 24-hour basis, which seems to be their biggest stumbling block at this point. She said their COAT team members have to make multiple contacts with these individuals to make sure they are still clean and sober in the community so they can enter a treatment provider. She said Mr. Young has a video, to which Executive Culver added, by the way, this video was taken with the County drone they purchased last year to work at the landfill, and other projects. Mr. Cannon asked Mr. Young where this is located, to which Mr. Young responded, this is the facility being discussed, which is Poplar Hill, and was pre-release. He said it is off Quantico Road some distance down. Mr. Cannon asked how many units are in the facility, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, there are 160 beds, but they are not thinking of that size facility. Mr. Matt Holloway asked if that is the maximum capacity, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, he is not even sure that would be the maximum for this use because they will have to reconfigure things, so they are thinking the maximum would eventually be 60 beds. He clarified, they would not start off with 60, but would probably start off with 20 single sex beds and then migrate into another 20 beds for the other sex. He said they have to be careful about how they integrate the two sexes, and they are quite a way away from a design of what the facility would ultimately look like, but they are thinking 60 beds is the right size.

Mr. Kilmer asked what the process would be of people going there, and whether it would be court ordered, or would it be the COAT team offering it, to which Ms. Brewster responded, she thinks it could be a number of options. She said she does not know that court ordered treatment would be a good fit as they really want this to be a voluntary program. She said there are facilities that currently house court ordered individuals, and the State may ask them to house some of those as well. She said they could be COAT referrals, or they could be other provider referrals, but there would have to be a central repository so that people did not just access the program on their own.

Mr. Cannon asked if they are saying a third party would be in charge of this, to which Executive Culver responded, yes. Mr. Cannon said the question would be who decides what residents will be staying there. He said he would hope that, since it is in Wicomico County, the number one first priority would be for Wicomico County residents. He said he knows they said this is for the entire Delmarva Peninsula, and being a State owned facility, this could quickly become a State facility. He said he just wants to make sure Wicomico County some way or another has the first priority with that, to which Executive Culver responded, as Ms. Brewster can tell Council, one of the problems is that when they find somebody who is ready to get help, if they have to wait for a bed, they usually lose them in that interim time. He said, if someone from the COAT team goes out and sees a person who says they are ready to get clean, what

they are trying to do is have a bed waiting for them. He said, when they are finished with this, they will require the provider to open up beds for Wicomico County and the Shore. He said they will not be going to Baltimore to try to get patients to come down here, but they are going to simply work with the Shore. Mr. Cannon said he thinks this is a good idea, and it is something Wicomico County needs, but already at breakfast this morning he had an individual who was at the table make the comment that pretty soon the next thing they know Wicomico County is going to be a clearinghouse for the State of Maryland. Mr. Cannon said he never thought about that, but that is what was brought to his attention. Executive Culver said there is another facility they are working on in St. Mary's County which would be very similar, and when Mr. Stamp comes down, he can explain to Council why they expect to keep this just for the Shore. Ms. Brewster added, that is the goal. She said they want to bring the resources here so the individuals can remain in the community, and return to the community after they have reached the maximum level of need in the center.

Mr. Strausburg said, to follow up, the longer-term thought is that the State would be looking to this as a test site, but the desire would be to lead to four, or maybe five regional operations like this so that each region of the State would have a facility of this type. He said there are a lot of details that have to be worked out, and one of the details they have to look at is how they will interact with their partner Counties, and how they will interact with the care provider and sources of funding. He said a lot of details are displayed on the spreadsheet, but they are at the broad conceptual stage right now. He said they are working with the State on that, and one of the first steps is how they will acquire access to the real estate. Mr. Cannon asked, if these individuals will be coming from other parts of the State, will they know any statistics as far as what the financial obligation is for individuals who are released from these units because they may not necessarily have a job. He then asked if this will create additional financial obligations on the part of Wicomico County, to which Ms. Brewster responded, she thinks the goal at this point is for each jurisdiction to have that financial responsibility, but she does not think they are there yet. She said they developed the 30-day plan and the 6-month plan at the request of the Governor's Office and Secretary of Health, and that is what is being displayed at this point. She said, as Mr. Strausburg said, they are in the very early stages of this discussion, and there are a number of items they have done on the plan, but there is a whole lot more work to do, as Council can see. She said they are taking baby steps in this because they want to do it right, and she thinks everyone at this table can agree on that. She said they are meeting with the other jurisdiction health officers this Friday to get their input into this program, and then they will be moving out and meeting with the other Councils. She said she thinks one of the biggest items on this timeline is the development of a business plan, as well as the investment pro forma because they cannot move forward without those two items, and she would venture to guess they will be bringing that back before Council.

Mr. Matt Holloway asked if they are looking at this as a public-private partnership, or more of an operator such as the nursing home, to which Executive Culver responded, more of a public-private partnership. He said there is a company up in Harrington called Connections, and they do this up there. He said Wicomico County has a seat at the table now. He said the State of Maryland owns this place and could do whatever they want to with it, so he is just glad they are in on the ground floor as they are the ones who brought the idea to them. He said, at the same time, now they can maybe help steer it the way they want it to go to help Wicomico County. He said, as it was said earlier, it could become a clearinghouse where Wicomico County would have nothing to do with it, and the State could take Wicomico County's idea and utilize it for whatever.

Executive Culver said they estimate that somewhere along the line they will need between \$5-\$7 million dollars, and he believes Mr. Pate Matthews, Director of General Services, can tell Council about

remodeling. He said the facility is working now, has its own sewage system out there, is using oil, heat and boilers, and that type of thing, and in regards to remodeling they will probably do more of an electric type heat pump, and that sort of thing. He said they have to break the showers up, and a lot of plumbing needs to be done, and the State has not said they will not help them, but has actually said they have money. Mr. Dodd asked if Executive Culver is suggesting the County taxpayers pay that \$5-7 million dollars, to which Executive Culver responded, no, he is not asking for any money for that. He clarified, that is going to be through the State alone, or through the USDA, or Federal money coming down. He said his ask right now is that Council keep their minds open to what they are doing. He said this all started from a very small idea with the land they have on Owens Branch Road, which is about 10 acres, to get some of these people out and let them help raise the food and give it back to the Maryland Food Bank, and make it a cycle, which would be helpful, but then it kind of involved into this. He said, after talking about this, it seems good, but he just wants Council to know where they are on this because now it is in the paper and everything else.

Mr. Dodd asked if this is some sort of thing like those commercials he sees on TV that are almost glorified rehab centers. He asked if they have seen those commercials on TV, usually late at night, to which Ms. Brewster responded, she is not up late at night to watch TV. Mr. Dodd clarified, by late at night, he means 6-8:00 p.m. Ms. Brewster responded, she really does not feel this is going to be a glorified treatment center. She said it is going to be a treatment center to meet the needs of the community, which, again is 24-hour access. She explained, if they cannot grab the person when they are in need, they are going to go back out, they are going to use, they are going to relapse, and possibly die, and their goal is to prevent some of these overdoses that are costing the taxpayers millions of dollars in criminal justice time, medical costs, judicial time, and the whole nine yards. She said she does not see this as a country club aspect if that is what Mr. Dodd is asking, to which Mr. Dodd responded, not at all. He said he was wondering if this would be insurance based where the user will have to use their insurance, or will this be free for all, to which Ms. Brewster responded, if they have insurance, that would be very helpful to defray some of the costs. She said those that do not have insurance are paid through the State's Administrative Service Organization called Beacon, so there will be a reimbursement mechanism for the services, and that is part of the business plan they will be working on with any provider they decide to negotiate with.

Mr. Kilmer said, in terms of keeping an open mind, he has heard from some folks down in the Quantico and Westside areas, and it might be good to have a meeting with some of the neighbors to let them know because they have asked him for the details, and he did not have any. He said he told them to tune in Tuesday to find out. He said he knows some people in that area have concerns, so the County should reach out to them and brief them as to what is going on because there are a lot of questions, to which Executive Culver responded, if he has names, he will be glad to call them. He said when they had the forum at Westside, many of the residents who showed up at the forum actually encouraged them to move forward with this, but he will be glad to have another forum down there to let people know what they are doing. He said they are willing to take any and all of Council down at any time they would like to see the facility, to which Mr. Cannon responded, he would love to set up a tour. Mr. Cannon said he feels they also should have a few public hearings before they get that far with this. He said the public will have to be involved with this, to which Executive Culver responded, they have to know what they are doing first before they can do that.

Mr. Joe Holloway said he would like to thank them all for looking into this because it sounds like a good idea, and there are a lot of good ideas. He said, if they look back at the Holly Center, that is something that worked really well for a number of years for the people who needed it, but then they step forward

to the boot camp the County had that did not work out very well at all. He said he thinks this is something that is needed, but he thinks they really need to be cautious as to how they approach this, and one concern is the neighbors as he thinks there is going to be a lot of concern with the folks who live in that area. He said it was mentioned earlier about bringing people into the area that are not their own, and he thinks that is going to be a big concern. He said a lot of the people who go into these facilities want to be cured, but there are some who go there just as a bridge to get out and go to the next step of whatever they are doing. He said Executive Culver mentioned the entire Shore, and mentioned a place called Connections in Harrington. He then asked how that facility operates, to which Executive Culver responded, much the same way, and Ms. Brewster can tell him about that because they are approved by Maryland, Delaware, and, he believes, New Jersey. He said they happened to buy a building, which may have been an old grocery store at one time, and they put in interior walls, and now have bedrooms and living quarters there. He said they have bathrooms and that type of thing there, so they made it all within inside this one building. He said he does not know what the capacity is there, but they did show them the different steps a client would have to go through when first coming in on the detox part, and then the observation part, and that type of thing. Mr. Joe Holloway asked if that is a State sponsored operation, to which Executive Culver responded, it is privately owned. Mr. Strausburg added, it is a small facility. He said the main facility does the detox, and then they have a residence that is about a block away, but there are a fairly small number of beds, and it is right in Harrington. Mr. Joe Holloway asked who pays the bills, to which Executive Culver responded, insurance companies, Medicaid, or whatever they have. Mr. Strausburg said it is all privatized. Executive Culver said there will be some who cannot pay, but there is some kind of State agency that covers that.

Executive Culver referred back to the video and said Council may not know, but the facility has different pods, and that is why they say they can phase into this. He said it has its own cafeteria down there, and has everything to make it self-sufficient. Mr. Joe Holloway said he was there years and years ago. He said he went down there one day, and of course that was when there were pre-release inmates, and they were fishing. Executive Culver referred back to the video showing the different pods, and said one could be men, and one could be women. He said the front section would probably be where they would have the counselors and that type of thing. He said there is a tower down there that the County is on top of also, so they are involved in that. He said a lot of Council have probably heard of Warwick in Secretary, and this would be much like that. He said it is very secluded, and very serene so people who want to get help can go out there. He said they have had prisoners escape from there, and the people who own all of the land around it are the Phillips Family. He said he knows them, but they have not said anything to him about this yet, but he would be more than happy to talk to anybody.

Mr. Kilmer asked Ms. Brewster how many people the COAT team has encountered in the past year or so who wanted treatment, but were not able to get it, and would be right for this sort of facility, to which Ms. Brewster responded, every one of the individuals who wanted treatment have not been able to access treatment immediately. Mr. Kilmer asked if she has a number, to which Ms. Brewster responded, they have accessed over 200 individuals in the past year, and at least 57 percent of those individuals have wanted some level of treatment at the time the COAT team met with them. Mr. Kilmer asked if they were able to get treatment, to which Ms. Brewster responded, no because there is access to treatment, but it is during business hours, and most of the overdoses that occur happen within the City limits, but they occur during the weekend and overnight hours, so they do not have access to put the individuals into treatment. She said the COAT team then has to maintain contact with them over a long period of time until they can access a treatment bed or a detox bed. She said they are generally meeting with these individuals six to ten times before they actually get access to a bed.

Mr. Cannon said he would be interested to know if the State could possibly deed the property to the County because, if they are going to have a third party in charge of it, they could possibly lease it to this third party. Mr. Strausburg said he has a conference call later this week with the State to talk about how they gain control of the property. Executive Culver added, they are working on all of this right now. Mr. Strausburg clarified, the call was going to be today, but Mr. Stamp is not available, so they are going to do it later in the week.

Mr. Joe Holloway asked if Sussex County has a treatment center other than this privately owned one, to which Ms. Brewster responded, they have a variety of treatment providers in Delaware, but the main provider is Connections. She said they have a lot of the State contracts, and they also have contracts in Maryland with some of the correctional facilities. She said they are participating with Maryland Medicaid, and they are accredited in Maryland and Delaware, which is a requirement now in Maryland.


Executive Culver said they will keep Council apprised of what is going on, and they would like to schedule Mr. Stamp to speak to Council. He said, if Council is interested in going to the facility, he and Mr. Young can make arrangements. Mr. Cannon asked the Administration to create a doodle poll where they can all pick a date that would work for everyone, and then, of course, announce it for the public, and possibly have Mr. Stamp come down on that day. He said he would love to see it, and that is a great idea. There was no further discussion.



John T. Cannon, President



Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3



Ernest F. Davis, District 1



Marc Kilmer, District 2


absent

John B. Hall, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5

Matt Holloway, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator