Portsmouth Covid Response Task Force

Meeting Minutes 9.20.22

12-1pm

Attendees: Karen Conard, Lori Waltz, Will Arvelo, Linda Briolat, Laurie McIntosh, Abbie Frank, Janet Laatsch, Molly Wilson, Nancy Brown, Amber Buttermore, Whitney Brown, Meme Wheeler

Guests: Rad Nichols (Executive Director for Coast Bus), Kelly Lesko (Director of Resident Services)

1. Will called the meeting to order @ 12:01pm
2. Will requested for a motion approve minutes

==Linda requested Change Franklin School to New Franklin School. Janet will make the change and resend to Jessica==

Linda motions and Amber seconds. All in favor

3. Will said we had good representation at the ARPA working meeting.
4. Portsmouth Housing Authority- Kelly speaking on behalf of Craig Welch. With Covid many of the residents retreated. Now they are working with other organizations to get the residents engaged (re: Pine Tree Institute). Looking at parenting classes such as 'Watch me Grow'. Many of the seniors have lost mobility during Covid. She mentioned exacerbation of substance misuse and mental health issues. Additional activities include community gardening.   Will asked how many children are at the complex. Kelly does not have those numbers.
Karen mentioned that none of the requests for ARPA funding list (handed out at the meeting) have been funded.
5. Coast Bus- Rad Nichols present. They don't have a request in, but Janet asked that I come and speak about transportation. He mentioned that it is a common theme across the Seacoast – both public and community based. Coast operations were significantly hindered due to Covid. Closed in May during 2020. They slowly implemented a new system that they were working on for the past two years. There is a real shortage of commercial operated licensed people to drive the larger buses. This has impacted services. Increase in salaries by 20-25%. They are an organization that thinks out of the box so would be happy to hear suggestions. They have received $7-8M in Covid relief funds. Laurie asked if there were other difficulties during covid other than the drivers. Rad said ridership dropped significantly. Currently they are back to 60-65% of what was their previous ridership. Forty percent (40%) have been suspended since Covid. Karen asked about how quickly they can make changes to set expectation. If it involves the purchase of equipment it takes 9-24 months depending on the size of the bus. The two year planning was really a strategic planning period, which was a much larger process then they ordinarily would go through but the board felt it was needed. Amber asked "Where do the commercial drivers get trained?" There is just one driving training school in NH. They have covid money that will get them through 2024. Rad hopes that the State will become a better partner in 2025 and beyond. Janet asked about their Ready Rides program and if it would be worth expanding that program. He mentioned that there are fewer volunteers since Covid possibly due to the fact most of the drivers are older.

6. Will mentioned on the third page of the handout, established by Kim M. when she was soliciting ideas. Karen made it clear that this is not an exhaustive list. Will mentioned that we could look at the larger, strategic issues that we have talked about and then either see who on the list can assist in providing some of these services or we can look specifically at what these organizations need and address that after the larger needs have been funded. Lori mentioned needing a process for reviewing the non-profit applications. We could present our recommendations to the City Council for decision making. Group agreed that we should give the Council priorities and themes and have them make the decision on who should apply for funds. Will A. will send out the applications to the group.
7. Next meeting speakers- Kim M. Will reached out to the CEO for CAP for Rockingham County, Seacoast Public Health Network can come to the next meeting as well.

1:03 *Laurie McIntosh made a motion to adjourn and Lori Waltz, seconded. All in favor*