

Minutes

Human Services Advisory Board held November 18, 2024

Members present: Diana Porter, Beth Eden, Theresa Chemnick, and Amy Ray.

Staff present: Richard Uri and Jami Mitchell

Guests: Debbie Haagensen, Executive Director, San Juan Island Shuttle System, "Island Rides"
Justin Paulsen, County Council Member elect.

No one from the public was in attendance.

Ray called meeting to order at 1:35pm and made the public service announcement.

Agenda: Board approved the agenda.

Minutes: The minutes from the October meeting were approved.

Debbie Haagensen from Island Rides presented:

- Island Rides provides essential services for people in need: seniors, people with disabilities and low income. It is more than a taxi. It is provided free or by donation.
- 2021 received a WashDOT grant, and a new Leaf was purchased for each of the three most populated islands. Prior to that, funding came from Lions and other community support.
- Staff is a combination of volunteers and paid.
- A Wheelchair accessible van will begin service on Lopez next week, with other island wheelchair vehicles to follow.
- San Juan Island offers off island non-emergency medical trips. Plan is for other islands to offer this service soon.
- Funding is secured for 25-27 biennium
- Uri added that the emergency ferry funding is connecting to Island Rides.
- Mitchell added that collaboration between public and private helps this to be very effective. Debbie and Richard work together to put the transportation pieces together.
- Uri said that with current funding models, statistics will be gathered, which will help keep funding going.
- Transportation to mental health appointments is an eligible reason to use Island Rides.
- Uri noted the challenges of moving people around due to the hurdles of having a safe vehicle and providing help getting in and out of vehicles. So it takes a certain kind of volunteer.
- Service is first come, first served. On demand works better than a shuttle service to meet needs.
- Uri commented that this provides huge benefits and allows people to age in place.
- Drivers love it, being helpful.
- Total 13 paid staff and a lot of volunteers, approximately 50+ over the 3 islands.
- The majority of rides are free, but some people pay \$20-40 per month. Some rides are billed to the transportation voucher program.
- Main funding is via WashDOT, but also community funding may be needed due to matching requirements.
- Goal next year is to increase outreach to Latinx community.

Mitchell added to her report:

- Interviews for the Public Health Social Worker position are going well, references on a potential hire are being checked now.
- Since the 32 hour work week was covered in national news, there may be more people applying for jobs in the county.
- Mitchell and Uri are on the board that makes decisions about emergency ferry funding priorities.
- Reminder to board members: online training must be completed by end of December.

Uri highlighted his report:

- Community Wellness Program: SJI \$195K approved. Lopez had less demand. Lopez and Orcas lack therapists.
- Ray noted that Medicaid/Medicare have increased their rates for therapy, reducing a barrier for therapists.
- Negotiation with MCOs will happen next year. It has been 10 years since current agreements were put into place. These agreements affect some of the most vulnerable in the community.
- At committee meeting, Uri questioned that the Health Care Authority started negotiation with the MCOs with a target of covering 80 percent of people. Why not a goal of 100 percent? A lack of a unified approach to healthcare?
- Mitchell noted the \$100K proviso from North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization. She and Uri are collecting data that will show who is being served by these funds. Uri said one third of proviso was spent in a couple of months of billing.
- Ray said there was an uptick in mental health needs after the election.
- Porter noted that at the recovery café, participants who started therapy via Zoom experienced setbacks. They were helped by returning to in-person therapy. Uri agreed that Zoom and in-person therapy must not be considered parity.
- Compass has one full time therapist. In the past there were many more. Rural communities in particular lack therapists.
- Drug court has approximately two participants now.

Board Recruitment follow-up:

- Ray to prepare invitation email for review.
- People with lived experience and Spanish speakers would be good additions to board membership.

Next meeting December 9 at 1:30pm

Meeting adjourned at 2:50pm