

# DEMHS REGION 4 REGIONAL RECOVERY STEERING COMMITTEE

Community Planning & Capacity Building/Infrastructure Working Group  
Economic/Natural & Cultural Resources Working Group  
Health & Social Services/Housing Working Group

May 13, 2021

## Steering Committee Special Meeting Summary

**Members Present:** Mayor Fred Allyn, Town of Ledyard/SCCOG Chairman (Co-Chair); Deborah Monahan, TVCCA (Co-Chair); Jim Butler, Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments; Maryam Elahi, Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut; John Filchak, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments; Mark Oefinger, seCTer; Reverend Benjamin Watts, Shiloh Baptist Church of New London; Reverend Catherine Zall, New London Homeless Hospitality Center; Tony Sheridan, Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce; Wendy Bury, Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition; Mike Licata, Region 4 Long-term Recovery Coordinator.

**Others Present:** Diane Manning, United Services; Jeanne Milstein, City of New London; Lee-Ann Gomes, City of Norwich; SCCOG: Sam Alexander, Carly Holzschuh, Amanda Kennedy; NECCOG: Hoween Flexer; DEMHS: Mike Caplet, Carla Iezzi.

### 1. Call to Order

Deb Monahan called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

### 2. Roll Call

Twelve members were in attendance.

### 3. Systemic Change Discussion

#### *Issues/Opportunities*

Deb Monahan set the stage for the conversation: are there things that we could be asking or doing for that would lead to systemic change rather than just looking at isolated unmet needs?

Elahi: ARPA funding will go to towns and schools, opportunity to make a difference. Proposes five important topics, discuss for 45 minutes and use last 15 minutes to discuss next steps. 1) Early Childhood Education 2) Wifi, especially for seniors and students 3) Mental Health 4) Homelessness Diversion 5) Transportation. Come out of meeting with 2-3 areas for focus. Zall: There are many needs, and can't focus on all of them. But need to develop a vision for at least some.

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Monahan: Example- ARRA emphasized rapid rehousing and diversion from homelessness-created Coordinated Access Network, a better system working with the same providers. If we can collectively leverage resources, can create coordinated system instead of isolated services, money is still limited. Millstein: Come out of ARRA funding with better system in place.

Elahi: Diane, what is your vision for mental health in Eastern CT? Manning: School systems addressing mental health in school, but not larger family health/ off-campus issues. Need home visits and work with parents to get kids back in school. Seniors experiencing abuse by people in their households. Need to work with seniors who have been isolated. Need to follow families with larger issues, need home visits. Schools should leverage organizations to address needs. Flexer: We need to be talking to school districts. Service providers need to be talking to municipal leaders and vice versa.

Butler: Towns are already developing spending plans. Lamont's plans are consistent with issues being discussed here. Allyn: 65% of the ARPA funds are going to balance state budget. Other important issue is getting people back to work and getting people taking jobs. Kennedy: there is momentum at the state and federal level for broadband. But Mental Health and Early Childhood seem ideal for improvement via collective impact, not sure about homelessness. Elahi: Would add homelessness. And these issues deeply connected to getting people into jobs.

Carol LaBelle: to get people working, need to address barriers. Top barriers are transportation and childcare, mental health also important. Monahan: TVCCA just selected to be home visiting agency for SE CT for pregnant women/children up to age three. To address child care needs, need to provide funding for new facilities.

Elahi: agree that this group doesn't need to take the lead on transportation or broadband. Filchak: transportation does need coordination. Gomes: need to diversify workforce, utility costs are a part of homelessness issue. Continue telehealth to address mental health and substance abuse treatment.

## *Next Steps*

Milstein: can we create a couple subcommittees? Mental health, early childhood, homelessness. Sheridan: need to focus on jobs creation and supporting immigrant entrepreneurship. LaBelle: that is connected. There are lots of jobs going unfulfilled, especially in health care and manufacturing. Monahan: proposes lead convener for early childhood lead conversation- Maryam Elahi. Homelessness- Cathy Zall. Mental health- Diane Manning. Zall: Could we consider following collective impact process (proven method), and do RFP to support? Monahan: perhaps discuss with United Way, backbone organization for community health

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coalition. Flexer: engage with NE CT Early Childhood Council, and advocate for legal representation for people being evicted. Elahi: propose call in next week with Zall, Monahan, Elahi, Manning to coordinate next steps. Monahan: Product could be to present ideas to towns on how funding can have better impact. Bury: asks that Steering Committee be made aware of when meetings occur to potentially listen in.

## 4. Next Meeting

The next regular meeting will be Thursday, May 27th at 9 AM.

## 5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.