

CORNER HOUSE BOARD
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
May 12, 2021
by videoconference

Members in attendance: Darrell Francis, Danita Ishibashi, Wendy Jolley, Cecilia Mathews, Joanne Parker, Wendy Perello (1st alternate), Henry Polanco, Dwaine Williamson.

Student Representatives: none

Staff in attendance: Gary De Blasio, David Errickson, Tracy Kindelsperger, Jean Woodman.

Guests: Mayor Mark Freda. Members of Princeton Mutual Aid (PMA) were in attendance; speakers are identified below.

I. Wendy Jolley opened the meeting at 6:03 PM. Wendy read the following notice into the record.

Notice of the Board's regular meetings as required by Sections 4a, 3d, 13 and 14 of the Open Public Meetings Act has been provided to the public. On December 22, 2020 public notice of the meeting date was posted on the municipal website. On May 7, 2021 public notice with a videoconference link and a draft agenda were posted on the municipal website. All notices were also published by Planet Princeton.

- a. Introductions – The Board members introduced themselves for the benefit of the guests. Several guests introduced themselves, with several identifying themselves as members of Princeton Mutual Aid, a local organization.
- b. The March 10 minutes were approved as distributed. Motion Cecilia Mathews, second Wendy Perello, approved.
- c. Announcement – Gary De Blasio announced his retirement from Corner House effective October 1, 2021. Members of the Board expressed their appreciation for Gary's service over the past 20 years.
- d. Public Comment

During the public comment period, some attendees used the Zoom videoconference chat feature to indicate they wished to speak, to ask questions, and to comment on other persons' responses. The chat feature was not available to all attendees, and any information expressed only in the chat is not a part of the minutes.

- i. Fern Spruill commented on the need for services for people who are trapped in their minds and need help, stating we need to let people know we are here for them. Dwaine noted Corner House had staff members on site even during the pandemic. Fern asked if people are available in person or via Zoom. Gary noted staff are available in person or by Zoom. Fern noted no one entity can reach everybody. Joann recalled Corner House's drop-in services from her childhood.
- ii. Leah Bowers asked about Corner House's advertising. Gary noted Corner House's outreach via the mayor's newsletter, staff who do school outreach, social media, the printed annual report to the community, and the efforts of Corner House Board and Corner House Foundation Board members. Leah identified a target market of 25 – 34-year-olds and inquired about outreach to graduate students who do not utilize local media, municipal outreach, or social media. Cecilia asked for suggestions. Leah suggested posters on Nassau Street and outreach on the streets. Gary noted the pandemic has shut down the community events where Corner House had been present. Dave noted some treatment centers turn away people who don't have insurance, but Corner House is publicly funded. Discussion ensued regarding treatment centers'

marketing tactics and whether Corner House targets people with or without insurance. Corner House staff affirmed Corner House accepts clients with Medicaid/NJ FamilyCare and the uninsured.

- iii. Fern Spruill commented on the extent of Corner House's outreach to the community. Gary and Fern made statements on Corner House's effectiveness and use of program alumni.
- iv. Wendy Perello noted she was raised in the Princeton community and thinks all present are trying to say the same thing. She stated she is sensing some tension, and is not sure why. She noted Corner House has professional clinicians, the work is consuming, the municipal government should support that effort, and, as we emerge from the pandemic, there is even more work to do. Wendy stated she would like to use this time to hear positive suggestions.
- v. Yan ___ has read the annual report to the community and liked what it said but did not see a full financial budget. Gary replied that Corner House has a \$1 million budget and it is available on the municipal website. He stated the Corner House Foundation raises about \$250,000 per year; it contributes \$200,000 back to the municipality each year and uses the rest for programs. Gary noted Corner House staff are some of the lowest-paid people in their field. Gary commented on PMA's financial status; Yan responded this meeting is not about PMA's work.
- vi. Ying ___ stated that, as taxpaying members of the public, they have a right to know financial information, and are not sure why this has become a hostile fight. Ying asked how many unduplicated clients Corner House has, stating the annual report only had percentages. Ying stated PMA has a record of going to town council meetings to fight for things like affordable housing and community services, and this information will help it identify what Corner House needs. Gary refused to answer until May 18 per Ying's OPRA request.
- vii. Wendy Jolley ended the public comment period at 6:46 PM.

II. Director's Report – Gary DeBlasio – see attached report.

- i. Corner House has resumed regular on-site hours.
- ii. The student leadership retreat will be held August 3 – 5, in person.
- iii. Treatment numbers reflect lower SUD treatment numbers throughout NJ.
- iv. Leadership programs are concluding for 2020-2021. The 2021-2022 student leadership team will be the largest in Corner House history.

III. Cultural Competency Plan – Dave presented the Cultural Competency Plan for Board approval. Dave reviewed the questionnaire used by the State Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and noted the template was developed from SAMHSA's "TIP 59"¹ for use by all State-contracted providers. Gary stated someone had asked if the plan could include trans or nonbinary persons, and that he had responded yes. Dave also noted that cultural competency is an ongoing process. Joanne noted the Princeton Civil Rights Commission has developed a cultural competency toolkit. Dave replied that staff reviewed it as part of developing this plan and can continue to use the toolkit while working through the action steps. The Board approved the plan. Motion Cecilia Mathews, 2nd Joanne Parker, approved.

¹ Treatment Improvement Protocol 59: *Improving Cultural Competence*, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4849, First Printed 2014.
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- i. Gary apologized for his emotional outburst earlier in the meeting.
 - ii. Joanne commented on people who come into Princeton, think they know how to run it, and (identify problems), and then move on. People need to respect those who have already been there and not try to tear others apart. Joanne noted she has been involved with PMA as well as Corner House.
 - iii. Dave noted an OPRA request is not necessary, but the funding and answers are complex. This board meeting also has to accomplish what Corner House needs to function. The answers are already reported to the State.
 - iv. Fern commented that she is happy to volunteer and collaborate.
- IV. Corner House Student Board Report (CHSB) – The student representatives were not able to attend this evening’s meeting, but their activities are noted in the attached Director’s Report.
- V. Municipal Liaison – Dwaine Williamson
 - a. Bernie Hrazdovic has started working as the new Business Administrator for the municipality. He is getting to know staff and departments.
 - b. The municipality has created a Cannabis Task Force to discuss the possibility of licensing cannabis retailers following the recent legalization in New Jersey.
 - c. Council has received a petition to create a Community Center in accordance with the municipal master plan, naming the former PFARS building and adjacent housing as a location. Services are already being provided, although Council notes that some needs assessments are in progress. Dwaine noted the concerns include possibly duplicating services, the effectiveness of social services delivery, and facilities use.
 - d. Vaccination clinics, and on-site vaccinations for those who needed them, were made available through the Health Department.
 - e. Council decided to discontinue the Hilltop Park turf project; Council and Mercer County will have to determine whether the County’s \$500,000 grant for the project can be repurposed. Ben Stentz, the Director of Recreation, is resigning.
- VI. Corner House Foundation and Development – Tracy Kindelsperger, Coordinator of Grants & Development, reported two fundraisers are scheduled:
 - a. June 4 – Tunes & Tulips – honoring Leah McDonald & the Princeton Police Department. The event will showcase student leaders who will present some of their work during the program.
 - b. Sept 25 – 5K at Stuart Country Day School at 8:00 AM. This will be an opportunity to reach more people in the community and present a holistic approach to health.
- VII. Old Business – none

VIII. New Business

- a. Wendy Jolley noted the Board might need to meet in July.
- b. Cecilia drew the Board's attention to the obituary of Irene Cornish Thompson, published in the *Town Topics* on April 28. Irene had interned and worked at Corner House in the 1980s. <http://www.towntopics.com/wordpress/2021/04/28/obituaries-4-28-21/>

IX. Adjournment

- a. Joanne Parker expressed her gratitude for the interest of PMA members. Joanne testified to her own positive experience with community support services when she was an adolescent and expressed strong support for Corner House's work.
- b. The meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM. Motion Dwaine Williamson, second Darrell Francis, approved.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, September 8, 2021 at 6:00 PM.

Meeting Schedule for 2021:

- July – if necessary
- September 8
- November 10

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Woodman, Corner House Board Secretary
Minutes approved July 14, 2021

Director's Report May 2021

Administrative Updates: Corner House staff have returned to the office on a full time basis with our normal hours back in place. Client sessions are held through Zoom or in person with the proper protocols in place; protocols include masks and a movable plexiglass screen. All clients are screened by a set of questions and have their temperatures checked at the entrance. The new Municipality of Princeton Administrator, Bernie Hvozdovic, has begun his service in Princeton and we had a productive welcoming meeting this week. We will host our annual Student Leadership Awards on May 25, 2021 from 6 PM to 7:30 PM.

Corner House Foundation and Development Office Updates:

DIRECT MAIL: \$87,406.00

INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS - TOTAL RAISED \$35,538.90

Includes gifts in honor/memory of individuals that were given separate from the Direct Mail campaign.

Includes anonymous \$25,000 donation

Events- Total Raised \$5,125.00

Sponsorships- \$3,500.00

Tickets- \$1,625.00

Pending: PNC Wisteria Sponsorship- \$2,500.00

GRANTS - TOTAL RAISED \$75,500.00

MacMillan Family Foundation-\$10,000

Church & Dwight-\$8,000

Church & Dwight (Barry Bruno) - \$2,500.00

Tikkun Olam Foundation-\$10,000

Starr Foundation-\$15,000

Griffin-Cole Fund- \$30,000 (for Leadership)

FUNDRAISING TOTAL FOR 2020-2021: \$203,569.90

Treatment Program Highlights:

Currently we have no wait list for clinical services. We have had 12 requests for services in April and thus far 3 requests in May. We currently have 8 Drug Court clients.

We have begun limited groups at this time: Act Your Values, Relapse Prevention Group, Thoughts and Feelings, and Women's Trauma.

Leadership Program Highlights:

The 2021-2022 teams have been selected. Corner House will field its largest municipal leadership teams in our history, which is fitting for the beginning of our 50th year of service to the community.

In addition, we will host an in-person Student Leadership Institute August 3rd-5th. The mornings, from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM, will be held under tents at Community Park fields. Participants will then head to the Princeton High School Auditorium from 2-5:30 PM for afternoon sessions. All guest speaker's sessions will take place in the afternoons at PHS. We have an approved protocol from Princeton Health Department to keep students safe, which includes mask wearing, social distancing of 6 feet, and individualized wrapped meals for all students. The Mayor and Health Officer will address the students at the beginning of the Institute. The Leadership Institute is fully funded by a grant from the Griffin-Cole Fund.

Seniors for Seniors: 10 CHSB volunteers are in touch with their assigned senior citizens, and they are reporting incredibly positive feedback. A video created by a few CHSB members about the program is available on our website. I encourage everyone to watch and hear what the students and seniors have to say about their experience. An end of the year picnic is planned for June 8 at the Community Park fields.

Corner House Student Board: The Student Board organized a virtual Trivia night on April 16 and will host a virtual movie night on May 22, 2021, for all four high schools. The students facilitate parts of the weekly meetings to expand on their skill development. One group created a "fishbowl" activity and another crafted a Kahoot activity, a Spotify activity, and organized an online board game. This experience allows them to learn marketing skills, organizing skills, and public speaking skills, enabling them to continue interacting with their peers.

Project GAIA: As students move into the last part of the year, GAIA has been busy presenting workshops at the Princeton elementary schools. In the past few weeks, we have run three workshops at Littlebrook, two at Riverside, and one at Johnson Park. GAIA has now completed all of their workshops for the year. As we come to our final weeks, we continue to meet on Tuesday nights to discuss topics of importance to the students. They had a great discussion on the pressures around college, and talked about ethics around a global pandemic, and what can be done to address the worldwide inequities in vaccines, treatments, and medical funding. This week they will have a conversation around ableism and the discrimination people with disabilities face. Their last meeting on May 18 will give them a chance to look back on what they have accomplished this year and look at their goals moving forward.

The TAG Team has coming workshops at JP Elementary on May 12 and Princeton Charter on May 13. TAG students engaged in robust discussion on topics raised in this NYT article about teen mental health issues during the pandemic year: [Opinion | How the Covid Pandemic Affected Teens' Mental Health - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#). TAG students discussed this article about celebrity Demi Lovato's choice to be "California Sober" and watched a clip from her recent documentary to understand how this decision and her past drug use affected her as well as her family and friends: [There's nothing wrong with being "California sober" — Demi Lovato's haters be darned | Salon.com](#)

Prevention Program Highlights:

Academic Success Today (AST):

Mentees

- Continuing to send out information on spring clinics and summer camps.
- Receiving applications from elementary school counselors for rising sixth graders who would benefit from AST program as they enter the middle school in fall.
- Preparing an end of year award ceremony. Obtaining student accomplishments from PUMS teachers. Plan to hold short ceremony outside on May 24 at 1:15 PM, under tents in front of middle school. Will give token gifts to rising ninth grade students.

Mentors

- Mentors reported hope they would be able to meet with mentees one-on-one again in person next year. Many found that mentoring two middle school students at same time was much more difficult than one-on-one. Also, felt students were not as engaged on Zoom.
- Working on email thanking mentors for their participation in AST.
- Planning fun active Zoom meetings for mentees this summer. Ideas include art projects, cooking foods and yoga. We will deliver supplies when needed for participants.

STAR: (Super Teens Acting Responsibly): The 8th-grade girls meet once a week to check-in and talk about topics and issues related to their lives. Recent topics included discussions including the following topics: friendships, girl power, self-care, self-love, empathy, and how to deal with stress, addiction, and creating connections.

Outreach Program Highlights:

AYP: Students are doing well in their classes and still attending online tutoring. Students participated in a workshop on anger and stress management. The group discussed triggers and coping skills and were very engaged in the discussion. Students have completed applications for the Summer Youth Employment Program and attended the orientation via zoom.

WOWY/PYP: Students are doing well in their classes and benefiting from online tutoring and SAT prep. Students have completed applications for SYEP, YMCA, and Princeton Recreation Department. A former EOF counselor, Courtney Agyeman, from Rider University spoke with students about the Education Opportunity Fund program, services, and benefits. Dr. Ebony White, a mental health therapist, spoke with students about the importance of mental health. She discussed eradicating stigmas surrounding mental health and how to break down the stigmas associated with mental health among minority communities. Dr. White taught the students coping skills and provided an activity where they practiced controlled breathing. Students were engaged with both speakers and continued the conversation through a group chat!

