

TOWN OF ACTON  
BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING  
JANUARY 13, 1987

MINUTES

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Barbara Brown  
TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Board members present: Richard Stephens, Acting Chairman, Eleanor Voorhies, George Emmons. Staff present: Edward Wirtanen and Marion Donahue, Sanitarians, Carol Holley, secretary, Priscilla Greene, Nursing Supervisor.

The meeting opened at 7:15 p.m. upon the arrival of Mr. Stephens

7:15 p.. The Wayland Group, James Kitendaugh and Linda Cavanaugh

Mr. Emmons asked for a quick overview of what the proposed study would do. Mr. Kitendaugh rendered summary of the background of the Wayland Group. He stated that their business is three years old, and deals with non-profit institutions only, providing planning assistance, future management counselling, and fund raising and marketing counselling. They have from 5 to 8 clients at any given time. Only the two principles of the firm do the professional work. The impressive backgrounds and educational credentials of the principles was outlined (Harvard, Tufts).

Ms Cavanaugh discussed her perception of APHNS's situation and her proposal to assist in developing comparative analyses of options and making a determination based on qualitative and quantitative criteria of any option being reviewed. Her understanding is that there are many parties to the structure: people being served, staff, the Town, other institutions. She proposed to interview the different categories of parties involved and also look at statistical data on the activities and finances of the APHNS, Nashoba and Emerson nursing services. Long-range objectives of APHNS and the Board of Health and the financial implications, impact on staff and community of various options, will be covered. The findings will be discussed with the Board of Health and APHNS administration.

Mr. Stephens stated that there are 3 basic constituencies the Nursing Service has to deal with. He as a Board member was interested in the Town. The reason Acton is in the health care business is that we have to provide many state-mandated services. Our purpose in running APHNS is that we can have a higher quality of service. We get a lot of service for a little money. It now costs \$20,000-\$30,000 per year to the Town to get this service. We can't buy this for less. If it were not a good deal for the Town, we would have to look into other options. These are not necessarily services only for the ill. We provide well-child clinics and cost-sharing for medical care. The patients don't care who manages the service. They are interested in good health care. 80% don't care about price, 20% do. 80% have insurance. The third constituency is the health care business. There are a lot of parties - we are having trouble with Medicaid not referring services that they will reimburse. We also have problems with competitors - the freebie business they will let us have. There are also merger partners. They are interested in the business point of view. We have no interest in the business end of the health care business. As a Board, we have to side with the Town as a whole. Why are we failing? Are we failing? If we conclude that we are failing, can we manage or fund-raise ourselves to success? Are we better off alone or with a partner? Is that the way the Wayland Group saw it?

Ms Cavanaugh stated that, in a word, yes.

Mr. Kitendaugh stated that they can refine the information. They are not decision makers. They can provide the information on which a decision can be based. The Board will have to measure the options one against the other.

Mr. Stephens discussed possible courses the study could take. Perhaps we are interested in more of a game plan or starategy in order to maximize benefit to the Town.

Ms Cavanaugh stated that one can always choose to underwrite, the Town can decide to stay in the business and fill in the gap.

Mr. Stephens debated if APHNS has a size problem which mandates a merger, or do we have a management problem. We have the best health care in the area, but over the past 5 years the problem of managing the service has become much more complex. Medicare doesn't care about quality of service as long as the paperwork is correct.

Ms Cavanaugh stated that they were interested in the energy behind a particular motivating force. Would the context and the energy justify fund raising?

Mrs. Greene stated that she felt Mr. Stephens was narrowing rather than broadening the goals of the study, keying in one very specific areas.

Mr. Stephens stated that the Professional Advisory Committee looked at the problem with a different viewpoint.

Mr. Kitendaugh asked going back to Ms Greene's initial conversation, what is the core question that can be posed?

Ms Greene stated that it is what APHNS will be and will be doing in 5 years.

Miss Voorhies stated that she thought probably the different members of the Board of Health posed the questions in a different way. We see the issue quite differently. I think it is difficult because as a member of the Board of Health I am concerned with the questions Mr. Stephens raised but I have a nursing background so I see that the trend all across the country is moving away from small agencies with part-time help and few resources. Newer ways with constellations that can provide better services with better prepared staff, more in-service education, more strategies that would help.

Mr. Stephens stated that if we came to the bigger-is-better approach then I could rephrase my concern that if we can get better service for the constituency by merging, I would agree. If we can provide better services by being alone, we should be alone.

Mr. Kitendaugh stated that the budgetary resources they had available have determined what they said they could do and could not do for the agency. How much professional time can this group afford to grapple with this issue? It is a limitation because we have to choose what way to deal with the problem.

We have suggested one, which is providing you with information configured in a different way and making judgments of the options available.

Further discussion of the scope of the project ensued.

Mr. Stephens stated that we have no problem getting funding for state-mandated services on the Town Meeting floor. We would have trouble funding clinics and cost-sharing programs. To analyze would come down to what the costs would be in being on our own versus running a nursing agency. The second issue is one of quality of health care. We provide nerses and contract everything else. A larger agency should be able to provide more diverse services.

Ms Greene stated that Mr. Stephens was looking at an either-or situation.

Mr. Stephens stated that he would like to see less interviews and more analysis of numbers in the proposed study. The service we are looking for is how do we manage our organization.

Ms Greene said the original stated intent was to take a look at how we stand and how the other options compared. That is what I understood we were looking for. You (Mr. Stephens) are suggesting a different approach.

Ms Cavanaugh stated that he is raising a whole another issue which is if you decide to be in the business and you want to be healthy in five years I would advise you to have fund raising and management plans. I see that as a different question.

Mr. Stephens stated that one could say that with the appropriate plan this agency could be an entity versus being in a merger.

Mr. Kitendaugh stated that the management plan in itself is a separate piece of work. If you decide to remain an entity then clearly you need to have a strong and offensive management strategy.

Ms Cavanaugh stated that there was then a fourth scenario:

1. Status quo
2. Merger with Nashoba
3. Merger with Emerson
4. Status quo but better, with a management plan

Mr. Kitendaugh stated that it is very easy to construct a plan, but factually the resources may not be available.

Ms Cavanaugh discussed the economies of a larger scale operation briefly.

Mr. Stephens expressed endorsement of the viability of the fourth scenario. The stated the problems with bureaucracy and anticipating changes in medicare procedures.

Ms Greene discussed the difficulty in management of nursing services, largely due to the demands of medicare, and made note of the high turnover in management personnel.

Ms Cavanaugh stated that you have to deal with the fact that there will always be clients whose services will not be reimburseable.

Mr. Kitendaugh asked if there were any questions the Board had hoped to have answered that they haven't?

Ms Voorhies stated she thought some of the Board members saw it from different points of view and that she would like the opportunity to look at options rather than just focus on the management problems of our own agency.

Mr. Stephens stated that the Board had a decision to make. It is merge, or manage. The criteria are going to be cost, the service, the quality of care to morbidity patients in particular. My sense of what we are looking for is a document to guide us through a merge-or-manage decision.

Ms Greene stated that was not far afield from what she had originally presented.

After some further discussion, Mr. Kitendaugh stated he would stand by his original proposal.

Mr. Stephens asked if, when they were done, the Board would have the informaton sufficient to make a decision.

Mr. Kitendaugh stated that within the given budget, major efforts were not possible but a memorandum would result.

Ms Cavanaugh stated that they are dealing with items yet unknown to them.

Mr. Stephens stated that the Board needed to confer with the Chairman and take the proposal under advisement. Miss Voorhies concurred.

The Wayland Group thanked the Board, wished them a good evening, and departed.

Ms Greene asked what she should do about Simione and Simione, especially in light of the fact that they had hired new personnel.

Mr. Stephens and Miss Voorhies both felt that the Wayland Group's proposal was preferable to Simione and Simione.

Miss Voorhies moved that the Board of Health approve the Wayland Group's proposal subject to the concurrence of the Chairman. All voted in favor.

Ms Greene, before leaving, discussed computer training courses and the purchase of software with the Board. Mr. Stephens highly recommended the training and believed that a computer consultant would be a good idea.

8:21. Review of minutes. Miss Voorhies moved to accept the minutes with corrections, Mr. Emmons seconded, all voted in favor.

8:26 Edward Wirtanen, staff member. Special permits. Mr. Wirtanen had requests for special permits submitted for 4-bedroom, single family dwellings in three aquifer areas:

1. Concetta Circle
2. Strawberry Hill Rd
3. Main Street

Mr. Stephens asked for confirmation that all were single family dwellings. Mr. Wirtanen confirmed, and stated that all septic systems were at least 100 feet from wetlands.

A brief discussion of the use of filter medium ensued.

Mr. Emmons moved that special permits be granted for all nine subject parcels, with all nine having the conditions that follow:

1. No underground fuel storage tanks permitted on site.
2. Septic tank to be pumped at least every two years.
3. Site will fully conform to Town of Acton Hazardous Material Control By-Law.
4. The sewage disposal system to be approved by Board of Health staff.
5. Leaching facility are designed and installed with an intermediate layer with a percolation rate of between 6-10 minutes per inch in those areas that have a percolation rate of less than 2 min/inch.
6. Sewage Disposal system is a minimum of 100 feet from flood plain and/or wetlands.

Miss Voorhies seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Emmons volunteered to be on a citizen's committee regarding the Kelley's Corner study.


8:40 Review of amended draft regulation regarding a change of ownership and transfer of permits. George Emmons moved to accept regulation as amended, Miss Voorhies seconds, all in favor. Staff directed to publish.

8:46 Review of correspondence. Regarding Brook Run Condominiums, it was stated they were making progress in solving their problems with septic system. Regarding Parker Village, Mr. Wirtanen stated they had been directed to speed up their discovery process.


The Board set their next meeting for January 27, 7:30 p.m.

Miss Voorhies moved to adjourn to Selectmen's meeting. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Carol Holley, Sec'y

Signed and approved,

  
Daniel Costello, Chairman