

Minutes
Barons South Committee
July 29, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Steve at 9:35am.

In attendance:

Steve Daniels, co-chair
Marty Hauhuth, co-chair
John Thompson
Jo Fuchs-Luscombe
Yvonne Senturia
Ken Bernhard
Barbara Butler, Human Services Director, Ex Officio
Shelly Kassen, Selectwoman, Ex Officio
Gail Kelley, Asst. Town Attorney

The minutes from the July 1 and July 21 meetings were unanimously approved.

Steve Coward:

Steve Coward is a Westport resident since 1998, and has provided legal representation to hospitals and senior living communities. He shared observations about regulatory matters and the overall field. He believes public/private partnerships in services for the aging are the future. Currently the state is committed to holding down the number of nursing home beds on a purely cost basis, which is hurting the non-profits, as the self-pay population goes to the small for-profit providers. Continuing care is a very actuarially modeled business: the population outlives the actuarial tables as people in their 90s can't make their maintenance fees.

Jo: concerned what happens when a nursing home closes.

Steve Coward: Beds from existing nursing homes can be sold, but not new beds. Hard to get buyers for existing skilled nursing facilities, in part because of aging infrastructure, as well as uncertainties surrounding Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement levels. The state can get a consent order holding 30% of beds open for Medicaid population, but Medicaid pays 70 cents on each dollar of cost. But end up being there longer than projected and then either take no more Medicaid or go to DSS to get a rate increase.

Are there lower cost models out there?

Shelly: To the extent that the state needs somewhere to put these people, community based is better. Should we go to DSS and propose that they break the moratorium to let us have a license for what we are trying to do in Westport on town owned land, as model for other communities that want to do the same thing next to an existing senior center and/or senior housing?

Steve Coward: DSS has done this with hospice care with a pilot project. Not a bad time to ask .

Steve Daniels: 3 or 4 components: housing, short and long term rehab and extended life services. Some savings delivering care on a congregate basis. MFP people have to go somewhere with their voucher to seek services. Question is whether MFP state and federal will pay. Eg: mental health deinstitutionalization ... don't look at just the beds for skilled nursing but also beds for rehabilitation which is larger component short term. Likelihood is we are not deciding who is going to bid. We will put it out there and see what we get back.

Shelly: From a developer's standpoint, part A is a housing model. Have to give back to the town and clean up the property. Can build at least 66 units. That part is a viable model. Developers have to respond to at least part A, and Planning and Zoning has said (in Text amendment) part A is to be built before part B. Some developers may not respond to both part A and part B. Questions are about part B... give a vision for part B and keep working on it, but don't hold up part A for it.

Steve Daniels: We will seek financial plans from the developers. Not imposing plans on them.

Jo: important to talk to DSS and see where the state is heading. Get our legislators involved. Commissioners respond to legislators.

Steve Coward: Try talking to Julia Starr at the CT Commission on Aging.

Barbara will call Julia Starr. Shelly will continue to work on appointment with DSS commissioner.

August 10th conference call with Dawn Lambert re: Money Follows the Person.

Yvonne previewed slide show for August 9th meeting with RTM long range planning and planning and zoning committees, which illustrates elements that could go into the RFP. Suggestions to be incorporated included introduction describing goals of site visits and what we learned, along with description of independent affordable housing with services models and the small house model. Quick chart showing layout and square footage of some senior housing apartments.

Next meeting: Thursday August 4th at 9:30am.

Meeting adjourned by Steve Daniels at 11:00am.