

*Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families*

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families**

**DATE:** Friday, July 20, 2007

**TIME BEGAN:** 8:05am **TIME ENDED:** 10:00am **FACILITATED BY:** Sarah Fox **SUMMARY BY:** Judy Buswell

**PRESENT:** Sarah Fox, Nancy Porosky, Katie Brandt, Betty Anson, Rasim Gusinac, Sue Smith, Emily Clement, Laurie Belanger, Micheline Roy, Christie Corrigan, Amy Hall **COUNCIL ASSOCIATES:** Rep. Jim Pilliod, Rep Alida Millham, Andre Paquette, volunteer, **GUESTS:** Stephanie Halter and Scott Meyer (Consultants with Data Project PSU), John Cook, volunteer, Judge Willard Martin, Dianne Zawacki (Boys & Girls Club of the Lakes Region), Mike Brandt (resident of Barnstead), Nancy Cook (Belknap County CAO), Rep Beth Arsenault, Rep Judie Reeve, Deb Rosato (BC Early Learning), Nina Gardner (Youth Assistance Program), Dave Tryon, volunteer, Brian Loanes (BC Restorative Justice Program)  
**STAFF:** Alan Robichaud, Judy Buswell

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1. **Welcome and Introductions:** Council Chair Sarah Fox welcomed Council members and invited guests for the presentation and discussion with State Sen. Kathy Sgambati on Chapter 263 of the 2007 Legislative Session. Introductions were shared.
2. **Discussion on State Budget and Chapter 263 of the 2007 Legislative Session: “Payment of Certain Youth Services Costs - Sen Kathy Sgambati** This legislation, part of the 2007 Budget Bill, shifts payment responsibilities between the counties and the State for 9 categories of funding. The rationale for these changes is that the current payment system is not working, and in fact currently costs the State \$1.3 million to maintain. This trailer legislation assigns costs for eldercare (nursing homes and home care) to the Counties while the state assumes financial responsibilities for the other seven categories that include juvenile justice, DCYF provider payments, and skilled care etc. Counties were assigned elder care costs because counties already operate nursing homes; home care, as a natural partner to nursing homes, was added. According to Sen. Sgambati, “This shift won’t change services – it only changes who writes the check.” While it is true that the Counties have been given the most expensive component, there will be “a cap” assigned to what the Counties must pay. This limit will be determined by the Legislature together with the Counties via an intergovernmental agreement. The second change is that \$5 million dollars will be available to give to counties to balance obvious inequities such as found in Coos County where the percentage of elders is high and the percentage of juvenile offenders is low. According to Sen. Sgambati, Belknap County should also “be a winner” and could receive \$200,000- \$300,000 out of this \$ 5M, but Merrimack, Hillsborough, and Rockingham will not receive any of this “balancing money” as they have fewer percentages of elders.

This reassignment of financial responsibilities will simplify and restore state and county relationships and reduce the endless haggling over who pays what, “something that fortunately has not occurred often in Belknap County”. Sen. Sgambati noted that if this County had been experiencing this endless “fighting” over who pays the bills, it might be easier to understand why this shift will be a definite improvement.

Year One, during the planning phase, will bring no changes. The expectation is that the Counties and State will work together on the “inevitable glitches”.

A lengthy discussion followed, including these questions and comments:

- No immediate impact is expected from this Chapter 263 legislation as a year lead time is needed to prepare for implementation and 3-year “ramp-up” of additional planning for the shifting of cost responsibilities.

- Sen. Sgambati says there appears “to be no political will for a broad-based tax” as a revenue solution. However, legislators did pay attention to, and free up money for increased prevention services and increased TANF benefits. She said, “It is an enormous challenge to have everything fully funded.”
- Judge Martin suggests that an unintended consequence might be “that local communities will not think the care of youth is their responsibility and will then become disengaged”. Sen. Sgambati responded that “this is a community question and that this concern is not worth keeping a bad system in place because communities are not convinced of their role”. It was acknowledged that the cost of a child in trouble ripples through everything and all governmental systems are affected. The Judge asked if she would support “local provisions and oversight over this funding process?” While Sen. Sgambati continues to support “local oversight”, some spending, such as “with DCYF is not discretionary, but highly mandated”.
- Sen. Sgambati says there will not be a need “to dictate to locals, as long as a strong accountability process is in place”, citing the now defunct Health Care Transition Funds as an excellent example.
- Andre Paquette feels that “unless there is corollary legislation to enhance the role of the community (towns and counties) and bring the citizens closer to the issues, the principles of Restorative Justice will be replaced with the punitive ‘stuff and cuff’ practices”. Andre explained how Belknap County has been able to develop a three-tier sanction process that includes the principles of Restorative Justice. These advances have been developed with the strong support, participation, and input of the JJAC group (Juvenile Justice Advisory Council). If a “built-in disincentive for county involvement develops, the achievements in Belknap County” and “the principles of Restorative Justice will lose”. If the State is now responsible for funding all juvenile services, it will be too easy for the counties to hand all their involvement and interest, including such projects as the Citizens Council, back to the state. Andre says there should be “lots of dialogue so Belknap County keeps its three-tier approach to sanctions and its strong efforts to restore youth to positive citizenship”. Andre says the “outcomes for kids are better when they are kept as close to their schools and families as possible”. He suggests some sort of “devolution of funds to Belknap County, or all counties, to support a citizen oversight process for the management of juveniles” be considered. Sen. Sgambati responded that “no one at the state level is walking away from Restorative Justice,” but acknowledges that it could be “hard to let one county do something different”. Rep Beth Arsenault who is on the Child and Family Law committee noted that committee members “bring up Belknap County frequently as a model of citizen involvement.” Sen. Sgambati is happy to work with Belknap County on any level “to get more solid around ‘Community Justice principles’”.
- Sen. Sgambati suggests it is “important to keep the discussion around *billing* changes (the Chapter 263 legislation) separate from *policy* changes. Chapter 263 is only about billing changes.”
- “Community Justice”, the over-arching philosophy guiding the Citizens Council and all its work, includes Restorative Justice. These approaches, by their definition, must include involvement of citizens. It is true that the value of citizen involvement cannot be adequately measured by current indicators.
- The “Commission”, tasked to develop an implementation process for this new Chapter 263 legislation, may not be the appropriate vehicle to discuss “local involvement” around the management of juveniles. Sen. Sgambati feels this important topic “would be lost in the expected focus on long-term care. There should be a parallel effort by another entity to promote local involvement and the principles of Restorative and Community Justice”
- Rep. Alida Millham reminded those in attendance that the Citizens Council developed here in Belknap County because of “the disconnect” between what the counties were expected to pay for their juvenile services and opportunities for local control and input over these costs. “The underscore” for the Citizens Council is “community development”, yet community development is a long and complicated process and very difficult to evaluate. Belknap County has made some

significant changes and these achievements “must not be jeopardized” or “diffused” in the implementation of Chapter 263. Alida is concerned that legislators, who must spend all their time dealing with proposed legislation and bills, find as a consequence that they do not have time for “creative thinking on juvenile justice as well as education and healthcare issues.” Sen. Sgambati agrees that this disconnect should not happen and that she “is happy to meet with us again to explore how to continue” on our present path. Sen. Sgambati suggests that we “must detail where these disconnects occur and how to prevent them. However, this process of securing local investment is still a local issue.”

- A definite challenge with this new Chapter 263 legislation will be to keep the County Commissioners and Delegation invested and interested in continuing the Citizens Council model as part of the County budget. In the face of this decreased motivation for counties to continue their financial support for juveniles, it is now up to all of us to promote local involvement and investment through some well organized process here in Belknap County.
- Chapter 263 will not affect the distribution of County Incentive Funds. The amount and process will remain the same.
- Judge Martin suggests that “the Court” must be involved in any discussions Belknap County has on how to avoid “unintended consequences”. The Judge also noted that Carroll County is beginning a “Citizens Council process” through a grant-funded project.
- Sen. Sgambati indicates that at least 8 M\$ in “new prevention money is now in the budget”. This money must be well spent, well targeted, and coordinated so that the streams are not isolated into different areas. She would like to see “an age continuum of prevention”, citing one of the best examples “as the Laconia Head Start where she observed effective interaction among the staff, families, and kids”.
- While there is more of an emphasis in this budget on prevention, “prevention concepts” are still not valued and respected as they should be. The \$30,000 average yearly cost to house an inmate in jail or prison could be more effectively spent on younger children and their families to keep them out of prison. She indicated that New Hampshire has “never really invested in prevention”.
- There needs to be excellent coordination and distribution of prevention funds and the Governor’s Commission.

**ACTION:**

- **Alan Robichaud and Sarah Fox will discuss further means for how the Citizens Council initiative and the changes it has helped to develop in the management of juveniles can continue to be used as a model for the state.**
- **The 1 page Fact Sheet on County-State Funding given to the Council by Sen. Sgambati will be distributed to all Council members and to others in Belknap County**

**3. Council Business Sarah Fox reporting**

- **Council Recruitment** The Member Development Committee will begin 1-1 conversations with designated people in the County to identify potential Council members. Sarah would also like to “re-visit” the “Passion Statements” written by Council members several years ago. She suggests that these statements and similar others could be the basis for “Letters to the Editor” about the Council. Council member recruitment must be “front and center” for us all the time, more important now than ever.
- **Vice Chair Appointment** Christie Corrigan has agreed to fill the vacancy in the Vice Chair position.
- **Minutes of June 15, 2007** A motion to approve the summary as written was made by Sue Smith with a second by Christie Corrigan. Motion carried.

**4. Other Council Business**

- **New Hampshire Children’s Trust Fund** will be observing its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. As a part of this observance, NHCTF will honor 20 individuals in the state as un-sung heroes who are making a difference in the lives of children and families. Dawn McCartney of Barnstead is one of the 20 being recognized. Dawn is a previous winner of the Annette P Schmitt UnSung Hero

Award given each year by the Citizens Council. Council member Katie Brandt of Barnstead suggests that the Council sponsor a table to include Dawn McCartney and her family. As this is a great opportunity “to promote the Council”, Sarah Fox made a motion to sponsor a table at this October 18<sup>th</sup> event; second provided by Emily Clement. Motion carried. The Council will have a display at this event.

**ACTION: Help will be needed in developing the Council display for this NHCTF event. Council members interested in working on this display are encouraged to contact either Alan or Judy.**

- **100% Schools** Council member Amy Hall of Belmont explained the “100% School project” developed by NH Healthy Kids. Its goal is to assure that every child has healthcare coverage. Amy is currently involved in discussions with LRGHealthcare and the Laconia School District on implementing this project in the Laconia schools and the Lakes Region. The formal launch of this 100% Schools project is this coming September.
- **Tobacco Tax** Amy Hall said she has been told that the recently increased tobacco tax in NH “will be eaten by the tobacco companies”, meaning actual consumers will not be taxed, but instead this extra revenue will be paid directly to the State by the tobacco companies.
- **NH Vision for Redesign: Moving From High Schools to Learning Communities”** Sarah Fox provided 5 copies of this newly released NH Dept of Education document to the Council. This is “a road map on how schools can be effectively re-organized.”
- **Belknap County Early Learning** Deb Rosato explained some of the projects now underway in Belknap County on behalf of young children and early learning. (1) School Readiness Indicators are being developed (2) Surveys of elementary school principals have been distributed. (3) “Born Learning” efforts are underway (public education and communication campaign on value and importance of readiness and early learning). Funds have been added by the WLNH Children’s Auction to assist in information dissemination. “Ages and Stages information will be included. This PR effort involves *all* families, not just those at risk. (4) New website about to be launched: [www.lrecfr.org](http://www.lrecfr.org) Target audiences for this website include parents, families, and service providers. Community users will be able to log on and post events.

5. **Executive Director Report – Alan Robichaud reporting** Alan distributed his usual “yellow sheet” that highlights current Council business and activities. He mentioned the following:

- **P.r.o.v.e.It! Data Training (June 20<sup>th</sup>)** Led by the P.R.O.V.E.It! data consultants, Plymouth State University professors (Stephanie Halter, Danielle McDonald, and Scott Meyer), seminar participants learned how to use the new database for coordinated data collection that was developed by the consultants. Participants also received a Training Manual.
- **July 27<sup>th</sup> JJAC meeting** Bill Fenniman, the Director of NH Juvenile Justice Services, will be a guest at the July 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of JJAC. Council members are encouraged to attend this discussion.
- **Early Childhood Initiatives** While not listed in this month’s report, Alan has been actively involved in working with Deb Rosato on local early childhood initiatives. They are planning a Forum for key business leaders to develop a team of “champions for kids”.
- **Chapter 263** Alan suggests some type of “Summit” (e.g. high level meeting) to begin a conversation with designated others on the impact of Chapter 263 in Belknap County.

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING**

**DATE: August 17, 2007**

**TIME: 8am-10am**

**LOCATION: River Level Conference Room, Busiel Mill, Laconia**

## FACT SHEET ON COUNTY-STATE FUNDING

Today's federal-state-county cost sharing covers nine different categories of expense. The budget proposal passed would divide up the payment responsibility for these nine programs. Nursing home and home care bills will be paid by the counties and the state will pay for the remaining seven programs.

**Goals:** There are two major goals for the change.

1. **To save unnecessary administrative costs.** This change will reduce unnecessary three-way paperwork and the problems that ensue – in some cases involving expensive litigation. The change will save the state an estimated \$1.3 million dollars in administrative costs and the counties will save a similar, if not larger sum. That money can be redirected into nursing homes and long-term care for our elderly.
2. **To distribute the cost of caring for elders on a more equitable basis.** The proposed change in the cost-sharing arrangement helps counties who have a higher number of elders on Medicaid and a smaller tax base to spread those costs over. For example – on a per capita basis, each Coos county taxpayer pays more than six times the amount of what their counterparts in some wealthier counties pay.

### Questions

**When does the plan go into effect?**

**NOTHING HAPPENS FOR THE FIRST YEAR.** We have allowed time to plan and to make certain that there is a smooth transition. Both the counties and the state will be involved in developing an agreement that will guide the implementation.

For two years after that, the billing responsibilities will be split but there is a 'hold harmless' provision that ensures that no county will experience a loss of funds.

The equity provision will be partially implemented in year 4 and then fully implemented in year 5. At that point there will be some difference in county costs as some credits are given to the poorer counties to offset the formal bias against counties with a high percentage of elderly people on Medicaid.

**Why are the counties paying for the most expensive programs?**

Counties will NOT absorb all of the costs related to the growth in the elderly population. The counties' *expenses are capped* in the budget and will be each biennium until the arrangements sunsets in SFY 2014 because this population is expected to grow faster than other segments of the population.

The formula changes are COST NEUTRAL to the counties and they will not, in aggregate, be paying any higher percentage of costs than they would under the current law.

The counties have expertise in long-term care and it made more sense to continue their involvement in this area. In addition to their expertise, the changes in funding responsibilities will save the counties a higher percentage of the administrative work and costs. They will assume two areas of cost, while the state will pay bills related to seven different programs.

**Why is this change being done now?**

The current cost sharing arrangement expires on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The counties maintain that after that date, they have no obligation to pay for any of the shared long-term care services. The state maintains that the funding arrangements would return to what they were prior to the changes initiated in SB 409 if the sunset were to expire next week. The county position would cause an immediate need for \$70 million in general funds. In either case, costly litigation is likely to ensue.

Some county officials approached the Senate and asked for their leadership in resolving the problem, stating that if left to the counties, the issue would not be resolved. Many attempts have failed in the past as counties have not all agreed with any one option put forward. Similar proposals have come close to succeeding in the past so we have built on those efforts. We are out of time and a solution must be in place by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Can changes be made to the plan?**

The year lead time allows the fine tuning of the proposal to continue if needed. Legislative changes can be proposed at any time going forward.

**How will services change?**

No services are changing. We are changing who pays the bills, not what services are offered.

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In the final analysis, the money we pay to care for our needy elders comes from the same taxpayers, whether they pay in state, county, or federal taxes. The budget approved by the committee ensures that we all share the costs more equally, while directing more money to services and less to wasteful bureaucracy. We have wasted nearly \$20 million dollars under the current administrative structure. That is money that is desperately needed to continue to serve citizens in need.

*This sheet was re-typed from hard copy of a Fact Sheet given to the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families on July 20, 2007 by Sen. Kathy Sgambati.*

*Director's Report*

*Citizens Council Meeting*

*July 20, 2007*

CATEGORY	TOPIC & SPONSOR	STATUS
<b>Community Forums</b>	United way/Upstream Health Forum	September 18 <sup>th</sup> at Woodside Taylor Community – Theme: Chronic Illness
	Convocation - 2008	Save the date: January 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 24 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Initiatives</b>	Victims Rights Committee	Developing a Victims' Satisfaction Survey. Currently going through a committee vetting process and then on to providers and law enforcement for further review. Seminar scheduled for October 18 <sup>th</sup> .
	BARJ Work Group	Legislative Initiative –Vetting process continues
	SAG Grant	A. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter report submitted B. Second year funding secured - \$31,378
	UpStream Professional Development Session	Juvenile Justice Services in Belknap County – October 3, 2007 Woodside at Taylor Community
	School Crisis Team Workshop	Victim Rights Committee – Day-long series focused on safety and victim's response in schools – October 18, 2007
<b>Coalitions</b>	Community Prevention Coalition (CPC)	Awaiting contract approval by Governor and Council (Expected 8/15/07)
	Follow the Child	Prevention Work Group to consider focus group discussions with various community sectors. Initiative continuing with Belknap County Early Learning Council – Chambers of Commerce
	Safe Schools Coalition (WRSD)	Open Space Forum being planned for October 13th.
	Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC)	William Fenniman Jr., Director of the Division of Juvenile Justice Services will attend the July 27th JJAC meeting starting at 7:30 AM. Council members who wish to attend are most welcome.
<b>Council Business</b>	Council Recruitment and Community Outreach	Membership Committee to activate recruitment initiatives
	Chapter 263 – Funding for youth services	Monitoring Commission progress on legislation. Ongoing to June 30, 2008