

Council Workshop – ARPA

Monday, January 30, 2023 @ 5:15 pm

1. County ARPA Partnership

On Tuesday, January 3, 2023, the Penobscot County Commissioners announced a sub-recipient award to the Bangor Region YMCA. Similar to previous County partnership opportunities, this project was reviewed by members of the City Council. It remains a priority for both the City Council and County Commissioners to leverage this historic funding opportunity by partnering on initiatives wherever possible.

The amount of the application was \$5,000,000, Penobscot County awarded \$3,000,000. The amount under discussion for City of Bangor partnership is \$2,000,000.

This request is to provide funding for a new and expanded YMCA to increase access to essential programs and services, including vitally needed education and child care programs. This project would enable the Y to deliver infant care for the first time, nearly triple its preschool program, and double its before/after school programs. Other programs that could be expanded are family activities; evidence-based chronic disease programs, health/wellness and aquatics programs for all ages; a unique teen center aimed at preventing substance use and suicide, and much more.

2. Update Detox Beds Wellspring

Our Public Health Director provided an update on the status of the current availability and operation of short term detox beds operated by Wellspring at a recent Government Operations Committee. Wellspring is in the process of opening a much-needed treatment facility that will fill a needed gap in the continuum of care, stabilization post detox with a 30-60 day 15 bed early recovery program.

3. School Based SUDS and Mental Health Strategies

Superintendent Tager will present information on school based SUDS and mental health needs/efforts and gaps.

4. Update from Public Health Director – Syringe Waste

5. Update from Consultant

- Update on Discussions with Efficiency Maine
- Update on Broadband Discussions
- Discussion on Initial Housing Options
 - Sprinkler installation grants
 - Direct funding to support development of housing
 - Invest in rehabilitation of aging housing stock
 - Fund land bank

Timeline for follow up on items from December 14, 2022 Workshop

- Community based SUDS and Mental Health Strategies – February 2023
- Efficiency Maine Partnership Program – February 2023

Timeline for follow up on items from January 9, 2023 Workshop

- Review of housing options – February 2023

The Bangor School Department currently employs 11 social workers, 13 guidance counselors, and 6 school nurses. These positions are an asset to the district and a valuable service to the school department. These professionals work collaboratively with the teachers, administrators, support staff, and outside agencies to make sure students' needs are met in a comprehensive team approach. This team approach allows families to be supported by the school staff and have services

Social Workers provide Gatekeeper assessments, home visits, support families in connecting them to outside resources, direct clinical support for students with Individual Education Plans, social thinking instruction in self-contained special education settings, resources to students and staff, and communicate regularly with families. They are the team member that supports wrap around services so that families have the necessary services in the community long term. This can include case management, counseling services, medication management, housing, clothing, etc.

School Nurses are responsible for supporting students in their medical needs, health plans for students to access their education, supporting families in connecting them with resources outside of school, coordinating care with physicians, and working with the school teams.

School Counselors are responsible for working with students on their schedules, future plans, Gatekeeper assessments, supporting students with emotional/mental health needs, 504 management, mentoring students, and providing resources to families.

The Bangor School Department prides itself in meeting the needs of students to access and excel in their academic experiences. In the last few years, what we have noticed when supporting families is that families become discouraged and frustrated with the long waitlist in the Bangor Region for mental health services.

At Bangor High School, we added the PCHC Clinic which is supporting the mental health needs of students attending BHS, but currently has a waitlist of 20 students. 50 students are currently receiving regularly scheduled mental health appointments weekly in the clinic. Throughout the district, we know of approximately 50 students that are currently on a waitlist for mental health services, whether this be counseling, case management, or Home/Community based treatment (HCT). These waitlists are anywhere from six weeks to six months long. The current staff at the PCHC Clinic includes a Licensed Social Worker, Medical Assistant/ Coordinator and a Medical Provider when fully staffed. In conversation with the LCWS, the exploration of an additional clinic at the middle school level is something to consider.

Within the Bangor School Department, we are also aware of students that experience substance abuse disorders. The data is difficult to gather as it's a topic that is not easily shared, thus official diagnosis is not readily available. The team above works the same with students that they know of to support them in getting the help and resources necessary to support rehabilitation.

With both of the above, truancy becomes the concern. Having students in school is the best way to support them. Having additional clinical support to provide interventions, bachelor level social workers to support home visits, and medical providers to support nurses in meeting the medical needs of students would be beneficial at a time when community supports are difficult to find and secure for families.

To provide a concrete example of truancy, Downeast School has a chronically absent rate (measured by over 18 absences) with a combined total of 24% of Pre K and Kindergartens above that threshold. 29% of Pre K and Kindergarten students currently have 13-17 absences. Personnel and program ideas are being explored at this time. This is another area of focus for families that is something to consider in respect to mental health and graduation rate, to create a bright future for all students.