

Logan County Commissioners Work Session

June 22, 2021

Present: Byron Pelton, Jane Bauder, Joe McBride, Alan Samber, Jerry Casebolt, Dave Long, Lonnie Brungardt, Bobby Jones, Chelsea Horner, Courtney Fern, Rob Quint, Kim Ertle-Clark, Debbie Unrein, Chance Wright, Trae Miller, Jeff Rice and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Byron Pelton called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION – Commissioner Bauder moved to approve the minutes from June 15, 2021 as written. Commissioner McBride seconded and the motion carried.

REVISIONS TO WORK SESSION AGENDA - Commissioner Pelton added discussion of the Trinity Lutheran TANF project, Jerry Casebolt regarding security and Rob Quint - FEMA update.

REVIEW AND APPROVE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES SCHEDULE OF BILLS – Dave Long met with the Board to review and approve the Logan County Department of Human Services schedule of bills dated June 22, 2021. The Board approved all bills as presented.

MERINO AND FLEMING SCHOOL DISTRICTS – BEHAVIOR HEALTH - Lonnie Brungardt, Bobby Jones, Chelsea Horner, Mike Forrester and Courtney Fern met with the Board on behalf of northeastern Colorado rural schools. The COVID pandemic brought an increase in teen suicide and this area of Colorado was hit hard. A pilot program with Bobby Jones was started the last six weeks of school. This is a peer mentorship program the data trends at the beginning of the program showed a lot of kids hurting and at the end of six weeks, kids were in better place mentally although they were still hurting. Mr. Jones talked to the kids one day a week at the Merino school. After that, a lot of students that were not on the radar came on the radar. There always had been a mental health crisis, but during the pandemic it became worse especially with the isolation.

With that being said, there is a need to provide the students with as many opportunities and resources as possible. Schools have been doing that and will continue to do that. However, what is needed is to think outside the box. There needs to be another opportunity for kids to talk to somebody that they feel comfortable with that is not a teacher, a counselor or principal. Bobby Jones' pilot program has done that very well. Mr. Brungardt stressed that we cannot continue to do what they have been doing. They have to do something different, they need to “fix the curve”. Growing up how your parents raised you and how your teachers taught you, that's what you remember then the next generation does the same thing and with certain situations, a family life trauma for example, becomes worse every generation.

Children's hospital, for the first time in 117 years has declared a crisis, it is something that has never been seen before. They are trying to provide more opportunities for people to come in. Rural schools can't afford social, emotional, and mental health professionals to come in to the schools. If they could afford them, they will not find them to come to the school districts.

Bobby Jones introduced the program that is provided through Children's Hospital. Children's Hospital declared a state of emergency last week specifically in rural communities. There were eight suicides in northeast Colorado last year.

Jones said he saw a lot of this coming five years ago, he was seeing it get worse. He was finding kids are shutting down completely. Kids are not opening up. In the data presented, they were seeing they were getting to the roots- kids were saying this is the first time they've ever opened up. Now they can start asking questions and find the root. If we don't get to the root we lose more and more kids.

The program roll out in northeast Colorado will be something that changes education forever. They will roll out four different programs, one on healthy relationships, another on bully recovery, and another on leadership. Jones will be in Logan County for the year next school year. He would like to see the programs planted in schools long term going forward. The curve must be flattened. Last year there were eight suicides in northeast Colorado, seven of them in five weeks. That can't happen anymore.

The Board asked Mr. Jones what happens with the program in future years. Jones will continue to work with schools and hopes to eventually have one staff person in each school every week. Jones will come in himself once a semester. They do have the resources of BOCES and Centennial Mental Health. Eventually staff and teachers in the schools would be trained so kids can "have a safe place to be broken."

Brungardt requested that the County be a full-time partner at \$175,000 to make this happen. Fleming, Peetz, and Merino will be in the pilot program along with Wiggins in Morgan County. Morgan County Commissioners seem to be interested. They want to have a firm idea prior to August to move forward without Wiggins just in case. If the program saves just one life, is all that matters. The program will be serving close to 500-600 students. The goal is to plan and make the program long term with grants, and to roll out the program to other districts in the state.

Mr. Brungardt was asked if he was aware of the RE-1 Valley school district program. It appears that they are very similar. Bobby Jones has done several talks in Sterling schools in the past and would be open to working with them. They had talked to them and they did not seem open to working with Bobby Jones. Sterling Schools have a program with Coaches to mentor the kids. Schools, principals and teachers got in their profession to be educators not mental health providers. Teachers need to be building relationships.

Peer mentorship, is working with small groups of students to prepare them to deal with friends coming to them and saying they are ready to commit suicide. The students need skill sets and tools to be able to handle those kinds of situations. Their families and parents don't know that information. The kids are afraid to talk to them and afraid of how they will react. Kids need to be taught that they can go through hard things and survive and live life joyfully. Brungardt told about a student who moved here from Colorado Springs. She has been in a lot of schools because her father is in the military. She was asked what was different about Merino High School. She said that this is the first school she has ever been in that talks about suicide. None

of the other schools had been talking about it. Schools are doing everything they can to fix the problem.

Bobby Jones agreed to talk at the CCI Eastern District meeting at Winter Conference, noting the suicides in Logan County and many other counties in the Eastern District have had teen suicides as well. Commissioner Pelton will get him the information.

Dave Long told Jones that he had made an impact on his kids that attend the Prairie School where Bobby Jones had talked. They are using the tactics they were taught and making them to be able to mentor kids on their sports teams that are going through some family issues and are in depression.

Lonnie Brungardt said it hit him hard that he lost a student because being former military, you don't leave anyone behind in battle. Without the help of Bobby Jones in the community they could have lost another to suicide in March. Another student has previously tried twice to commit suicide, today she has qualified for the state track meet.

GENERATION GOOD RESPECT – Kim Ertle-Clark, the founder of Generation Good Respect met with the Board. Generation Good Respect is a non-profit that has been eight years in the making. The group stands against bullying. She distributed the Code of Respect which is being modified and simplified. It will have a simplistic curriculum which includes a three-minute video talking about respect. Teachers will then take ten minutes of class time to discuss the videos with their classes. The curriculum will be sent out to schools across the nation and the world. Haxtun High School was the first school to implement the teaching and is has had good results. On September 3 Kim Ertle-Clark is going to launch Generation Good Respect at the Fairgrounds with a Movement of Respect. Activities and music will be planned. There will be food trucks, and non-profits to connect with students and impact lives. She hopes to have local singers and hopefully others as well.

TANF GRANT FUNDS – Dave Long presented a services contract between Logan County Department of Human Services and Trinity Lutheran Early Education Center. Dave Long recommended the support and approval of this last-minute agreement rather than returning the TANF funds for this fiscal year. They had earlier been approved \$8,000 for playground equipment. They were going to ask for more but could not find anyone to build it. The grant will be used for outdoor classrooms with learning stations. The grant amount is \$48,076.42 for two outdoor learning centers. Commissioner McBride moved to approve the agreement with Trinity Lutheran Preschool. Commissioner Bauder seconded and the motion carried 3-0.

AMERICAN RESCUE RECOVERY FUNDS - Debbie Unrein and Chance Wright met with the Board to discuss the American Rescue and Recovery Plan Funds. The Board asked what cost estimates were to make sure all buildings were getting clean air through their HVAC systems. Chance Wright has an RFP out right now to get Energy Services Companies to come in and give us estimates to do this. The proposals are due back by July 19th.

Logan County will receive a total of \$4.3 million. This year the County has received a little over \$2.1 million. The rest of the funds will come through next year. Expenditures must be Covid-

related and must be tied to public health. The County can pass money through to other entities. Guidelines should be developed to ensure all the federal requirements are being met.

It was suggested that Human Services be allocated a portion of money to distribute behavior health grants similar to the TANF funds. Human Services could be a mechanism to distribute some of the funds and also be fiscal agents for these funds ensuring that the requirements for use of the funds are met, including measuring the results of the programs.

Mr. Jones' program has lots of good information he is measuring which will probably over and above what would be required. Measuring results is also built into the proposed RE-1 Valley program. The \$175,000 per year is for all the rural schools in the county. The schools can then apply to CDHS and the Office of Behavioral Health and use their ARPA funds awarded for matching funds for other grants. Debbie Unrein noted that the funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024. Funds can be obligated for the future to help make the programs sustainable in the future. Funds must be used by the end of 2026.

Dave Long told the Board that DORA needs to be brought in because regulations are so stringent for licensing behavioral health field workers that it is difficult to achieve the expectations. The applicants need some skills to connect and build relationships, but they don't necessarily need a doctorate.

Debbie Unrein discussed the deadline to submit the spending plan. She has her first report due in August, which is a simple guideline of what

It was suggested to start a list of entities that have programs that could be funded.

- HVAC in all county buildings and air quality in the systems (improved air quality in the jail to help stop spread of any viruses.)
- Re-1 Valley School District has requested \$150,000.
- Merino and Rural School District requested \$175,000 plus support for 2 or more years.
- Middle mile broadband construction, future maintenance and support.
- 0-3 age childcare and parental coaching.

Broadband was discussed although there does not seem to be hard numbers available. The County would have to maintain the line in the future. Someone from the private sector will still need to build the last mile. Broadband may be becoming old technology. Star Link may be the future for internet capabilities.

FEMA UPDATE – Rob Quint reported that he has talked with Tomas Birney at FEMA. Birney would like to meet with commissioners at some point. He suggested that the county mail out letters now to the property owners in violation to inform them that they have to take corrective action. The letter can be vague and it will request that property owners contact Rob Quint. The letters will get the ball rolling so that the people know there is a problem, and they should try to rectify the problem. The letter will be from the County Attorney implying that legal action is possible if they don't comply. If property owners refuse to correct the problems the county may have to go to court. The hope is that the people will know that they must do something about the issues. Each property is a different situation.

The deadline for the county to initiate correction is October 22, 2021. This is the deadline to supply data that states the county has made efforts to address the violations. The county must create an action plan, showing that all efforts have been exhausted. At that point the properties can be banned from FEMA insurance, doesn't mean can be banned from FEMA insurance.

County Attorney Alan Samber will draft a letter for the Board to review. Rob Quint will send this to Thomas Birney to make sure this is what FEMA wants it to say. Letters will be sent via certified mail.

JERRY UPDATE ON SECURITY - Jerry Casebolt reported that he went to the NJC Young Farmer's Tractor Pull on June 19 and was able to observe the new security company. The security company personnel seemed to be attentive. There was one issue, during the show people were walking down the ramp with beers in their hands. Something that probably slipped through. After the event they did make people either drink the beer or empty their beer in the trash can. Jerry will call them and give them that information.

NEWCLOUD CONTRACTS – Nothing new to discuss on this. Still nothing from CenturyLink. Jerry will reach out to CenturyLink one more and give them one more chance other-wise the contract will be on agenda next meeting.

TRAE MILLER – Trae would like to meet with the Board. He will call the Commissioners office to schedule.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned 10:41 a.m.