

TOWN OF GREENWICH
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
NATHANIEL WITHERELL STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES – Mazza Room, 1st Floor, Town Hall

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

Committee: Arthur Norton, Elizabeth K. Krumeich, Jill Oberlander, Nancy Weissler

Board: John Blankley, Marylee Kiernan, Leslie Tarkington

Others: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller, Larry Simon, Nathaniel Witherell Chairman, Allen Brown, Nathaniel Witherell Executive Director, Nathaniel Witherell, Director of Financial Operation, Lynn Bausch, Deputy and Director of Nursing, George Cossifos, Director of Admissions

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 A.M.

1. Approval of the March 29, 2016 minutes

On a motion by Ms. Weissler, seconded by Ms. Oberlander, the Committee voted 4 to 0 to approve the March 29, 2016 minutes.

2. Nathaniel Witherell Admissions Process Review presentation - George Cossifos, Director of Admissions & Lynn Bausch, Deputy and Director of Nursing

Mr. Brown introduced two of his staff members, Mr. George Cossifos and Ms. Lynn Bausch, who were prepared to present the Nathaniel Witherell admission process and other related matters to the Committee members.

Mr. Brown distributed an April 5, 2016 midnight census report showing that 191 of the 197 available beds at TNW were occupied, representing a high occupancy rate. Mr. Brown responded to a question about the occupancy rate by stating that there are 230 nursing homes in the State of Connecticut with an average occupancy rate of 88%. The report showed that there are currently 42 rehabilitation units and 155 other units for a total of 197 available beds.

Mr. Simon asked for the Committee's assistance in responding to a questionnaire sent out by the Representative Town Meeting's Budget Oversight Committee (BOC) regarding the operations of Nathaniel Witherell. Basically, Mr. Simon asked the Committee to review his answers to the BOC's questions from an objective perspective.

At this point, Nathaniel Witherell members, led by Mr. Cossifos, gave an overall description of the admissions process at Nathaniel Witherell. The presentation centered on the following areas:

- How does one get into Nathaniel Witherell? Mr. Cossifos explained that there are a variety of sources from which patients are referred to Nathaniel Witherell.

He said they could be from 1) self-referrals, 2) referrals from Hospital Discharge Planners, 3) bed reservations or community referrals. Regarding the hospital referrals, Mr. Cossifos stated that the majority of new patients are Medicare primary cases and approximately 70% of all new admissions come from Greenwich Hospital.

- What is the difference between a long-term versus short-term admission? Mr. Cossifos stated that the long-term admission process is lengthier. He offered that there are about 20 participating physicians in the process. However, he also stated that TNW has a Medical Director, Dr. Francis X. Walsh, who is a consultant that participates in the admissions process. Ms. Bausch added that all Medicare admissions must be three-day hospital qualifying to get into TNW.

Mr. Cossifos informed the Committee that there are also a variety of waiting lists that may restrict access to TNW due to a lack of availability of a bed. He said examples are a Medicaid versus Medicare waiting list. In addition, there are male versus female waiting lists among others.

- Admission Trends/Patterns. Mr. Brown told the Committee that prior to Project Renew that the most admissions TNW had in one year, July 1st to June 30th, was 574. He added that with the completion of Project Renew, the weekly average for last year was 10 admissions per week. Mr. Brown then told the Committee that currently TNW is averaging 12 admissions per week.

• Admission eligibility. Mr. Brown made it clear that there is no Greenwich residency requirement to get into TNW. He added that about 90% of the admissions are Greenwich related; either residents or family connections. Mr. Brown also said that Greenwich residents can jump the waiting list, as allowed by a State of Connecticut waiver.

Mr. Norton asked Mr. Brown to explain the Connecticut Statutes that impact admissions listed in the handouts. Mr. Brown told the Committee about the implications of Connecticut State Statute 19a-533 whereas TNW is not required by law to accept indigent admissions and State Statute 17b-347, and its potential impact of terminating Medicaid provider agreements.

3. Financial Issues Discussion

A "2016 Medicare Billing Analysis" prepared by TNW personnel was distributed. Mr. Brown cautioned its value saying it was too complicated to understand without a thorough explanation of the multiple and various codes. Mr. Brown and Ms. Bausch explained the meaning of the report and the various codes in an attempt to clarify the contents of the report. Ms. Bausch cautioned the Committee that the billing rates change every year, so it is hard to gain a comparative of the reported figures in the report.

There was a general discussion about other nursing homes and their respective profitability's. Mr. Brown wanted to make it clear, regarding TNW, that TNW makes money on rehabilitation patients and private payers. He stated that everything else loses money.

Mr. Norton informed the Committee members and TNW personnel that he would be entertaining adding an audit of TNW as a possible agenda item for the BET Audit Committee. Ms. Tarkington asked if TNW still utilizes the audit expertise of outside accounting firms. Mr. Brown responded that they still use the services of Mr. Vincent Ruocco, however he left his former firm and now works for O'Connor Davies as an accounting consultant to TNW.

Ms. Krumeich suggested that the Committee schedule a representative from the Town's Law Department to attend a meeting to discuss various legal issues relative to TNW.

4. Future Meeting Schedule

The Committee requested that TNW officials provide the Committee members with a tour of the facilities at TNW. Mr. Brown agreed and the next meeting on April 12, 2016 will be held at TNW and a tour of the facilities will be provided.

5. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Weissler, seconded by Ms. Oberlander, the Committee voted 4 to 0 to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 A.M.

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Peter Mynarski, Recording Secretary

Arthur Norton, Chairman