The Nathaniel Witherell
Town of Greenwich
Connecticut

Board of Directors Zoom Board Meeting
Minutes
October 18, 2021

Present: Laurence B. Simon, Chairman; Melissa Gibbons, Secretary; Suzanne Brown; Christopher Carter; Paul Hopper; Nisha Hurst; Richard Kaplan; Joan Merrill; Nirmal Patel, MD MPH

Staff: Michel Baptist, Housekeeping/Laundry Supervisor; Chris Ann Bennett, Infection Preventionist; Nadia Benson, Deputy and Director of Nursing; Linda Marini, Assistant to Executive Director; John Mastronardi, Executive Director; Elizabeth Mungai, Dir. Of Utilization, Clinical Outcomes and Rehab Services; Scott Neff, FNW Executive Director; Nunzio Raimo, Director of Financial Operations; Kimberly Schupp, Clinical Dietician; Ai Linh Tu, Rehab Manager; Larry Vanterpool, Facilities Director; Margaret Wayne, Assoc. Director of Nursing

Guests: Amy Badini; Andy Duus, BET Liaison; Paul Scholtes; Mary Alice Schulte; Kate Tabner; Ellen Wolfson, Commission on Aging;

Mr. Simon opened the meeting at 5:04 PM via Zoom Webinar.

Mr. Simon introduced Kate Tabner, nominated by the Board of Selectmen to join the Nathaniel Witherell Board. Her appointment will go before the two RTM committees Tuesday, October 19, 2021, and will be presented to the full RTM for approval on Monday, October 25, 2021.

Medical Director’s Report – Dr. Frank Walsh absent

Review/Approval of Minutes of September 13, 2021 - omitted in error

Executive Director’s Report - presented by John Mastronardi

COVID-19 Vaccination - 98% of TNW employees have been vaccinated. Infection Control has registered with CVS for a COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Clinic on site for residents and staff. We are waiting on approval for that clinic to be launched and operative.
As of today, we have not received approval for the CVS hosted clinic. Absent such approval, our nurse managers, clinic nurse supervisors, Associate Director of Nursing, and Director of Nursing will be scheduled to begin administering the booster shots to our residents next week.

RFPs – Mr. Mastronardi reported that as a strategic part of our fiscal responsibility plan, TNW’s leadership team has been reviewing, revising, and submitting RFP’s with a particular emphasis on our most costly vendors: Food & Nutritional Services; Rehab Services; and Pharmacy. The management team is currently in the process of evaluating and grading the bids that were submitted with the goal of awarding contracts for all three outsourced services by the end of this calendar year.

Flu Clinic – We will also be holding our annual flu vaccine clinics in the boardroom on October 21 and October 26. All TNW staff, volunteers and Board members are invited to receive the flu vaccine.

CT Public Act 21-185 – A new Connecticut State act states that skilled nursing facilities are mandated to have one full time social worker per 60 residents (not beds). The requirement goes into effect no earlier than January 1, 2022, and the legislature appropriated a fixed amount of funding to assist nursing homes that will need to increase their social work staffing. The Department of Social Services has posted an application for the rate increase for that social work requirement. TNW currently employs two full time social workers and one part time worker, and conservatively we project census of 180 to 188. Subsequently, on Thursday October 14, 2021, we posted on the Town of Greenwich website for the full-time social work position.

HR Training Program – The Human Resource Department has been asked to conduct an informational session to explain various HR policies procedures. These sessions will be held on November 1, 4 and 9, via zoom, by Mary Pepe, Director of Human Resources, and Erica Mahoney, Assistant Director of Human Resources. Topics will include Management Rights; Progressive Discipline; addressing performance issues; personnel files; FMLA; Americans with Disabilities Act; Employee Assistance Program; and hiring process overview.

Interact – Our clinical staff will be initiating Interact (Interventions to Reduce Acute Care Transfers). The interventions are part of a quality improvement program designed to improve the identification, evaluation and communication related to significant changes in residence status. Many of our peers are currently using Interact as a way to successfully treat patients in place. Transfers to the hospital can be emotionally and physically difficult for residents to acclimate to, and they can result in various complications related to hospitalization; they can also be very costly.

Ms. Benson stated that Interact is for nurses to collaborate with the APRN or MD on duty. When used correctly, it will begin with the CNA completing the Stop and Watch part of the tool, answering questions about how a resident is feeling, and whether there has been changes in the resident’s condition. The CNA would pass that information to the nurse who would create an SBAR Tool (Situation-Background-Assessment-Recommendation), and that SBAR would be used for the APRN or the MD to evaluate and see if a clinical intervention or hospitalization is necessary.
Mr. Kaplan noted that 25 facilities in the New York market instituted and implemented Interact. Those that integrated it with their EMR (Electronic Medical Record) saw a reduction in readmissions by about 25%.

Dr. Patel stated that it will not only improve quality of care, but it will also increase income by allowing us to manage higher risk patients, and CMS pays for performance (PDPM, Performance Driven Payment Model). Dr. Patel asked that updates be given at subsequent Board meetings on implementation and measures of success.

**Therapeutic Recreation – presented by John Mastronardi for Carissa Ronish**

This month residents enjoyed an Oktoberfest party, weekly movie club, Norman Rockwell art class, and ice cream socials.

Upcoming autumn activities include cooking demonstrations, Halloween Pooches on Parade, flower arranging, and Halloween party.

We will host a resident holiday party this year in December and are in the beginning stages of planning. There will be live music entertainment and a holiday menu.

As a reminder, the monthly calendar of events continues to be posted on our website under “Events & Newsletters”.

**Building Committee Report - presented by Larry Vanterpool and Paul Hopper**

The Building Committee met last week and discussed the following:

**Tower Electrical Panel Upgrade** – Mr. Vanterpool reported that the vendor received the necessary materials and has begun to set up the temporary power and equipment in the Courtyard. Once the equipment is adjusted and into the facility, Mr. Vanterpool has asked for two weeks notification so that we can schedule and prepare ourselves for disruptions in power supplies. We have a plan for the care of our residents during those periods that were approved by DPH.

**The Pavilion External Renovations** – Mr. Vanterpool reported that this project is complete. There is approximately $90K remaining of the Community Development Block Grant and we are working with CDBG to determine if the remaining funds can be used for additional improvements within the Pavilion residence.

**American Rescue Plan (ARP)** – Mr. Vanterpool stated that the Town is scheduled to receive approximately $34M as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP). These funds are meant to be used to improve infrastructure in accordance with very strict guidelines. TNW has submitted a request for HVAC improvements, which are in our capital budget, to increase airflow with better filtration throughout the facility. In the event of another pandemic-like situation, our environment would be better prepared with proper airflow ($725K) and rooftop units. Mr. Kaplan
asked if these funds could be used for elevator repair/replacement, though this does not fit the specific criteria set forth by the ARP. The answer to the elevator question is no. The Town Administrator expects to provide the funds to TNW in the first quarter of 2022.

Mr. Hopper noted that given we were under budget on the electrical replacement for the Towers, it is beneficial that we have some leftover funds and may be able to extend that project to include the upper stories, as well as perhaps some of the panels in the administration building. He stated they are hopeful they can proceed with the approvals from the town by adding on to the existing permitting with an amendment, rather than having to go through a whole cycle again. This is pending approval but TNW is hopeful it can be accomplished.

Mr. Simon stated that we reduced our capital budget spending by more than 12% over the next 15 years by the money saved on the Electrical Panel and Pavilion projects.

Mr. Kaplan made a motion to submit four identified FY23 Capital projects, totaling $675,000, to the Town for approval. His motion was seconded by Ms. Hurst and approved by the Board by a vote of 8-0-1.

1. Nursing Capital $  20,000
2. General Capital $  95,000
3. Replacement of Tower elevators $500,000
4. Chapel windows $  60,000

Ms. Gibbons added that geothermal technology can provide air conditioning while eliminating a lot of the need for air handlers and condensers. They can be simpler to maintain and more sustainable, though also more expensive to install. Since we are going through this big of an overhaul, she asked whether geothermal should also be looked at as an option. Mr. Vanterpool explained that the technology Ms. Gibbons spoke about, used in commercial and residential properties, has not yet been introduced into the healthcare facilities that he is aware. One of the main concerns is that we are required as a long-term care facility to treat the water and chiller water for Legionella. Mr. Vanterpool does not know if that is a possibility with geothermal but will look into it for future opportunities. Mr. Simon noted that he has seen this technology in new construction, but it may exceedingly difficult to put into our existing building.

Finance Report – presented by Nunzio Raimo

Mr. Raimo reviewed the Financial Statement and Operating Results for the period ending September 30, 2021:

- For the month of September 2021 average daily census was 173, exceeding the prior 12-month average of 167
- NW Census by payer class for September 2021: total days billed were 5,173.
- Occupancy Percentage for September 2021 was 85%, exceeding the prior 12-month average of 83%; average beds per day for September 2021 was 172.4.
- September 2021 revenue from operations was $2,294,883; budgeted target revenue is $2,430,520. Certain residents will get Medicaid approval after they have been charged at the private pay rate; with that adjustment of about $114,000 added to our current
revenue of $2.3 million, we come very close to that budgeted number despite the fact that the census was slightly lower.

- Two efficiency metrics were highlighted: 1.) Monthly revenue per FTE (which is an indicator of staffing efficiency) for September 2021 was $10,163, exceeding the prior 12-month average of $8,405; 2.) Revenue per billable patient day (which shows the efficiency of our revenue stream from operations) for September 2021 was $444.00, exceeding the prior 12-month average of $435.

- Revenue September YTD Actual was $7,581,744, compared to budget of $7,291,559, resulting in a positive variance of $290,185. All categories except Private Pay were above budget. Our Medicaid reimbursement rate is a bit higher and our September 2021 PDPM rate was $728, exceeding the national average of $650.

- Expenses from Operations for September 2021 YTD Actual were $4,477,139 compared to budget of $5,020,143, resulting in a negative variance of $543,004.

- September 2021 YTD Margin Before Debt & Allocation of $3,104,605, $833,188 over Budget.

- September 2021 YTD Margin Before Debt & Capital was $1,897,104 compared to our budget of $853,269 resulting in a variance of $1,043,835. Actual Capital Expenditures were $357,457.

- Net Revenues September FYTD were $520,201, compared to a budget of ($523,634), resulting in a positive variance of $1,043,835.

- Mr. Simon noted the $1,539,646 is the amount of cash we are generating before Debt Service for the Town; after subtracting the Debt Service, the result is a $145,201 cash surplus to the Town.

Mr. Duus commented that it was “fantastic to see this kind of performance of the past quarter” and asked when the last quarter was that Nathaniel Witherell was a positive contributor (after Debt Service). Mr. Raimo explained that the dashboard in his report is a running P & L of Nathaniel Witherell over the last 11 years, giving a snapshot of where we have been in prior years and how truly good the progress is.

Mr. Simon stated that this is due in part to an increase of our Medicaid rate by $40. If we can continue to increase our census the results can be very good. Mr. Kaplan noted that these results are strictly operational and do not include, as we did in last year, any additional federal dollars that NW received; this is how well we’re doing today without any additional income that we received last year.

Mr. Raimo noted that the $40 Medicaid Rate increase remains until the end of March 2022, and on April 1, 2022 it goes from about $342 to $306; but for the majority of FY22 we will enjoy that higher Medicaid rate.

- For September YTD 2021 Benefits were under budget by $206,162.
- For September YTD 2021 Salaries & Wages were under budget by $331,468.
- For September YTD 2021 OTPS were $11,249 under budget.
- For September YTD 2021 Supplies & Materials were under budget by $188,420.
- For September YTD 2021 Maintenance expenditures were under budget by $11,867
Mr. Simon said that on July 1, 2022, the state will implement Acuity Based Reimbursement. Based on our data we have been shown that we would be going up the maximum amount possible, which is $6 a day; without the maximum, we would have gone up $16 a day.

Ms. Hurst asked Mr. Mastronardi to speak on ways to improve the census. Mr. Mastronardi explained that first and foremost, and budget-neutral, his plan is to hire a Nurse Case Manager/Liaison. This individual will be someone who spends the majority of the time outside of TNW, has a network of connections, sells TNW to referral sources actively and proactively, and is an individual with a great, engaging personality. This person will positively promote what Nathaniel Witherell can do for clients, patients, and residents.

Mr. Mastronardi also noted ways to potentially diversify our service portfolio: having a on-site hemodialysis den; and home care services and developing that skill set for our current staff, which is in the long-range plan. We do want to expand our services out in the community and be a benefit to the community by providing skilled nursing care, or a level of skilled care, for those residents.

**Marketing – presented by Christopher Carter**

With regard to the hiring of a Nurse Case Manager/Liaison, Mr. Carter suggested discussions to strategize our advertising around that function.

Mary Cronin, our main point person at Harrison Edwards, has left to pursue her own copywriting and content development business. Mr. Carter commented that for the two years he has been on the Board, Ms. Cronin has truly been on top of our advertising business. Her replacement will be introduced to Mr. Carter this week.

Our targeted campaign that ran through July is not running currently, but Mr. Carter hopes to get that going again; perhaps that may have had an impact on our census.

In September we had over 55,000 impressions on Google with nearly 2000 visits to the site. Facebook had over 10,000 impressions of our posts and over 500 engagements.

Mr. Carter reported that we have some digital ads in Stamford Magazine, Seniors Blue Book and Hearst Golden Year Special Section.

At the upcoming meeting they will be talking about any insights we may have learned from the the Harrison Edwards admissions survey to ask people who reach out to our facility.

Since the last Board meeting, there have been 21 Facebook posts. Two of the recent ones were *The Challenges of Aging, What Caregivers Should Know*; and *Concerned With Memory Loss, Try These Strategies to Stay Sharp*. 
We installed anti-spam filters on the website to prevent bots and rude language. We also continually update the Family Update Section with the latest COVID information and Visitation Guidelines.

Two new blogs were posted: *How to Prevent falls Among Older Adults*; and *Aging Well Today and For the Future*.

Ms. Merrill suggested running full page ads in the hardcopy Greenwich times, specifically to get photos of activities taking place and our name out to the public. Mr. Carter stated that Harrison Edwards has a good relationship with the Greenwich Time but having them run a non-town government related article is a tough accomplishment. He noted that our focus is with online ads instead of print newspaper.

**Friends of Nathaniel Witherell (FNW) – presented by Scott Neff**

Mr. Neff reported that the fall direct mail Community Appeal was dropped the first week in October to approximately 15,000 Greenwich households, 950 short-term patient alums and long-term resident responsible parties, and 400 FNW Board member solicitations.

**Chairman’s Discussion – presented by Laurence Simon**

A motion was made by Mr. Kaplan to approve the 2022 draft calendar of Board Meetings which was distributed at the Sept. 18, 2021 Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hurst and approved by the Board by a vote of 8-0-1.

2022 Meeting dates:
- January 24, March 21, April 25, June 20, July 25, September 19, October 17 and November 14.

Mr. Simon asked Mr. Duus to update the audience on the status of the RFP for TNW Management Services. Mr. Duus stated that he was not allowed to comment at this time, as the Town rules prohibit any public discussion of active RFP evaluation committees. The committee has made some progress and done good things in terms of data collection, but is still not in a position to make a recommendation to the First Selectman. Mr. Simon stated that Board members received a letter from the Town Attorney reiterating the Charter provision that the Board has the full legal authority over all transactions affecting Nathaniel Witherell, consequently anything that comes out of the RFP would have to be presented to the Board for further action.

Mr. Simon thanked Mrs. Joan Merrill for her time, service and dedication to the Witherell Board. Mrs. Merrill will officially leave the Board October 25, 2021. Ms. Merrill said it had been a pleasure knowing and working with everyone and wished them the best of luck in the future.

Joanne Kotulski, Interim Administrator prior to Mr. Mastronardi’s placement as Executive Director, recently consulted at NW for two weeks. Mr. Simon has received her report and will distribute to the Board after his review.
In answer to Mr. Simon’s question about when the State DPH will next arrive for a surprise survey of our facility, Mr. Mastronardi stated that we have heard that the State is focusing first on facilities that are three stars or lower and waiting for the five stars; but, we continue to prepare. He also noted that Ms. Kotulski was helpful in prepping our quality assurance book and QAPI plan, and he thanked her for that.

New Business - none

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 PM was made by Ms. Hurst, seconded by Mr. Carter and approved by a vote of 8-0-1.

Respectfully Submitted,
Linda Marini
October 27, 2021