



# OCONEE COUNTY OPIOID RESPONSE TASK FORCE

Regular Meeting Held at:

**March 15th at 10AM**

Council Chambers, Oconee County Administrative Offices  
415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC

## Members

**Aaron Zeller, MD (Chair); Scott Krein (Co-Chair); Lekesha Benson  
Michael Carroll; Richie Caudill; Tim Rice; Caitlin Pope;  
Alan Sayre; Jon Holland; Zac Smith**

The Oconee County Opioid Response Taskforce met on Friday, February 16th, 2024 at 10am in County Council Chambers, located at 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla SC. Members present included Aaron Zeller, Michael Carroll, Caitlin Pope, Alan Sayre, Lekesha Benson, Scott Krein, Tim Rice, Brittney Martin; Grants Administrator, and Staff Liaison; Zac Smith.

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeesc.com]. In addition, it was made available [upon request] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

## Minutes:

- 1. Call to Order:** Dr. Aaron Zeller called meeting to order at 10am.
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** Dr. Aaron Zeller
  - Motion made by Mr. Alan Sayre, Second by Mr. Scott Krein. No Discussion. All in favor 7-0.
- 3. Discussion Items:**

### **Community Support Application Review/Approval for Kingdom Over Culture**

- Ms. Charity Comeaux with Kingdom Over Culture presented a proposal for funding.
- Reviewed the operational processes and accomplishments with Kingdom Over Culture.
- Current needs are exclusively funding.
- Reviewed what the funding would be used for (salaries, vehicles, and fixed location).
- Would work in the treatment and recovery abatement strategies.
- Gave three testimonies from past clients.
- Mr. Scott Krein: is your program going to be opioid specific?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: It's an overall substance recovery.
- Mr. Scott Krein: Is there a way that you could operate without full funding?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: Yes, we can.
- Mr. Scott Krein: How long is the program and how did you get to the actual percentages of success?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: It's hard to find actuals but with the people that we have had now and looking ahead, we can see around 75 percent of people graduating.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: Can you tell us the sustainment plan after this year of funding is over?

- Ms. Charity Comeaux: Grants. There is program fees that the women pay but it is very unsustainable. More discussion followed.
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: Do you live with them in the home?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: They live upstairs, and my family and I live downstairs.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: Do you use the addiction medicine team?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: No, we try to not involve them and do it naturally. We keep them busy.
- Dr. Zeller: How many of your clients have used addiction medicine team?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: One, and the client wanted off of it because she did not like the way that it made her feel.
- Dr. Zeller: Is Kingdom Over Culture opposed to having someone in the system that uses methodone?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: Yes.
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: Are your participants newly in recovery?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: Yes they are.
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: In the event that they are on a substance at the time, do you still accept them?
- Ms. Charity Comeaux: Yes, and then we will assist them in transportation to rehab in Greenville.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: Anymore questions?
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: Commended Ms. Comeaux on her non-profit.

### **Christ Central Ministries/OARS/Magnolia House:**

- Ms. Darragh Geist presented proposal for the Magnolia House.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: What would be the sustainability after funds run out?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: Relationships and grant funding elsewhere.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: What is the organizations stance on using medication assisted treatment?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: To continue the MAT and to eventually to move the client away from dependence.
- Mr. Scott Krein: What makes your program opioid specific?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: Clients and how to identify the opioid based situation. More discussion followed.
- Mr. Scott Krein: Would you be willing to accept funding outside the full amount? I.E. a lower amount.
- Ms. Darragh Geist: We will figure it out if it were to be a lower amount.
- Mr. Scott Krein: Is there any funding outside of governmental funding that OARS is doing?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: Yes. Grant funding, tithing, and other sources of donations.
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: Do you have any program fees for the Magnolia House?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: No, not for the Magnolia House.
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: Why is there a \$25 fee for an ACE assessment?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: We do that in OARS. A case manager completes them.
- Mr. Tim Rice: Would you apply on behalf of the clients for Medicaid or are you billing Medicaid for services?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: Billing Medicaid. It pays for a recovery/treatment program.

- Ms. Lekesha Benson: Does Mr. Williams bill Medicaid for his services?
- Ms. Darragh Geist: Not at the moment, but it will most likely happen in the future.
- Ms. Lekesha Benson brought up the leadership and directors of OARS and Magnolia House. Discussion of leadership roles and compensation.
- Discussion on application approval:
- Mr. Scott Krein: On the topic of money, there is only a specific amount. Discussed being conservative on how the money needs to be dispersed.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: No guarantee on the amount of money increasing.
- Mr. Scott Krein: If we fund pieces of their proposal, they can find other avenues for funding.
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: For the record, I would be in favor of funding both, whether it be full or capping.
- Mr. Zac Smith: With the approval of application, the timeline is strict.
- Mr. Alan Sayre: Motion made for a special meeting on March 29<sup>th</sup> for application approval. This would give ample time for applicants to have ample time to revise final application. Ms. Lekesha Benson gave a second. Motion amended for depending availability. All in favor 7-0.
- Ms. Darragh Geist does not consider the Magnolia House a pilot project. She feels as if it is more of an expansion instead.

- **Oconee County Sheriff's Office:**

- Mr. Alan Sayre stated that in the ease of transparency that he would present and then answer questions regarding the presentation. As far as a vote, he would be recusing himself.
- Mr. Alan Sayre gave presentation on proposal of funding for Sheriff's Office.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: This is a matter that can be voted on at this time.
- Mr. Scott Krein: Both Emergency Services and Sheriff's Office go to multiple events together. These banners and flyers will be a great benefit.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: These banners will be for public education, correct? And will assist in the pill take back program?
- Mr. Alan Sayre: Answered questions regarding public education banners and that the pill take back program would not be opioid specific. More discussion was followed.
- Mr. Scott Krein: Made motion to approve the Oconee County Sheriff's Office, Mr. Time Rice second, approved 6-0. Mr. Alan Sayre recusing himself.

**General Discussion from Taskforce Members:**

- Dr. Aaron Zeller: In full disclosure, the County has been approved for \$246,000 dollars. Even though non-profits are applying for funding, the County has to do their part and have a part of funding. More discussion followed.
- Ms. Brittney Martin: Just a reminder that the Taskforce is an advisory committee and cannot bind to any contracts.
- Discussion on funding amounts for organizations.
- Dr. Aaron Zeller: What are we going vs. not going to fund. What is the will of the Taskforce?
- Ms. Lekesha Benson: The amount should be modified, and then see what they can fund with that.
- Mr. Alan Sayre made motion to have organizations revise or alter an application for next meeting. Mr. Scott Krein made revision to add priorities. Discussion noted stating that salaries are a hot topic and organizations need to be self sustaining after a year. Mr. Alan Sayre is concerned with a comment from OARS stating that they can scrap the mission critical

expenses of \$33,000. This gives concerns and would like to see priorities for funding. Would like to see where OARS lie with funding and what is most important. If mission critical is not essential, then why is it in the application to be scrapped. Mr. Tim Rice: In fairness, the other applicant who left should have the opportunity to hear discussion regarding funding. The discussion should be tabled until other applicant can be present. Ms. Lekesha Benson asked if a percentage of a salary being removed if the employee will be doing other types of addictions besides opioids? An amended motion made by Dr. Aaron Zeller that Taskforce will unlikely fund real property. All in favor 7-0

4. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Alan Sayre, second by Mr. Tim Rice. All in favor, 7-0.

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