

Morris County Advisory Committee on Women
May 18, 2021, 2021, 5:30pm to 7:00pm
Via Microsoft Teams

Present: Kasey Errico, Pam Bennett-Santorio, Eileen Specchio, Karen O’Keeffe, Donna Boyce, Elaine Muller, Liz Kisatsky

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. O’Keeffe called the meeting to order at 5:32pm and welcomed attendees.

2. Review of April Meeting Minutes – The Committee reviewed the April 20, 2021 meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Boyce, seconded by Ms. Specchio.

3. Discussion:

• **April 20th ALICE Presentation and Morris County Needs Assessment**

Ms. O’Keeffe began the discussion by briefly reviewing aspects from the presentation, particularly the child care pilot program in Morris County, United in Care. She also opened the discussion regarding the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC) Needs Assessment, which was conducted throughout the State. A presentation on this material will be provided next month if doable. We can prepare questions in advance of the presentation at today’s meeting. We need to start to discuss the topic of what, as a Committee, struck us that we think is interesting, and gives us direction in terms of where we agree we can advise the Commissioners on the topics we feel impact women in Morris County. Ms. Boyce was impressed on the amount of data that was collected, clearly there is so much need. Ms. Specchio agreed with the amount of need. We have to try and figure out where do we zero in on what we can do, or what kind of help do we want to offer? She liked Ms. Mueller’s idea of keeping people informed via the newsletter, and asked if this has this been started? Ms. Mueller stated it has not. Her goal is to meet with Brian Murray, the County Director of Communications. Ms. Kisatsky will forward his contact information to Ms. Mueller. Topics need to be relevant and could be based on Historic Women and their achievements. Ms. Mueller wants to be prepared before meeting with Mr. Murray. Ms. O’Keeffe stated that we have a couple of opportunities. We can use the newsletter to inform, in terms of what we are learning, such as the child care pilot program, or we talk about items of interest to women of Morris County. The purpose of this Committee is to inform the Commissioners of the needs of women in Morris County. It’s very important to remain focused. Ms. Errico suggested that it may be difficult to be in a situation where we have to have “something” for the newsletter, which would force us to “create” a topic by a specific date. Instead, when there is a relevant topic, that we think is noteworthy and valuable to share, and to inform readers. This way we are not searching for topics.

Ms. O’Keeffe recommended the Committee circle back to the agenda items and discuss the ALICE Presentation and the Needs Assessment. For instance what struck her, regarding the Needs Assessment, 14% of the population in Morris County is experiencing severe housing costs burdens. 5.3% of children under 18 are facing food insecurity, 4% of children are without health insurance, and 5% of children under 18 are living in poverty. Regarding the ALICE Report, 65% of the female head of household in Morris County, are living below the ALICE threshold.

Ms. Muller stated that what struck her was that with the Needs Assessment, two things kept people in the position they were in. One of the barriers was lack of transportation, the other was the lack of awareness of services. These may be items the Committee can address and put into the newsletter piece. We could work to diminish these barriers. A lot of people need help, but don’t know where to go. Maybe the Committee can pick a topic, such as housing, and provide information in the newsletter on how to qualify and where to go.

Ms. O’Keeffe suggested researching who the Community Providers are in Morris County, specific to women’s needs, and highlight this information in the newsletter. Ms. Errico stated that Morris County Committees share information. Brian Murray, also requests that provider information is shared with him for County dissemination. Ms. O’Keeffe recommended the Committee begin by defining topic areas. Ms. Errico also mentioned that items in the newsletter get on the social media feed as well. Many topics are picked up by Municipal town pages, which are a great platform to get information out to the public.

Ms. Boyce was shocked by the number of ALICE adjacent people who fall through the gaps, it was a very large group. Maybe we can highlight a service opportunity, and where to find it to plug some gaps. Ms. O’Keeffe suggested selecting two topics for the newsletter like child care and housing. Ms. Mueller thought it was a good idea. She also stated that within the Needs Assessment, some of the age breakdown percentage information needs to be looked at closely. Ms. Errico stated that the Division on Aging will be doing their Needs Assessment through the Area Plan. We can do a comparison once it’s complete. Ms. O’Keeffe recommended picking a couple of topics and have members research what the resources are. Ms. Errico stated that at an upcoming meeting, we can invite a member of the HSAC and ask what process they used to garner specific information.

Ms. Boyce mentioned the Domestic Violence issues. How do we ask someone if they are safe where they are? People are still currently confined in their homes. How about people who age out of Foster Care and are desperate for services? Does Morris County have funding to assist this population? Providers are aware of services, but the youth do not. They need a trusted voice to connect them to services.

Ms. O’Keeffe asked the Committee if they had an opportunity to view the pilot program United in Care website. There’s a lot of information imbedded within the link. It is anticipated there will be a deficit in child care, and the cost is expected to increase. This issue will definitely impact the ALICE population. Ms. Specchio added there is also a lack of caregivers to fill positions. To address why there is a deficit, Ms. Errico can invite Rebekka Zydell, Executive Director of Child and Family Resource Center, to a meeting to discuss the issue, as well as the Needs Assessment outcome.

- **Development questions for HSAC regarding the Needs Assessment**

Ms. O’Keeffe asked the Committee what are some of the questions we should ask Ms. Zydell when she attends an upcoming meeting:

- How often is the Needs Assessment conducted?
- How many people participated?
- Any surprises from the previous year?
- What are the significant changes from the last assessment?
- What is the breakout demographic profile related to all areas?
- How would we prioritize what we were going to address, what role can we take on?
- What does she see as an urgent standing need, can this Committee assist in some capacity?
- How and where is the information being disseminated?
- Who are the providers that are receiving the funding, and is the public aware of them as a resource?
- What are the barriers to child care?
- How many child care facilities have closed in Morris County?
- What are the qualifications for a Caregiver in Morris County?

4. **New Business/Announcements-**

- Membership Update: New members are typically appointed in January. However, as this Committee membership is not at the minimum number of members, the Committee is allowed to bring new members on board during this time.
- Discussion on contributing to the County E-newsletter on a regular basis – See above.
- Other topics? – Ms. Errico received a link to the article from Miranda Kawiecki and will forward it to the Committee.

5. **Public Section/Questions** - None

6. **Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 6:42pm. The next meeting will be held on June 15, 2021.