

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING OF MARCH 31, 2021
MINUTES

This meeting was held via Zoom online meeting services and was available for the public to view, listen and participate via videoconference and dial-in options.

This meeting, in its entirety, is available to view by visiting the East Lyme Town Hall webpage.

PRESENT: Mark Nickerson, Kevin Seery, Marc Salerno, Rose Ann Hardy, Paul Dagle and Dan Cunningham
ALSO PRESENT: Patricia Payne, Care and Share; and Amy Hollis, Shoreline Food Kitchen and Pantry

Mr. Nickerson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance, and he noted that this will be the first meeting of many to discuss how we will spend the American Rescue Plan funds.

Discussion – Care and Share

Ms. Patricia Payne introduced herself as the new president of Care and Share and gave a brief history of the time she has spent volunteering up to this point. Ms. Payne reviewed the history of Care and Share and explained the many benefits that they provide the members of our community, which is attached hereto as Exhibit 1. She stated that they currently offer the food pantry to all their clients, and they also currently offer up to \$800 per family per year for direct pay assistance, such as gar repairs, rent, insurance, etc. Care and Share pays directly to the company on behalf of the client.

Ms. Payne stated that they appreciate the space that the Town has donated to them for their use, and it is very appropriate for the privacy of their clients, but the space is getting a little tight. She stated that some of the large that they need are; two commercial freezers, two large refrigerators, increase the dollar amount of the food cards they give, they would like to start giving out gas cards, they would like to initiate a child care assistance program, they need new doors, larger space, a generator on demand, the building needs cleaning and painting, air conditioning, funds to pay for the outside auditor, new grocery carts with larger wheels, a new copier, upgraded bathrooms, to name a few. Mr. Nickerson stated that he would like Ms. Payne to work on getting some estimates for these items so that they have a better idea of what they are asking for. He stated that he will speak with the appropriate Department Heads and see if some of the things that are being stored in the building can be moved to give Care and Share room to expand. Ms. Payne reported that both Stop and Shop and Shop Rite provide discounts to Care and Share on food. She confirmed that their revenues are derived all from donations, and they have a budget of approximately \$180,000 per year. Mr. Nickerson stated that the Town will investigate giving them more space to expand, and to also investigate upgrading the outside lighting; Mr. Seery noted that the Town should investigate replacing the doors because it is a town owned building. Ms. Payne reported that they have about 175 families signed up, and feed anywhere from 70 to 80 families per month. They provide scholarships to clients and their children for both credit and non-credit courses. Mr. Dagle asked if they would please prioritize the list of items for them so that they have a clearer vision of what needs to be done first. Mr. Dagle thanked Ms. Payne and all her volunteers for the outstanding job they do of taking care of our residents.

Mr. Nickerson reported that he spoke with Mr. Newton today and confirmed that approximately 20% of our students and their families are eligible for the free lunch program, which is about one in five children.

Discussion Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantry

Ms. Amy Hollis, Executive Director of the Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantry (SSKP) was in attendance, and she stated that the East Lyme pantry manager is Sherrie Weiss, but that she was unable to

FILED

April 14, 2021 AT 9:23 AM/PM
Bruce Atcham ATC
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

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attend tonight's meeting. A summary of information on SSKP is attached hereto as Exhibit 2. Their pantry in East Lyme is at St. John's Episcopal Church on Thursday afternoons, and they operate throughout eleven towns on the shoreline. Ms. Hollis confirmed that last year's ALICE report shows East Lyme at 22% working poor, or what is now referred to as Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. She stated that although we do not have many families that fall below the poverty line, we do have many working families that are just making ends meet. She stated that their mission at SSKP is to provide food and fellowship to those who are in need, and she stated that one of the most important things that the Town can do to assist them is to get the word out so that more families in our community are made aware of this resource. She stated that once a person is registered, they can visit any one of the food pantries, they do not have to visit the pantry in their own community if they are uncomfortable with that. Ms. Hollis stated that one of their goals is to reopen the meal site in Old Lyme, which closed during the pandemic, and hopefully open a new meal site in East Lyme; in 2019, 780 East Lyme residents were registered with them. In 2020, approximately a quarter million pounds of food was provided to resident in East Lyme, feeding approximately 18,000 people over the course of the year. During the pandemic, she stated that they did not require anyone to register and provided food to everyone who showed up at the pantries; and they estimate that participation increased by 50%. One of the biggest differences between SSKP and Care and Share is that SSKP does not ask what your financial situation is; if you go to a pantry you will be provided with food with no questions asked. She reported that the yearly operating budget is around \$900,000 and all the funds and food come from donations. Ms. Hollis stated that their greatest needs now are food and a truck with a lift gate; she stated that the currently have one truck without a lift gate and they use that for all eleven sites. Mr. Cunningham suggested that we might investigate partnering with the other towns that SSKP serves to pool our resources to purchase capital items such as a truck or other large equipment. Mr. Nickerson requested that Ms. Hollis price out what the purchase of a new truck with a lift gate and get that to him, and he will commit to reaching out to other towns to ask for a joint venture. He noted that all towns have been asked to spend 1-2% of the American Rescue Plan funds on art and culture.

Ms. Hardy stated that she would like to concentrate on groups such as the Commission on Aging, Meals on Wheels, Senior Center, the VNA, Veterans in our community; and regionally Safe Futures and the Homeless Hospitality Group of NL should be on the list. Mr. Nickerson stated that he will invite Youth Services and Niantic Main Street to a special meeting on April 7th at 7pm. He reported that during the regular meeting, we will here a presentation from the SCORE group.

Mr. Nickerson reminded everyone that until we receive these funds, which are anticipated to arrive in early June, these are all planning discussions, and no action will be taken to distribute funds.

MOTION (1)

Mr. Seery MOVED to adjourn the March 31, 2021, special meeting of the East Lyme Board of Selectmen at 8:10 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. Salerno. Motion passed 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted By:



Sandra Anderson
Recording Secretary

EXHIBIT 1

Care and Share of East Lyme Board of Selectmen's Meeting American Rescue Fund March 31, 2021

Care and Share of East Lyme was established as a 501c (3) charity in 1989 to serve residents in East Lyme, Niantic, and Salem. We currently serve approximately 175 families each year and supply 70 – 80 families with food each month. We rely entirely on donations and volunteers to operate. Food donations are accepted at bins in various places in East Lyme and Salem and every Saturday at the pantry. Monetary donations fund all our programs and are used to purchase most of the food we give to clients. Our current operating budget is about \$180,000. Although most of our clients pick up food at our Roxbury Rd pantry, many of our clients do not have access to vehicles. In those cases, we deliver food.

Although our original charge was to provide food, we have expanded services over the years to include:

Designated Assistance – monthly payments of \$100 toward living expenses paid directly to vendors. These payments are generally made for rent or utilities

Emergency Assistance – clients may apply for payments up to \$800 annually to help with bills they are unable to pay e.g., insurance, taxes, medical expenses, etc.

Food Cards – Stop and Shop gift cards are provided to each client with their monthly food allotment. These cards may also be used to purchase gas.

Holiday Programs – holiday baskets are provided to approximately 130 families (even if they are not currently clients) at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and in the spring with a supply of food for a holiday dinner. In December, clients have access to gifts for the holiday season at our holiday store.

Backpack Program – approximately 75 fully stocked, grade appropriate backpacks are provided each July for children

Coat Program – winter coats, jackets, scarves, hats, gloves/mittens are available for clients each fall and winter

Scholarships – we are currently providing 4 scholarships of up to \$2,500/year for clients or their children towards credited and noncredited classes

Camperships – provide summer camp experiences for children. In addition, food and snacks for lunches are provided for campers

School Nurse Assistance – we provide socks, underwear, and changes of clothes for school nurses to use in emergencies

Due to the generosity of our community in the past year, we have been able to increase the amount of assistance we can offer clients for education and emergencies. However, our currently pantry is small (actual pantry area is approximately 900 ft²). This does not

give us much space to store shelf-stable foods therefore it does not allow us to provide food for families more than once every three or four weeks. If we had more space and were able to upgrade our freezers and refrigerators, we could provide food more often and possibly include more perishable foods. In general, we can offer frozen meats and bread. Occasionally, we offer eggs and milk but do not have the ability to store fresh fruits and vegetables.

Looking for assistance with building maintenance and expansion. Priority items will be submitted to Mark Nickerson.

Thank you,

Pat Payne
President
Care & Share

EXHIBIT 2

Dear Friends in East Lyme,

Thank you for the opportunity to share about the Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries. Founded in 1989, SSKP has grown to serve our eleven-town region from East Lyme to Madison and north to Killingworth and Chester. We operate five pantry sites including one in East Lyme, and several meal sites. All food distribution shifted during the pandemic to a grab-and-go curbside model. The community support, volunteers, and our host sites enabled us to adapt throughout the pandemic and continue offering food to guests each week.

In 2019 SSKP had 780 registered guests from the town of East Lyme with over 7,000 registered guests across all five pantry sites (coming from throughout the region). Our pantries provide groceries to all guests weekly. All residents of the eleven towns are welcome to register and receive groceries. Our meal sites are open to all with no registration.

In 2020 SSKP shared over 1.6 million pounds of food through the five pantry sites, which was a dramatic increase from the year prior. This food represents 1,436,000 meals shared in 2020 (in 2019 we shared 927,873 meals).

Our strategic plan includes continued strengthening of our service, exploring ways to lower barriers when accessing food support, preparing for long-term sustainability, and the continuation of our core mission to provide food and fellowship to individuals in need.

With 22% of East Lyme falling within ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) and approximately 30% ALICE across our service area we anticipate the need for food support to continue.

The food resources at our pantries come from three sources: 1. Food Banks, 2. Food Donations from the community, and 3. Food purchased by SSKP weekly, which includes protein, eggs, and lots of fresh produce.

First and foremost, the best way to help is to make sure our community members know what resources are available. We all need support of some type from time-to-time and together we can ensure everyone has access to basic food support. We would welcome towns to share information about SSKP and the help that is available.

We rely on our one box truck for hauling food between the Food Bank and our pantries. Each week our part-time drivers move thousands of pounds of food. With 1.6 million pounds of food shared in 2020 and approximately 1/3 of that moved by our drivers on one small box truck you might image the incredible efforts involved. Beside the underlying wish list item of working for the day everyone has basic needs met a dream item would be a new truck with a lift-gate. I have begun researching pricing for this large wish list item. I've also learned that it may be possible to add a lift-gate to our current truck, which might cost up to \$10,000.

I am grateful for your time and the many ways you work to strengthen our communities.

With gratitude,

Amy Hollis, Executive Director of Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries

ahollis@shorelinesoupkitchens.org

860-227-2599 cell