

**CORNER HOUSE BOARD**  
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES  
March 10, 2021  
by videoconference

Members in attendance: Darrell Francis, Danita Ishibashi, Wendy Jolley, Cecilia Mathews, Joanne Parker, Wendy Perello (1<sup>st</sup> alternate), Henry Polanco, Dwaine Williamson.

Student Representatives: none

Staff in attendance: Gary De Blasio, David Errickson, Tracy Kindelsperger, Jean Woodman.

Guests: Members of Princeton Mutual Aid (PMA) were in attendance; speakers are identified below.

I. Wendy Jolley opened the meeting at 6:00 PM. Wendy read the following notice into the record.

*Notice of the Board's regular meetings as required by Sections 4a, 3d, 13 and 14 of the Open Public Meetings Act has been provided to the public. On December 22, 2020 public notice of the meeting date was posted on the municipal website. On March 5, 2021 public notice with a videoconference link and a draft agenda were posted on the municipal website. All notices were also published by Planet Princeton.*

- a. Introductions – The Board members introduced themselves for the benefit of the guests.
- b. The January 13 minutes were approved as distributed. Motion Dwaine Williamson, second Cecilia Mathews, approved.
- c. Public Comment – Guests from a newly organized group, Princeton Mutual Aid, described their work in the community and noted they have encountered people in need of mental health services. They inquired about helping with Corner House's community outreach.
  - i. Maria Juega asked what Corner House's budget for 2020 was, noting an apparent budget as of the September 30, 2020 municipal report. Gary De Blasio noted the municipal CFO has not been available to clarify the report, but that Corner House's 2020 budget was \$760,874 and the 2021 budget is \$799,172.
  - ii. Sophia Chan asked about the Princeton University Chicano Caucus and volunteer translators. Gary noted translators are available at events for Academic Success Today (middle school tutoring program) and the 2020 hiring of a Spanish-speaking therapist for the clinical programs.
  - iii. Ali Mctar inquired about Corner House's outreach to the Princeton community. Gary explained the outreach programs in the middle school and high schools, the high academic success. Joanne Parker spoke to Corner House's longstanding community outreach and its service to students in the African-American and other communities.
  - iv. Hirishi Somayaji inquired about protocols and procedures for serious substance abuse and mental health issues. David Errickson, Director of Clinical Operations, summarized Corner House's ethical and contractual obligations under the state regulations for outpatient substance abuse treatment facilities. Discussion followed regarding the difficulty of working with friends and community members who abuse substances and relapse, and navigating the area between a client's willingness to engage in treatment and a facility's limits with respect to the client's right to self-determination.
  - v. Manik Dhar asked about how many minors and clients are served in Corner House (substance abuse treatment) programs and how the success of the

programs is measured. Gary and David reported precise service figures are not immediately available but can be supplied. Gary noted 50 – 60 students attend the prevention programs each week. David also summarized the state, county, Medicaid, and court entities that regulate and audit Corner House’s treatment programs. David also noted that, during the pandemic, community-based mental health services have been overwhelmed with requests, while substance-abuse service requests have dropped dramatically, even though addiction continues. Darrell Francis reported on the HIPAA and confidentiality limitations placed on drug rehabilitation facilities following client discharge. Gary also noted that David and he have just been appointed to a county drug-overdose review committee.

- vi. Maria Jueva requested a followup meeting between PMA members and Corner House staff. Gary and Maria will work to schedule a Zoom call. Members of the PMA and the Corner House Board expressed appreciation for each other’s work in the community.
- vii. Dwaine Williamson commented on the voluntary aspect of a person’s engagement in treatment, even when Drug Court is involved. Darrell Francis pointed out that many programs, including Drug Court, are focused on clinical treatment. Too many people, once they leave clinical care, literally have nowhere to go. Clients’ material needs, such as housing and employment, need to be addressed.
- viii. Mika Kelley of the Harm Reduction Coalition asked about Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT). David Errickson responded that Corner House uses and supports MAT (although it refers clients elsewhere for injectable medications), but is not funded as a Harm Reduction facility.

II. Director’s Report – Gary DeBlasio – see attached report.

- a. All Corner House staff, except one, have received COVID-19 vaccinations, and staff are increasing their hours in the office.
- b. Corner House is working with a state facilitator to create a cultural competency plan.
- c. Gary summarized recent donations and grants received.
- d. Student Prevention Programs:
  - i. Applications for the TAG (Teen Advisory Group) and GAIA (Growing Up Accepted as an Individual in America) programs for 2021-2022 high-school juniors are available online. Corner House Student Board members have created a video clip to advertise the programs and encourage rising juniors to apply.
  - ii. Sgt. Tom Lagomarsino of the Princeton Police presented on marijuana legalization laws and the issues raised by these changes.
  - iii. Scott Heydt of RefinED Character facilitated an online workshop on implicit bias.
  - iv. Gary noted the students are more willing to engage in Zoom sessions when they are student-led and give them a chance to share with one another.
  - v. Academic Success Today (AST) now has about 40 middle-school students. Many Princeton University students help tutor and mentor the middle-schoolers, also on Zoom.

- e. Treatment Programs: Client applications and treatment participation are at their lowest levels in at least 20 years.
  - f. Outreach Programs:
    - i. WOWY (World of Work for Youth) and PYP (Princeton Youth Project) students are enjoying virtual college tours, since they can learn about more colleges than they usually would during in-person visits.
    - ii. A program alumna returned for an online discussion of her substance use issues, which the students found moving.
  - g. Financial Report – Jean Woodman reported the treatment revenue has declined about 40% during the pandemic, but we are managing for now. The grant funding for the bilingual clinician is particularly helpful at this time. Additionally, Gary and Jean have met with municipal CFO Sandy Webb to align Corner House’s reports with the municipal budget. Gary noted that Corner House passed the municipal audit with excellent marks.
- III. Corner House Student Board Report (CHSB) – The students were not able to attend this evening’s meeting, but their activities are noted in the Director’s Report.
- IV. Municipal Liaison – Dwaine Williamson
- a. Dwaine reported on the complexities of providing affordable housing, including the need for municipalities to offer incentives to developers to build and offer 20% of a project’s units as affordable.
  - b. Hilltop Park, across from Princeton Community Village, has a natural grass field. Athletes and their families are in conflict with environmentalists over the proposed replacement of the grass with artificial turf. The Recreation Department is working with both sides to resolve the issue of playability vs. natural habitat.
  - c. Municipal Business Administrator Marc Dashield is retiring at the end of March. The Council is seeking a replacement.
- V. Corner House Foundation and Development – Tracy Kindelsperger, Coordinator of Grants & Development.
- a. The upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration will be an opportunity to reconnect with people who have benefitted from Corner House’s programs over the years.
  - b. An in-person Spring Gala will not be possible this year. The Corner House Foundation Board is developing ideas for other fundraising events and hopes to host an in-person event of some kind in the fall. Volunteers for an event committee are welcome.
  - c. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year will begin August 17, 2021. Corner House hopes to host events throughout the year, culminating in a birthday party event in August, 2022. Joanne Parker offered to help develop lists of contacts.
- VI. Old Business
- a. Gary reported that the reduced (\$14,000) grant for the Princeton Alcohol & Drug Alliance (PADA) supports the Outreach program to at-risk students. The PADA continues

to meet on the first Thursday of the month in order to share resources and to be a presence in the community, even though it cannot offer community events at this time.

- b. PADA needs community members. Guest Mika Kelley offered her contact information and asked to be invited to PADA meetings.

VII. New Business – None

VIII. Adjournment

- a. Joanne Parker expressed her gratitude for the interest of PMA members. Joanne testified to her own positive experience with community support services when she was an adolescent and expressed strong support for Corner House’s work.
- b. The meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM. Motion Dwaine Williamson, second Joanne Parker, approved.

**Next regular meeting: Wednesday, May 12, 2021 at 6:00 PM.**

Meeting Schedule for 2021:

- May 12
- No meeting in July
- September 8
- November 10

Respectfully submitted,  
Jean Woodman, Corner House Board Secretary  
Minutes approved May 12, 2021

## **Director's Report March 2021**

**Administrative Updates:** Corner House will remain with a limited onsite staff until further notice, based on Health Department recommendations. Currently, we are still providing on-site drug testing to high-risk clients. In addition, we are offering onsite clinical and EAP services, as determined necessary by staff. All staff, except one by choice, have received their complete Moderna Vaccine series. We are awaiting guidelines from CDC and Health Department to adjust our scheduling for onsite services.

David Errickson, Tracy Kindelsperger and I are working on the development of a Cultural Competency Plan for Corner House Behavioral Health as required by the State of New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. We had our first consultation meeting today with representative of the State. The plan is due April 30, 2021 and will be reviewed with the Board.

### **Corner House Foundation and Development Office Updates:**

**DIRECT MAIL: \$87,406.00**

**INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS - TOTAL RAISED \$6,763.90**

This number now includes gifts in honor/memory of individuals that were given separate from the Direct Mail campaign.

**GRANTS - TOTAL RAISED: \$43,000**

MacMillan Family Foundation-\$10,000  
Church & Dwight-\$8,000  
Tikkun Olam Foundation-\$10,000  
Starr Foundation-\$15,000

**FUNDRAISING TOTAL FOR 2020-2021: \$137,169.90**

### **Leadership Program Highlights:**

#### **2021-2022 TAG and GAIA Applications are Available Online**

**The Leadership programs:** The students look forward to meeting on Tuesday as it provides an opportunity for them to check in with each other and prepare for workshops and events. Last week, Sergeant Thomas Lagomarsino from the Princeton Police Department spoke to the students about the legalization of Marijuana. He was well received and the students enjoyed the discussion. Sergeant Lagomarsino has committed to returning and updating the discussion as the law changes. In addition, Scott Heydt from Refined Character facilitated an interactive program about implicit bias and identity for all students.

**“Seniors for Seniors”** 10 CHSB volunteers are in touch with their assigned senior citizen and they are reporting very positive feedback. The Town Topics recently ran a story on the program. A group from CHSB is planning to create a show about this program and it will be posted on CH social media and other places.

**Corner House Student Board CHSB** 2019-20 alumni spoke to the current CHSB about their college experience during these challenging times. It was a valuable get together for both groups. The students also created video clips to encourage current sophomores to apply for TAG and GAIA. The clips were sent to all the schools. The Student Board members continue to attend their assigned Municipality of Princeton Board and Commission meetings and share the information with their fellow members each month. The students are currently working on or have completed the following events: **2/20-Zoom Cooking Class**, **2/26-Game Night**, **3/2-A video** about the “Seniors for Seniors” experience and **5/14-Outside Movie Night**.

**Project GAIA:** GAIA has now developed and revised workshops for all age groups in second, fifth, and eighth grades. The workshops are scheduled throughout March and April and students are excited to have the opportunity to present their workshops. The team dedicated a group to discuss the recent anti-Asian violence in our country and reviewed an article by Princeton Professor Anne Anlin Cheng that appeared in the NY Times. Project GAIA is hoping to have a few notable Princetonians who have made a positive difference for our local communities of color speak to the leaders this spring. They also will continue to discuss mental health, stress, and loneliness for teens during the pandemic.

**The TAG Team** facilitated two workshops with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Riverside Elementary School. Their presentation focused on healthy decision making, peer pressure, and the risks of vaping and substance abuse. They have workshops scheduled this month at Littlebrook Elementary School for 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The students are planning additional workshops for younger grades.

### **Prevention Program Highlights:**

#### ***Academic Success Today (AST):***

##### **Mentees**

- Martha continues to contact parents, checking on the mentorships. Addressing any issues that may arise or parent concerns.
- Reaching out to summer camps who have provided scholarships in past and attempting to secure other options. Sending out information on spring clinics.
- Contacting elementary school counselors for recommendations on rising 6th graders who would benefit from program at PUMS next year.

##### **Mentors**

- Martha is working with student leaders on a fun Zoom event planned for March. Emailed AST families to see if they have access to a microwave, all responded positively. All mentees and mentors will prepare and bake microwavable mug cake together.

##### **Lawrenceville Program**

- Only two more Zoom meetings with AST 6th graders and Lawrenceville student tutors. Program consists of fun activities, games, chatting, craft projects and acting.

#### **STAR: (Super Teens Acting Responsibly)**

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls meet once a week, to check in and talk about topics and issues related to their lives, such as friendships, girl power, self-care, loving oneself, and empathy. In addition, they have been focusing on how to deal with stress and anxiety.

### **Treatment Program Highlights:**

All clinical services continue on a telehealth basis through Zoom. We continue onsite drug screens for higher risk clients, with new precautions and Plexiglas screens. We have begun onsite EAP services to municipal employees and clinical services to a few clients, as determined by clinical team. The clinical team are currently preparing Webinars covering a variety of topics including addiction, trauma, anxiety, and depression. The first one is posted on our website.

Currently we have no wait list for clinical services. We have had 10 requests for services in February. We currently have 8 Drug Court clients. Treatment numbers are beginning to increase ever so slightly.

We have begun limited groups at this time: Act Your Values (3), Women's Trauma Support Group, and a Relapse Prevention Group (4).

### **Outreach Program Highlights:**

**AYP:** Our students are doing well in their classes and taking advantage of regular tutoring set up through Community House. The focus with students has been on effective communication (both verbal and non-verbal) especially with parents, teachers, and friends.

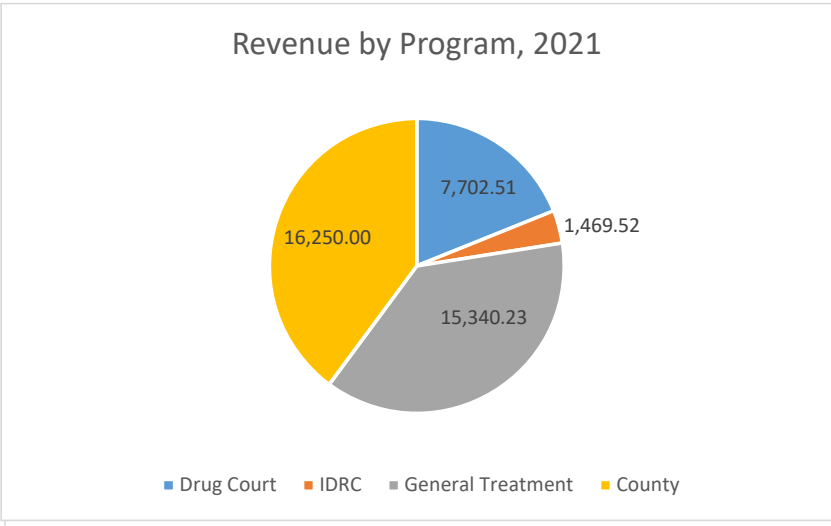
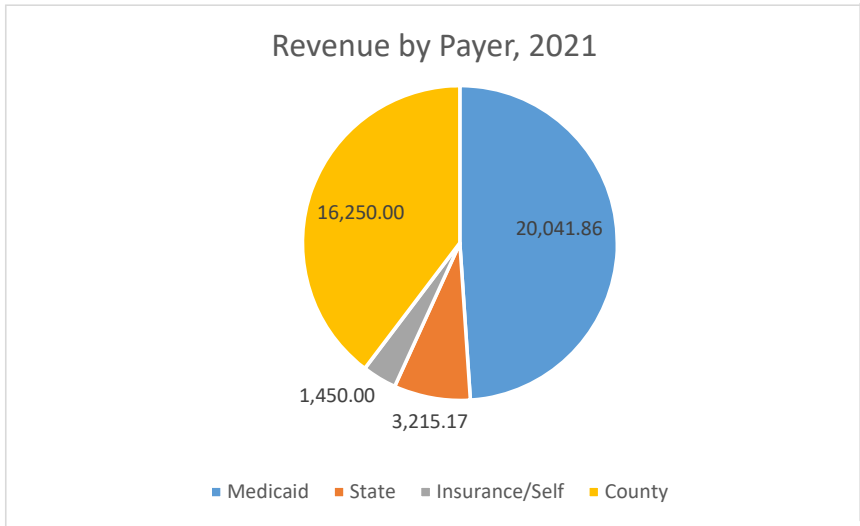
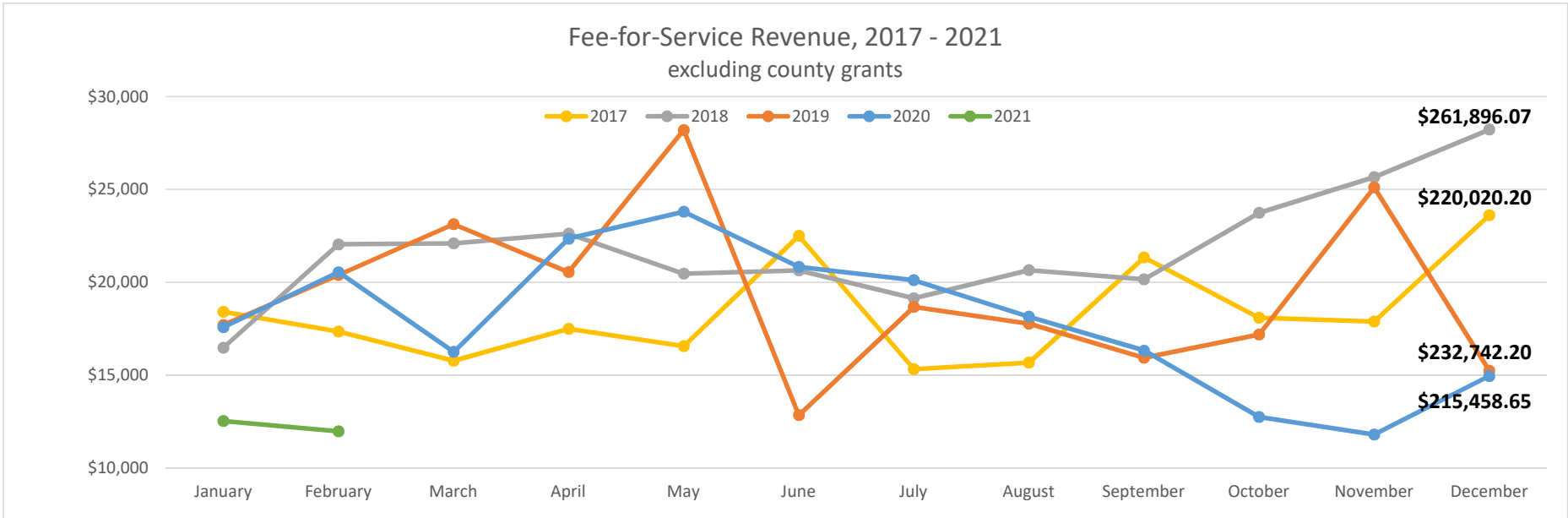
**WOWY and PYP:** Seniors have received acceptance letters from Seton Hall, William Patterson, Rutgers University, and Montclair. **One of our sophomores is the recipient of the Give Something Back Foundation Scholarship and will be receiving a full ride to a selected college upon graduation.**

Over the past three weeks students have visited NYU, Penn State University, and the University of Maryland. Students are finding the virtual tours quite informative, as it provides them an opportunity to see more schools than we normally explore. Next week, Lateef Farmer, Director of EOF at Mercer County Community College, will speak with our students.

Students also heard from Robyn, a former Outreach Student. She discussed her past struggles with substance abuse and how she made important changes to get help and improve her life. Her talk had a significant impact on all students.









## PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

CORNER HOUSE BOARD

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that the Corner House Board will hold a regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, **March 10, 2021 at 6:00 PM** via videoconference using the following:

Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96092355735?pwd=YmlTK1dGWtZazhub0tWOTQrVHV2QT09>

Meeting ID: 960 9235 5735

Passcode: 493836

If logging in to Zoom via computer or mobile device for the first time, please allow a few extra minutes to install the program (if using a computer) or app (if using a mobile device). Once you log in, you will be asked to enter your name and an email address.

The agenda to the extent known has been posted and formal action may be taken.

Gary DeBlasio

Executive Director, Corner House

# CORNER HOUSE BOARD

## Revised Regular Meeting Agenda

March 10, 2021

6:00 PM

By videoconference

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- I. **Welcome** – Wendy Jolley
  - Introductions
  - Approval of January 13 meeting minutes
  - Public comment: Three (3) minutes per speaker
- II. **Director's Report** – Gary De Blasio
- III. **Student Representatives** – Gianna Gasparro (PDS), Renee Nearing (PHS), Jason Yang
- IV. **Municipal Liaison** – Dwaine Williamson
- V. **Corner House Foundation and Development** – Tracy Kindelsperger
  - Upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration
- VI. **Old Business**
  - Princeton Alcohol & Drug Alliance (PADA) funding for 2021 – 2022
  - PADA membership and the Alliance's role in the community
- VII. **New Business**
- VIII. **Adjournment**

Remaining meetings for 2021:

- May 12
- No meeting in July
- September 8
- November 10