

Colebrook Select Board
Selectmen Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2025

Selectboard Members: Sue Collins, Greg Placy, and Ray Gorman.

Staff: Tim Stevens & Heidi Lawton

Public: Erik Petersen-UCVH, Eric Moran-White Horse Recovery, & Greg Williams-Prevention Specialist, North Country Health Consortium.

Hearing of the Public:

- A. Erik Petersen works at UCVH as a consultant on Substance Use Disorder Patient Treatment Project. He is working on the care provided to the patient coming into the hospital, getting them set up with in-patient treatment elsewhere in the state, but also getting them services in the area as well. Erik has worked with the Health Consortium, Eric from White Horse Recovery, as well as Mackenzie Dorr from Juvenile Justice and Probation, and John Leblanc from Pittsburg & Colebrook PD. He has been working on forming an RCO, which is a Recovery Community Organization, hopefully in the surrounding area. Erik explained that there have been some RCO's that have been developed in the area in the last year. One in Berlin and there were a lot of great successes with that RCO. Erik explained that RCO is a non-profit organization that is led and governed by peers in the local recovery community. Community members help to organize the recovery meetings and any other peer-led meetings that there may be. It tends to be more AA & NA than anything else because of the popularity and familiarity of these. Outside of providing those meetings they provide support for individuals with the use of recovery coaches, providing support for family members and friends, access to various resources, providing social work and connection to social services, and community education and training. Similar to what he has done at the hospital with providing harm reduction materials like naloxone to the community, RCO's tend to pick up a lot of that.

Eric Moran talked about how a lot of the RCO's in the southern part of the state are heavily into harm reduction. Eric explained that he is less like that, he does wound care kits and some testing of drugs for fentanyl and Narcan, but that is about it. He finds that the more north he goes the more resistant people are to the other paths. So, if somebody wants that, he would have to refer them farther south.

Erik explained that harm reduction can mean a lot of different things, but it is basically to reduce the harm if someone is in a place that is not conducive to abstinence-based recovery, meaning fully sober, it is basically trying to get them to a place where they are

safer than when they started. An RCO is not a place for people to come and use, it is not a safe injection site, these are sober places, these are places for people to seek recovery.

When their team decided to start the project called “Reaching Rural Initiative” they assessed our area to see what was most in need in Colebrook to help the substance use disorder community. An RCO is kind of the catch all, a way to provide resources. They set out right away to develop an RCO because of what they saw through the various community stakeholder meetings and events that they have held. They brought in an author named Sam Quinones who is an award-winning journalist, and a New York Times Best Selling author came and spoke at the Tillotson Center and in all of these various meetings they kept hearing people saying, “we don’t have enough resources, and we don’t know what to do about it.” “Responsibility is falling in all the wrong places; it shouldn’t be the responsibility of a local business owner to house people because there is no housing.” “It shouldn’t be the responsibility of a family member to try and get someone sober in their living room because it is just not a place that is conducive for that kind of effort, nor is it safe.” Having education around these efforts was so lacking that they realized they needed to have something stable, something sustainable, something that would last for the community so the recovery community could start to build up and support itself. They say the opposite of addiction is connection and whenever they are helping people access resources, initially they are seeing that their best suggestion for them was having to drive an hour and a half south to go work on sobriety because there are no other people in recovery to help support them. The area has two AA meetings a week, which is very minimal considering a lot of people, especially in early recovery, need to go to a meeting every single day. They saw that over the past few years, nationally, and not just particular to Colebrook, there was a rise in overdoses and a substantial rise in overdose fatalities. At one point last year we had a 50% mortality rate, meaning half the people that were overdosing were dying. The national average, which was somewhere around 15-20%. We did address it with the distribution of Narcan, and we have seen those numbers go down, but that is not sustainable. The development of an RCO seemed like the only logical conclusion they could come to for the kind of project that could help. The benefits of an RCO reaches beyond just helping the individuals, it also reaches out to the community at large, it is a massive reduction in healthcare costs, economic benefits, a rise in employment, and a reduction in crime rates. Berlin had some statistics come out after the launch of their RCO and they saw a big reduction in their crime rates and overdose deaths. Beyond that the family support that these places provide is intangible.

Erik understands that they had put forth the idea of an RCO to the town and that Colebrook has a lot going on right now, but they wanted to explain everything and let the town know that they are going to try to explore avenues to go forward and keep the town in the loop. They want the community to participate and be aware of what they are driving towards. They want to open it up for any questions the board may have. Ray asked, “what exactly are you looking for?” Sue said, “I thought you were looking for a fiscal agent?” Erik said,

“what we are doing here today is really just letting you know what we are doing with the project, that we are going forward and looking for opportunities.” Eric said, “if we get another fiscal agent, are you going to let us proceed, because what I do know is odds are we are going to have more people then negative, that is the reality, but something bad is going to happen in the RCO, right, eventually someone is going to overdose at the center and we will be there to Narcan them, but 911 will be called, right, this is just very real.” Especially where you have no sober living, you are going to see a lot of the people that want to get help, as you can imagine going to Manchester. Keene is the most used detox rehab that he has been using lately, they just seem to have more beds. If someone really wants to get better, there is no reason to come back to Berlin unless it is a safe family and the same is going to apply for Colebrook, a good supportive family, so go to sober living, get a year under your belt, and when they actually come back, they are actually a participant in the community. They are paying taxes, working, etc. That is the change you will see, but it will take a while. But that doesn’t mean bad things won’t happen, they will.

Erik says, “basically we are not asking you for anything today, we are not asking you to participate in anything, really, we just wanted to come forward and let you know what the project was that we are driving for and wanted to keep the board informed. We didn’t want to ignore any concerns that you might have. Greg said, “we just have too many projects going on right now.” “We have to oversee the funds on these.” Eric said, “we are going to Virginia next week to present the project, they are aware of our situation and they can’t let non-profits be the fiscal agent, but we are trying to get an exception, if that exception happens, this has the potential to move forward, and if this moves forward, we also have the potential to go after a 1.3 million dollar grant which a hundred thousand is just enough to get our feet wet. That is really nothing, but the other one is real success. Discussion ensued.

Greg Williams said, “we are going to Virginia next week, we have already been awarded the hundred thousand dollars, it is going to disappear if we don’t find a fiscal agent, if you have any ideas, that is what we would be asking for, maybe an extension for the county to give them a little more time to think about it? We don’t want to see the money leave this area. Sue said, “the way I understood it, from talking with you a week ago was that, if the town is the fiscal agent, it is just a matter of one check coming in here and one check getting written to somebody else and we do none of the paperwork.” Greg said, “we did talk to the coaches, because we have through this project the reaching rural coaches who some of them are alumni of the project from previous years and others are people who work for the BJA and they kind of guide us how to do this whole thing and they said that at the very least there would be a two-part payment structure. One would be the first six months and the next would be the rest. That would definitely be something that we would communicate with BJA a little bit more on. If that was something that was plausible for either the town or the community that they could be kind of a pass through, then we could bring that to them as an option. They are working with us now to help us find an option for a fiscal agent.

They are looking at a possible extension. What we can do, since the consortium has more employees than the town is actually run the project and the town or county be the pass through and if either space was open to that as a possibility, we could ask for an extension so there would be time for the town or county to look at it and get any information that you need. Discussion ensued. Tim said, “another issue is when a town becomes a fiscal agent, one of the things you sign says if steps a-z are not followed exactly you are on the hook for that hundred thousand and have to pay it all back, then the town becomes the responsible party for something that someone else is overseeing and doing all the work for.” Erik said that White Horse, the people that would actually be running the center itself have a proven track record of how they handle these places. Sue asked if the center would be at the hospital. Erik said no, they recently talked about a location in West Stewartstown that is only being utilized for half a day on Wednesday right now, and the rent is paid for the next two or three years, so they talked about the potential of utilizing that space. There is no space that has been determined or committed to at all. That wouldn’t necessarily mean that the hospital is then responsible for the RCO. The party responsible for running the RCO is White Horse Recovery. The way that they would write the project for the grant would be based on what is needed for location, what would need to be built or rented or whatever the possibility is. Discussion ensued.

Sue asked is the million dollars just for a year, is it? Erik said no, that would be anything after the hundred thousand, designing the program, getting a location, etc. Eric said he is hoping we can get a Harbor Care Contract as well since they fund all the other RCO’s in the state, if they can fund this one like they did the one in Berlin, then 1.3 million becomes less vital.

Ray said, “the County would make a lot more sense then the town of Colebrook.” Greg said the town did sign off on the grant but then pulled back. Sue said that the board never signed off on the grant. Greg said the town was on the grant when they submitted it December 4, 2024, and then as the group got closer, the town said they couldn’t do it. Tim said, I was asked about it, and I said it needs to be brought before the Selectboard because the Selectboard would be the determining factor. Ray asked the group if they had spoken with Ben Champagne at the County. Greg said, yes, they had spoken with Ben, who referred them to the County Commissioner, Ray Gorman, Greg said Ray was in Boston for a meeting and there was a quick turnaround time, so it did not work out. Greg asked if after they come back from Virginia could they come and talk to someone at the County and give them the time they need to process this. Ray said, “I can give you the avenue that you need to come to a commissioner’s meeting, talk to Ben and get Ben on your side and see where we go with this. We have gotten millions of dollars’ worth of stuff that we need to do within the next three to five years and there is no way we can handle that grant process, we have all we can do to handle what we have now, the people we have working for us, it is more than we can do. At the county we have more people working for us, so we can possibly do this. Where Colebrook is the lead town on all these things, and it ends up

costing us. Erik totally understands. Ray said there are three commissioners in the county, and they work very well together. Ray said the county has much better resources than the town. Ray said the meeting is the second Wednesday of the month. Discussion ensued.

Regular Agenda:

A. Review and approval of Minutes of 1/13/25. Sue made a motion to approve the minutes of 1/13/25, Ray seconded, motion passed.

B. Review and Sign Payroll and Disbursement Manifests: The Selectmen reviewed completed payrolls and disbursement manifests and signed them.

C. Town Manager's Report:

-Letter was sent to the Auditors about fixing the Miscellaneous billing deficiency. The board would like a copy. Heidi will get them a copy.

-Tipping fees increase for Mt. Carberry was already discussed.

-Would the board be willing to give Heidi permission to sign the Used Oil grant paperwork, Sue would like the Town Manager to do it. Sue made a motion to give the Town Manager permission to sign all paperwork associated with the Used Oil Grant for the State of New Hampshire, Department of Environmental Services, on behalf of the Town of Colebrook, Ray seconded it, motion passed.

-Tim was asked about glass going into the compactor, it is going into the compactor. They are trying to tell people not to throw glass into the compactor, to put it into the C&D bin. Ray asked, "so what am I supposed to do with my bottles?" Tim said throw them into the open C&D bin on the left. Ray said most of the community believes they should put it into the regular trash. Tim said, yes, we hadn't really figured it out yet, but had since been told it can harm the compactor so now, we are trying to get word out to throw it in the C&D bin. Sue would like the Copy Center to make the signs.

-Tim found out that Northern Tire no longer brings their tires to our transfer station, they are shipped out. Greg said yes, but Brian LaPerle is the one that would know what the rates are for different tires and can fit them into categories is what he was talking about. Greg said the town used to have rates for different sized tires and now it is for up to this size tire and up to that size tire. We need to have it by tire size. Greg said because a bicycle tire might be a 22-inch tire and that is why you need to talk to Brian.

-Social Security does not cover any indigent funerals or burials. Specific situations, a surviving member may get something to help with a funeral, but not someone who is indigent.

-Highway Overtime: we need to address the issue of overtime. Tim said he talked to TJ and he said they went out at 4:00am and this was some of the issues that came back to Tim.

1. If they go out at 4am to plow the bus routes, they can't plow Main Street prior to going out. Once they come back from plowing the bus routes, Main Street has already filled up with cars.

2. If they go out at 4am, they cannot plow the parking lots because they did not have enough time after plowing the bus routes, once they get back to town, cars have already started to park in them.

Sue said, then they need to go home from work at one o'clock in the afternoon instead of three. Greg said he is not backing down from them going out at 4am. Greg said they don't need to go out and check roads. Tim said the Highway Dept also told him that they can't plow the bus routes and then come into town and make it back out to East Colebrook to plow all those roads. TJ told Tim that since he has been here 20 years they have always, during the months of October through April, had someone go out during the night to check roads. TJ said that person would have to make the call as to if they needed to go out and plow or sand. Greg said, DOT doesn't even have anyone out at night. Ray questions whether or not the night checks are even happening. Tim asked about having the police that are already out and about checking the roads for them. TJ said they tried that in the past and it did not work. Tim asked who is the authorizing agent to call out the Highway Dept? Sue said it is in our Personnel Policy. Tim asked if the police called them out, is that reason enough? Sue said yes, and I believe that is what is in our policy. Greg said the majority of the time, like the state, there is no reason for the Highway Dept to be out after 11pm or before 4am. Tim said, what do we do when a resident calls between 12-3 and can't make it up Titus Hill or to their home? Greg said, if it was freezing rain, that would be different, that would be the only time it would be different. Greg said, again, it is not the town's job to be somebody's winter tires. Greg said, why are we using so much winter sand? They even put down winter sand when there is nothing on the road.

Tim explained that the overtime budget has not increased since 2020, but TJ and Danny's base pay has increased. Discussion ensued.

Discussion ensued on where they are putting the snow and picking up the snow on Main Street. Ray said people are trying to cross the streets and there are snowbanks everywhere, these need to be cleaned up.

New Business:

- A. The Selectmen reviewed the new Alarm Ordinance. Discussion ensued. They will review it in more detail on 2/4/25 at 3:00pm.

Old Business:

- A. IRS Letter: Still no response
- B. John Cotnoir Status: Melanie was going to take it because he has 2019 liens. She was going to check with Jane Sanders. Tim said we would be delivering anything to him by Colebrook PD.
- C. Insulation update: will be starting Wednesday. Sue asked, is Mark Zizza working on the second part of the camera project? Tim said, yes, he is.
- D. Dispatch Invoice: All set.
- E. Prices for Disposal of Shingles: Tim said we need to start charging more for the disposal of these. We are under charging by about 30%. Tim recommends going to 100%. Tim will start working on the schedule.
- F. Cremation & Burial Fees: Mike Pearson, Jenkins-Newman Funeral Home submitted a letter to the board asking for the board to increase the amount the town gives for disposing of remains for an indigent person from \$750.00 to \$1250.00. Sue made a motion to change the welfare guideline to \$1,200.00, Ray seconded, motion passed.

Tabled/Pending Items:

- A.

For Approval and Signature:

- A. Intent to Cut: Jimmy Crossley
- B. John Falconer: Appointment Letter, Selectmen approved, he needs to come in and do his oath with the Town Clerk.

Hearing of the Public and Any Other Business:

-Greg explained that Chris Brady wanted him to get in touch with him, so Greg went and saw him. Chris wanted to know if the town knows of or has any property for him to do a grass seed growing trial on. He thought the north wells would be a good spot. Greg said it might be, but it is almost all wetlands and there might be solar panels put on there. Greg said the better option might be the back side of the cemetery property. Greg said the Cemetery Trustees would have to go along with it, I don't know why they wouldn't. Tim said they did not want solar panels up there. Ray asked if this was grass for Chris to sell. Greg said no this is a research project for the Farm Bureau.

-Sue asked if W-2's was being done this week? Heidi said yes.

-Sue said after our Town Meeting we need to look at water rates. Please put this on the agenda of our first Selectmen's Meeting after Town Meeting.

-Sue had an article from The Union Leader by NH DES Commissioner Robert Scott for municipalities to learn more about Cyber Security in a box. It is about protecting water systems from cyber security threats.

Non-Public Session Under RSA: 91-A:3, II (c): none

Determine Date for Next Meeting: February 10, 2025, at 1:00pm

Adjourned: Sue made a motion to adjourn, Ray seconded the motion, motion passed to adjourn meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Lawton

Heidi Lawton, Administrative Assistant, Town of Colebrook