

Consultants update school board on early findings from study

TASK TO FIND SCHOOLS' BEST USE

By Carol Britton Meyer

The consulting group conducting a study on the best educational use of Hull's public school facilities reported to the School Committee earlier this week on their initial impressions and on the areas they will explore as the town moves to enact a five-year strategic plan geared toward preparing students for success in the 21st century.

The study by the MARS consulting group has as its primary goal to determine how best to educate Hull's youth. MARS will consider current enrollment and enrollment projections, existing building space and use and related strengths and deficiencies, current educational programs and those that school officials would like to continue, and possible additions to the curriculum.

"The principals are very enthusiastic about their schools," Jay Barry, representing MARS, told the committee at its Dec. 9 meeting. He said he had noticed that the school buildings "are in great shape. Your custodians do a good job."

The next step in the study process will be determining various options related to grade configurations, the impact of extracurricular programs, transportation considerations, financial implications, and future space needs.

Taking note of declining enrollments in the schools, School Committee member Stephanie Peters asked if closing a school would be among MARS' recommendations, and if that school building were put to another purpose, "what would we do if in the future we need more school space, especially without any available land in Hull for that purpose?"

Barry said that any recommendation to close a school "would be a very serious decision. You won't get it back," he acknowledged. "The Request for Proposals mentions future needs. The study will go into the 2030s."

School Committee member Lucas Patenaude asked whether MARS has ever been involved in combining mixed uses (school and municipal) in one building.

"We've asked about that, although we have no direct experience," Barry replied. "It does come to mind when looking at what's here [in Hull]. We've already started to talk about it."

MARS staff will visit the schools next week, which will be their third visit so far, and will continue with more visits in January and February and discussions with School Committee members. In early 2020 it is expected that the consultants will collaborate with school officials on what the various options and key issues are.

Toward spring MARS representatives say they plan to talk again with HPS staff members and will share their preliminary findings with the administration "to make sure we're on the same

• Continued on page 3



SANTA'S HELPERS. Dozens upon dozens of unwrapped toys have been dropped off at the Hull Fire Department's central station by local residents to ensure that all children have a joyful Christmas this year. Working in conjunction with Wellspring Multi-Service Center, donations will be accepted until Friday, Dec. 13. Some of Santa's helpers, gathered outside the station on Wednesday morning, are: (from left) Fire Chief Christopher Russo, Captain Steve Johnson, firefighter Ron Lynch, HFD administrative assistant and toy drive coordinator Jane Walsh, Wellspring's associate director of development Kelly Fleming, and the organization's director of elder services Margaret Mellon, and firefighters Jake Williamson, Gary Twombly, Kevin Dunn, and Robert Wholley. [P. Abbate photo]

Manet CEO seeking collaboration with town, service agencies in Hull

GOAL OF 'LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP' CITED

By Carol Britton Meyer

Voicing an interest in serving Hull and its residents as both a resource and partner, Manet Community Health Center CEO Cynthia Sierra told the Board of Selectmen last week she wants her health center to be "the safety net" for this town and its surrounding communities.

"Our goal is to establish and grow our collaboration with our community partners – including the Hull Council on Aging and the Anne M. Scully Senior Center, the schools, emergency services, Wellspring Multi-Service Center, and the Hull Nantasket Chamber of Commerce," Sierra said. "We have the expertise and collaborative spirit to do more in Hull."

Selectmen Chairman Domenico Sestito hinted that such cooperation is likely, saying that he and fellow board members "look forward to a long-

term partnership with Manet."

Selectman John Reilly said he is pleased there continues to be a Manet presence in Hull, particularly "with the growing opioid epidemic," and he and Selectwoman Jennifer Constable said they would like to see the working relationship between the town and Manet expand.

Sierra and Manet Board of Directors member Matt Littlefield attended the Dec. 5 selectmen's meeting to provide an update on the services provided by the health center from its busy location at 180 George Washington Blvd.

Forty-three percent of Manet patients are Hull residents, while 15 percent come from Weymouth, 11 percent from Hingham, 5 percent from Cohasset, and the remainder from other South Shore communities such as Marshfield, Plymouth, Whitman, and Brockton.

The Hull site cares for 17 percent of Manet's total patient population and represents 14 percent of total Manet patient revenue. Other locations are in North Quincy, Houghs Neck, Snug Harbor (also in Quincy), and Taunton. Services are provided regardless of a patient's ability to pay. "We're dedicated to serving

• Continued on page 2



Thomas Foye photo



Letter to the editor

Thanks to donors, chariots keep rolling along at Paragon Carousel

To the Editor:

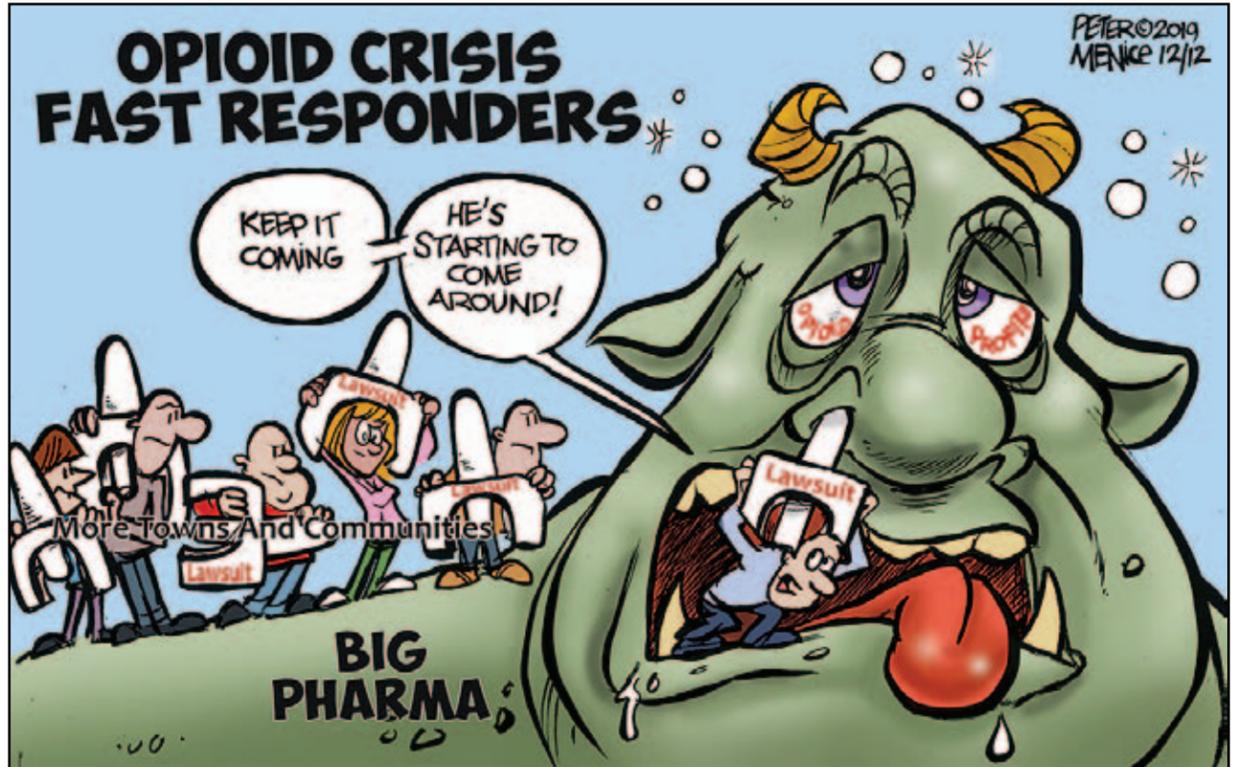
The Friends of the Paragon Carousel were delighted to read the article regarding the restoration of the second Roman Chariot in the Nov. 14 issue of The Hull Times. Getting the chance to publicly thank those who aided the project is so beneficial to a nonprofit.

We wanted to also offer our gratitude to a few more folks. Being aware of the long history of service of the Rotary, the Board of Directors recently reached out to the Hull/Nantasket Rotary with the hope that they might consider joining us in completing this long-awaited restoration project. After a three-year fundraising effort, the second chariot is in the final stage of its return to glory. Approximately \$30,000 has been raised to this point.

Now we have a craftsman, Eddie Nascimeto, of DeCarlo Upholstery of Weymouth, who is willing to donate his time and expertise to reupholster the interior, but the cost of the fabric put the project over budget. However, once we contacted the Rotary, they quickly agreed to help us purchase fabric durable enough to last 25 years and host thousands of visitors a season. What a grand holiday gift to our beloved carousel!

The value of our artistic treasure has been widely recognized; yet, some may not realize the importance of the chariots to our many visitors who face challenges. They allow accessibility to the physically disabled, our elderly, day care groups, and our youngest riders. All can experience special moments of joy and create lasting memories in the comfort, safety, and elegance of the chariots.

The Board of Directors and restoration artist James Hardison would also like to offer a very special thank you to Daley & Wanzer Moving Co., of Hull, which so carefully moved the chariot off the carousel into the studio. In the spring, Richie Fleck and his crew will return the chariot to the



carousel to begin a new life.

Please stop into the Paragon Park Museum this Saturday from noon until 2 p.m. during the Hulliday Event to preview the restoration, and please save April 4, 2020, as a very special date to take part in the dedication of the Copeland Chariot and see its return to regal splendor.

Thanks to all of you who help us care for the carousel, and happy holidays to you and yours.

Marie Schleiff, President
Friends of the Paragon Carousel HT

Manet collaboration

Continued from page 1

anyone who needs access to primary care. We want to be sure no patient is left behind," Sierra said. "Our counselors and patient navigators [work with patients] to find a health care plan that meets their needs and that they can afford.

What makes Manet unique, she continued, is its ability to provide "convenient, local, quality care right here in Hull." The center is open six days a week and also offers evening hours.

Sierra noted that 22 percent of Manet's Hull patients are Medicare recipients and that this population has increased over time. In fiscal 2019 the payor mix beyond Medicare included 44 percent Medicaid patients, 30 percent with commercial insurance, 1 percent under the Health Safety Net, and 3 percent self-paying. The largest number of patients served was in the 45-64 age range, followed by ages 20-44, and ages 65-84.

Of the total number of Hull visits in fiscal 2019 – 8,679 – 2,942 were Hull patients. Six Manet staffers live in Hull, including lead provider Nikita Fitzcharles, M.D., who, Sierra said, is "a remarkable humanitarian" as well as a physician. Hull native Kevin Silva is part of the senior management team as senior director of operations.

Manet Hull's integrated primary care approach

includes: combined family medicine, newborn and well-child care, behavioral health services, health benefits counseling, 24-hour on-call coverage for patients, community outreach/health education, wellness programs, substance use and mental health services, a Narcan/Naloxone Opioid Reversal Program (education and distribution), and medication-assisted treatment for substance use.

"We also have nurses dedicated to working with patients in recovery [from substance use disorder]," Sierra said.

Town Manager Philip Lemnios noted that Hull has "an aging population" and that the fact that the senior center's new outreach worker was scheduled to start Dec. 9 provides a "great opportunity" to help fulfill that goal of collaboration between Manet and the town.

Manet assumed management of the Hull Medical Center in 1989 as its third site; the building and land are owned by the town. In 2012 the health center underwent a \$500,000 renovation, which was followed by an investment of \$21,000 in new flooring this year.

Future plans outlined by Sierra could include urgent care for walk-ins, as well as registered patients, and possible walk-in service for those struggling with mental health issues, including depression.

Asked by Lemnios what she considers to be the biggest challenge in the next five years at the Hull location, Sierra said: "retention and recruitment of our talent. There's a pressing nationwide shortage of primary care physicians.

"We want to ensure that our work force continues to grow and develop and stays with us," she said. "And we want to be sure our organization stays fiscally healthy and continues to create a culture that perpetuates a sense of joy and commitment to our mission."

In response to another question posed by Lemnios, Sierra confirmed that Manet remains an independent, federally qualified health center in good standing. "I assure you we are on steady financial ground," she said. Manet's funding comes from a variety of sources, including a federal grant that covers partial costs.

Asked by Constable to share other challenges that Manet faces, Sierra named transportation for its patients as a major issue. "We will be looking into programs such as Uber Health" to help address this problem, she told the board.

Sierra said that "nutritional instability" is another issue for some patients served at the Hull site. "The ability to have fresh produce available there would be of great value," she said.

Reilly acknowledged that managing and operating the Hull site is a "huge undertaking. It's amazing what goes on behind the scenes to make the center successful," he said.

Lemnios added his praise: "I applaud you folks for staying with it [amid a rapidly changing and increasingly complex health care environment]. It's fantastic." HT

Guidelines for submitting letters to the Times editor

All letters to the editor are welcome and will be considered for publication. Letters can be emailed to news@hulltimes.com or uploaded on our website, www.hulltimes.com.

Letters must be signed by the writer. Anonymous letters and letters written under pseudonyms will not be considered. For verification purposes, letters must also include the writer's home address, email address, and telephone number.

Letters will be edited for style and, if necessary, shortened for space considerations. Letters should typically be 150 to 250 words in length.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts, opinions, and suggestions with us! HT

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