



rRemarks Data for November 15th, 2022 Village Council Meeting

Agenda Section: Consent

Agenda Item: G. MOT 2022-9707 A motion accepting the Social Services Gap Analysis Report

Commenter: David Rose

Comment: Comment on HSC Report

The Human Services Commission (HSC) report to VC and VC's discussion of it at its Oct meeting did little to assuage the concerns I voiced months ago about the program. Permit me to elaborate.

From the get-go, VM described the referral program as a big success. But scrutinizing closely its data and operation, one may infer "success" means nothing more than the social service worker (SSW) receives requests and makes referrals, however small or large the volume of requests may be. This "success" was a foregone conclusion however because the position appends to the police and fire departments' referral effort, and to the Council Chair (CC)'s effort to respond to phone requests, an individual with presumably greater knowledge, experience, and contacts to make referrals.

But the program is a referral effort and nothing more.

VM admitted to the members of the HSC but NOT to VC and thus to the public, what happens after a referral is made, even if it is accepted, is unknown. And cannot be found out because that information is protected by privacy laws.

Which means, contrary to comments made in VC's discussion, it is NOT correct to presume or claim people are actually seeking and/or getting help thanks to the SSW program.

To repeat: acceptance of an SSW referral does NOT mean the individual actually did anything more! The individual need not have taken any further step(s).

As a referral program, it's simply a kind of dispatch service. It has no goal beyond its own existence.

Nor does it have or intend to acquire knowledge about actual need within the community for any particular service. Indeed, given the lack of boundary for what constitutes a 'service' for which an individual can be referred, how would one conduct such research or go about assessing degree of need? By definition, to repeat what I observed months ago, the scope of 'needs' are infinite, while the demand for service is intended to be knowable only reactively and on an individual basis.

Further in that regard, this program is NOT intended to infer from individual need to existence of "community need." The report omits any mention of such a 'gap,' that is, a failure not about availability of service but about the systemic structural factors needing attention that contribute to individual need for service.

To me the most bizarre aspect of the report is that it emphasizes as HSC's main task making DG residents aware of the fact VC has hired a SSW.

But this objective begs two obvious questions:

1) What difference does VC having a SSW make?

If the SSW weren't there, as was true until the position was (re)created, an individual in need of service used other means to find the service s/he needed. Which means VC has no way to assess 'improvement' in referrals compared to NOT having a SSW ... from the community's perspective. The only perspective VC has is the one it uses, meaning the SSW is by definition (presumed to be) an improvement relative to the VC's prior method(s) of providing referrals.

To what extent is that presumption supported by data? VC has failed to provide such comparative information, presumably because it does not have data from prior years against which to make comparisons.

Given that the SSW is intended to help only those who are DG residents, it's not obvious why such a referral operation isn't handled at the county level or by townships or shared across communities. The county has an extensive website page of agencies. The DG SS page has a less extensive set of links; which begs a related question: Would a more extensive set of links on its page lower the number of people needing to call the SSW for a referral? Is that possibility good or bad?

For that matter, private non-profit entities also offer web pages linking to assorted agencies.

Which is to say, the SSW feels more a relatively politically 'safe' program for the VC to support — not too expensive, not too controversial.

2) What difference will it make should more residents in DG become aware of the SSW program?

Compared to other communities, given what most people consider important social services available in a community, DG on its face is NOT a community in much need of those services.

Both the 'research' done by the ad hoc committee justifying hiring a SSW and comments made at HSC meetings indicate residents are (not surprisingly) unaware of the extensive breadth and depth of service agencies available. But that's hardly cause for alarm because THEY HAVEN'T NEEDED THEM! And presumably don't expect to need them. So it's not surprising residents, including HSC members and the ad hoc group, were unaware of these entities.

But this raises a fundamental question the report fails to address: What is the purpose of the HSC?

HSC members seem to be a set of good-hearted, good-intentioned people trying to 'give back' in some small way, trying to help those 'less fortunate.' But given the SSW program is a referral operation and nothing more, what is the purpose of the HSC?

Even on the task of making the community aware of the SSW, VC stated clearly its desire to avoid HSC members' acting in any public context without the SSW present.

So HSC members are relegated to attending meetings to do what?

In that vein, I would observe that — contrary to VC comments during the Oct discussion — the HSC report is NOT in fact evidence of lots of hard work put forward by anyone on the HSC. The HSC has gotten off to a faltering start, has never had a student member, has cancelled several meetings due to lack of a quorum, has already 'lost' one member, and has no expectation a serving member have expertise in any relevant academic disciplines or professions because, well, given its role, who needs any expertise? Nor do HSC meetings elicit much in the way of public interest, other than yours truly.

As suggested above, VC has no interest in HSC being a mechanism by which to gauge how many people in need live in DG and the nature of their needs. [Or, conversely, one could observe EVERYONE in DG has needs, but VC has no interest that HSC inquire about them.]

From the perspective of VC, that deficiency does NOT matter.

Why not? Because, among the well-to-do, the notion of 'giving back' usually ignores the extent to which one's own way and standard of living contributes to and/or is the cause of problems experienced by those in need of social services. The well-to-do as a class prefer to believe the two are disconnected, that the bulk of those in need are less fortunate due to some personal deficiency. A few individual members of the well-to-do class are allowed/encouraged/expected to 'give back,' that is, to ameliorate to some small degree the impact of the structural exploitation from which the class as a whole benefits. But that's as far as "giving back" is allowed to go.

Thus, keeping the number of such people relatively low within DG, thanks to high property prices, gives VC and residents a way to launder consciences, at minimal financial cost ... because it keeps out most of those in need and shifts elsewhere the cost of bearing such needs.

Instructively revealing is the matter of the ride subsidy program.

Why do rides for seniors get so much attention in the report? For one, because it's the only service the VC can gauge (to some extent) actual provision of service. But as VC discussion of the program revealed, VC has no idea the extent of actual need for rides and ride subsidies within the community. It's a perfect example of the point raised above: people in need of rides are likely getting rides, even if VC doesn't know about it or participate in it.

Nor is it obvious what 'value' the SSW position or the HSC adds to the ride subsidy program's operation.

Is the HSC to be tasked to fill in this gap of knowledge? By doing what?

Furthermore, for data collection purposes, if a call for a ride carries the same "weight" as a call for mental health, that may make sense if the purpose of the data being collected is simply to track the number of people calling for dispatch. If one is concerned about the impact of the service provided on the well-being of the community, however, equal weighting of those two makes no sense whatsoever ... unless every ride is

to/from a mental health program. Does the purpose of a ride matter; is a ride to a grocery store treated as identical to a ride to an MD appointment, a ride to a movie theater, or a ride to a shopping mall? Which is 'worthy' of subsidy?

Given that the current suburban way of living is impossible without relying on cars and one's personal or a friend/relative's capacity to drive, the implicit assumption of a ride subsidy program is that those lacking one or both are relatively small as a percentage of residents, and relatively manageable in their need for rides. Is VC prepared to find out otherwise? Then what?

In sum, regardless of the points raised herein, because VC and VM have made the SSW a pet project, raising community awareness of the SSW's existence will presumably continue justifying monthly HSC meetings.

Which I find tragically ironic, given VC and VM keep the ECC dormant and continue to refuse to support any effort to raise the community's awareness of the fact the way of living in DG is NOT environmentally sustainable (ENVS). That reality is something everyone in DG needs to know and do something about.

But therein lies the key problem. Activating the ECC and making ENVS a real goal in DG would require VC show real political courage. Promoting SSW and HSC does not.

In short, the SSW referral operation tries to do something VC and residents who are aware of the SSW can interpret as showing concern for the less fortunate, even as residents remain oblivious to the degree of harm they cause both inside and outside DG by the aggregated effects of their individual and collective ways of living.

The effort to promote awareness of the SSW program is intended not so much to fill a gap of service needs as to fill a gap in conscience laundering.

As such, DG offering social service referrals is simply a variation on a theme I have noted repeatedly in prior comments to VC, a theme that applies across the board in IL. Which is simply this: thanks to the heavy reliance on property taxes to pay for local public services, most notably public education, property rich towns in IL are inhabited mainly by people who are more exploiters than exploited. Which means they are able to provide their community a quantity and quality of services matching not so much their need as their desired level of said service. In DG, that now includes referrals for the amorphous concept of 'social services.'

Agenda Section: Active

Agenda Item: A. ORD 2022-9687 An ordinance adopting the fiscal year 2023 in lieu of passage of an appropriation ordinance

Commenter: David Rose

Comment: 1. VC refers to the EDC and Downtown Management Group as 'partners.'

But how is that term an appropriate description when both are wholly dependent on VC for their financial survival?

Are they worth the support? VC claims so, but provides little in the way of substantive proof. Typical for VC.

EDC is applying for some kind of 501c3 status? In order to be able to apply for grants?

Why does it need grants? To try to shift the financial burden off DG residents, at least ostensibly.

Why does it need to do that? Because the pandemic clobbered EDC's reliance on visitors paying that bill (through hotel tax).

How is 501c3 anything other than a scam when the EDC's primary purpose is to generate tax revenue that — if all goes well — helps finance its own existence and tries to lower the property tax burden on residents, as if residents cannot afford/are unwilling to pay for VC-proffered services otherwise?

2. VC's desire to 'keep' the budgeted excess pension contribution is laudable on its face.

Left unstated is the reason for not making the contribution, in spite of it not being needed.

Is VC worried the contribution might be lost forever should it be used to invest in a money-losing endeavor?

Or does VC want to keep the funds to leave open the option of NOT using the money to pay toward a future pension contribution and divert it for some other purpose?

And when will VC provide more specifics about the expected amounts of future pension contributions, particularly under scenarios where the federal government and Federal

Reserve do not pump trillions into the economy, creating thereby the illusion the value of investments (stocks and bonds) is rising?

Let's hope IL's pension funds weren't invested in FTX and other cryptos.