Board of Health Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 at 7:00 PM
Remote Only

Agenda

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, the meeting and public hearing will be conducted with remote opportunities for participation. Remote participation and access methods include:

ACCESS INFORMATION:

A. This meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 15, 2023 at 7:00 PM. Location: REMOTE ONLY

B. The meeting will be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/watch-now?site=3

C. Public may comment through email: amyers@watertown-ma.gov

D. Please Visit the Board of Health Website here: https://www.watertown-ma.gov/176/Board-of-Health

E. **Join Zoom Meeting https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/83188312663 Meeting ID: 831 8831 2663**

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1. Call to Order
2. Acceptance of Minutes
   A. Review of Draft Minutes of October 18, 2023
3. Public Comment
4. Watertown Biosafety Committee
   A. MatchPoint Therapeutics, Inc. – 57 Coolidge Ave Avenue
5. Presentation of the WBSC addressing amendments coming before the BOH
   A. Draft Document
6. Licensing approval for additional dogs – 16 Brandley Road
7. Social Services Resource Specialist Annual Report
   A. Third Quarter Report
8. Staffing and Department Updates
   A. Activity and staffing updates and introductions of new employees
9. Items that could not be anticipated before meeting
10. Adjournment

BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

MINUTES
The Watertown Board of Health has scheduled a REMOTE ZOOM meeting on Wednesday October 18, 2023 at 7:00 pm

PRESENT: Dr. Barbara Beck and Dr. Dominic Amirtharaj

Staff: Abbey Myers, Acting Director of Health Maureen Foley, Clerk
In attendance: Tim Maguire, Corey Martin, Emily Kuiper, Ayca Yalcin Ozkumur

CALL TO ORDER: Dr. Beck called the meeting to order 7:05 pm

Minutes
Minutes were not approved for September 20, 2023 meeting,
Will approve minutes at November's meeting

Public Comment
No Public Comments

WBSC Permitting Recommendations and Information on Review Process
Cyte One Biotechnologies – 199 Dexter Avenue
Ayca Yalcin Ozkumur, Director of R&D gave a short presentation of the company's activities. Dr. Beck asked what products do the cells secrete.

Dr. Amirtharaj made a motion to recommend approval of the biosafety permits for CyteOne .
(Amirtharaj, Beck) (2,0)
Roll Call

Health Department Permitted
AvenCell Therapeutics – 500 Forge Road Amendment
Emily Kuiper, Associate Member of Immuno Oncology gave a short presentation of the company's Viral and Gamma Vectors used in oncology to produce T-Cells. Dr. Beck inquired about the use of hoods dedicated to lentivirus. Dr. Amirtharaj explored the Gamma Retrovirus Vectors with Dr. Kuiper.
This was an informational presentation to the BOH.

Department Update
Abbey Myers, Acting Director of Health stated the department hired a new Per Diem Food Inspector. Health has hired a Health Officer primarily involved in rodent control throughout the city.
Flu vaccinations have been given to WFD, WPD, Housing Authority, Seniors and DPW employees. There are three clinics scheduled for the public to receive their vaccine.
Ms. Myers stated the Tobacco Collaborative will be inspecting this month. There has been major compliance.

DRAFT

Health has started permitting renewals for Food, Residential Kitchens, Annual Pools, Tobacco Sales, BioSafety, and Hens & Bees.
There was a food borne illness cases (3 separate incidents close together) at an establishment. The health department is working with the establishment to increase sanitation.

Items that could not be anticipated before meeting/future meetings

RSV testing is not done at the local level.

Adjourn:

(Amirtharaj, Beck) 2-0.
All in favor.
Roll Call

Adjourned the meeting at 7:52 PM

DRAFT

WBSC and BOH review of amendments
Companies submitting amendments to the WBSC will be requested to appear before the Watertown Board of Health under the following situations:

1. Expansion from bench scale to large scale work (eg >10L)
2. Expansion of proposed work from original approval when there are changes to safety precautions or procedures
3. Addition of specialized facilities (eg vivaria, radiation facilities)
4. Increase in biosafety level from original approval or conversion of low-risk registrations to permits
5. Other situations not listed above where the WBSC feels the BOH should be aware of

WBSC Review without BOH review
Relocation of companies to a new address, expansion of proposed work within existing safety precautions/procedures, or expansion of footprints involving changes in safety procedures requiring review by the IBC will be reviewed by the WBSC. These amendments may be reviewed without requiring presentation to the BOH however the WBSC will make a final determination when the amendment is presented at a convened meeting.

Administrative Review of amendments
Expansions of companies within an existing address/footprint of an incubator space may be approved administratively if there are no updates required to safety plans or IBC minutes and/or updates to personnel (including IBC community members). Updated floorplans are required with submission of this amendment and administrative review will determine if a WBSC presentation is required.

Change of company name may be approved administratively if there is no expansion of work and updated documentation (eg. insurance certificates, safety contracts etc.) are submitted.

DRAFT

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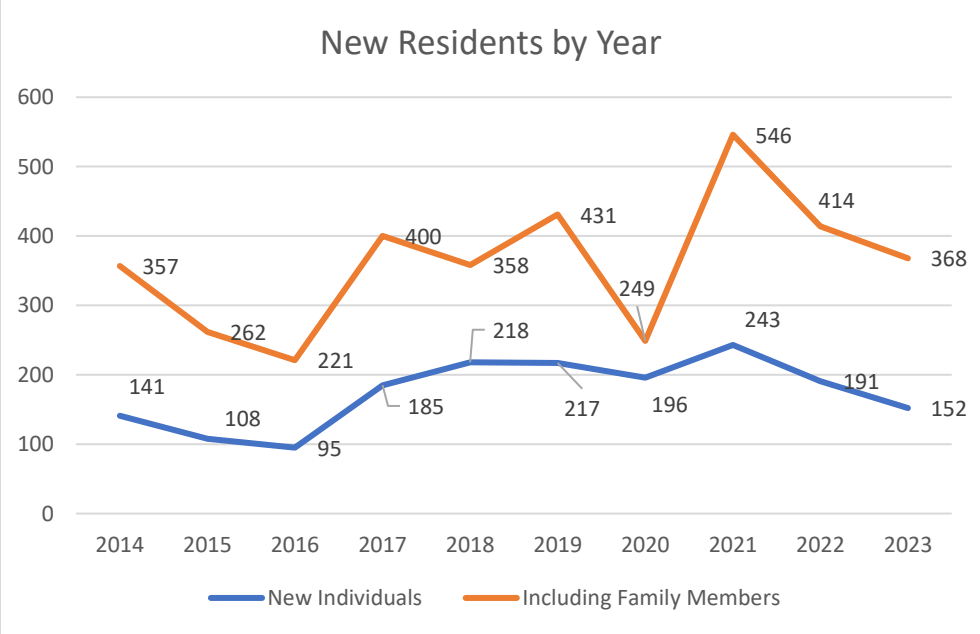
DRAFT

Watertown Social Services Resource Specialist (SSRS) Program
July – September 2023

Between April and June 2023, the SSRS program served a total of 139 households, which included 58 new households for a total of 134 new Watertown residents. The total number of households served by the SSRS program to date is 1,746 for a total of 3,606 residents when including family members.



*Please note that 2023 only reflects Quarters 1-3

In August, sixteen refugee families (49 total served including family members), primarily from Haiti, were placed by the State into a hotel in Watertown. The families are receiving support and resource coordination through the Watertown Refugee Support Group, a working group through Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice, and the Environment. The SSRS Clinicians have been in contact with the Refugee Support Group to provide resources and answer their questions. In addition, the SSRS Clinicians met with the sixteen families to ensure that they have SNAP Benefits (Food Stamps) and Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC).

SSRS Clinicians provided more support this quarter than usual to older residents, to assist the Senior Center with their workload when their Case Worker retired. SSRS Clinicians directed older adults to other resources and support in the community as well as to the Senior Center. Since the hiring of the new Case Worker at the Senior Center, Sheri Melenciano, SSRS Clinicians have connected with Sheri and sent her referrals.

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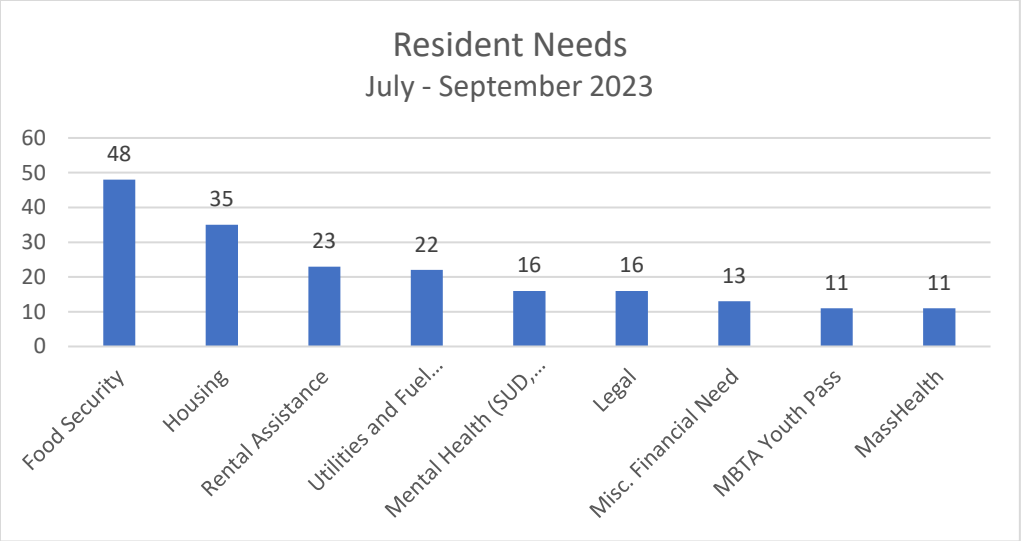
The chart below represents the assistance needed for new and returning individual residents over the last quarter.



*SUD = Substance Use Disorder; DV = Domestic Violence

This quarter, the primary needs were food security, housing, rental assistance, and utilities and Fuel Assistance, mental health needs including Substance Use Disorder and domestic violence, legal questions, miscellaneous financial needs (besides rental assistance and utility assistance), and MBTA Youth Pass Program, and MassHealth. Many clients have multiple needs and SSRS Clinicians complete a needs assessment and prioritize with clients to meet their most urgent needs.

This quarter, the need for food security and housing remained high. Supporting clients around utilities somewhat decreased this quarter, in part due to the funding for residents through the Watertown Community Foundation State Grant for COVID-19 Relief coming to an end. SSRS Clinicians expect to see utility assistance needs increase as we go into the heating season. Providing clients with a connection to free legal aid increased this quarter, most often relating to housing and eviction law as well as family law. SSRS Clinicians assisted more clients with their MassHealth coverage this quarter, most often helping clients maintain and renew their existing coverage and sometimes applying for the first time. Other common needs are help with applying to or maintaining Social Security Disability benefits, employment, and transportation.

Ways in which SSRS assists with needs:

- **Rental assistance** includes connecting residents to local and state applications and grant funding sources, such as the Helen Robinson Wright Fund through First Parish Church in Watertown and Marshall Home Fund. Residential Aid for Families in Transition (RAFT)

continues to be a source of funding for clients only if they have received an eviction notice or need help with moving costs.

- To address **food security**, SSRS Clinicians help clients apply to SNAP (formerly food stamps), distribute grocery store gift cards with funds from the Watertown Community Foundation for those impacted by COVID-19, and share local food pantries and the Watertown Community Fridge.
- SSRS Clinicians provide **utilities and fuel assistance** by helping clients access Fuel Assistance for heating costs during winter months, the Watertown Emergency Utility Assistance program, local grant funds including funding from the Watertown Community Foundation for pandemic impact, and discounts and payment plans through utility companies. SSRS Clinicians communicate with utility companies to prevent shut offs for clients awaiting funding.
- For **Housing Assistance**, SSRS Clinicians work with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness by applying for public housing and other affordable housing programs, as well as connecting people with emergency housing such as shelters.
- **Miscellaneous financial needs** often include one-time financial needs such as rental assistance, the purchase of a refrigerator, or paying an ambulance bill. These needs are usually filled by local block grants, such as Helen Robinson Wright, Marshall Home Fund, and the Perpetual Benevolent Fund.
- For **mental health needs**, including coping with Substance Use Disorder and domestic violence, SSRS Clinicians discuss with clients their options for treatment and support, and submit referrals for other Wayside programs (such as Outpatient, In Home Therapy, and the Navigating to Emotional Wellness Program), therapists, treatment, and DV agencies.

Outreach

Referrals

This quarter, referrals to the SSRS Program came from the Refugee Support Group, Senior Center, State Representative and City Councilors, Watertown Housing Authority, Marshall Home Fund, Helen Robinson Wright Fund, MBTA, Hospital Social Worker, Suicide Hotline 988, Google, and friends.

Interview on Food Security in Watertown

SSRS Clinician, Sophia Suarez-Friedman, sat down with Cable Access (WCATV) and Watertown News for a filmed interview about food security in Watertown. Sophia spoke towards the increased need for food resources that began during the pandemic and has remained high. The interview will be part of a multi-part series on food security in Watertown that is projected to be released in the Fall.

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Faire on the Square

SSRS Clinicians, a Clinical Intern supporting SSRS, and other Wayside Staff tabled at Faire on the Square on September 23, 2023 to outreach to the community about local resources and mental health supports available to them. Despite being a rainy day, there was a big turnout and SSRS Clinicians spoke to many residents.

From left to right: Aida (Clinical Intern), Christina Lupica (Wayside Staff), Maysa Ramos (SSRS Clinician), Sophia Suarez-Friedman (SSRS Clinician), Maeve Kennelly (Wayside Staff)

Wayside staff talking to Watertown residents

Wayside Staff with State Representative Steve Owens

WAYSIDE YOUTH & FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

Building Strength, Hope & Resiliency

Local and State Assistance Programs

Grant Funding

The SSRS Program continues to manage two small block grants through the Marshall Home Fund and the Helen Robinson Wright Fund which provide emergency financial assistance to residents in need. This quarter, the SSRS program was able to connect *8 residents* to emergency financial assistance through these sources. Areas of need included rental assistance, a portion of college tuition which Financial Aid did not cover, purchasing a refrigerator, and Uber gift cards.

The Watertown Community Foundation received a second iteration of a State Grant for COVID-19 Relief which they granted in part to the SSRS Program. The SSRS Program distributed emergency funds beginning at the end of March, and the funding is almost fully expended. This quarter, *22 households* have received funding, some for assistance in two areas. *Thirteen (13) households* received the final grocery store gift cards, *8 households* were granted utility bill payments and 2 *households* were able to avoid a utility shut-off due to the funding, and 5 *households* received transportation assistance (through a Gas gift card or MBTA Charlie Card).

Community Partners and Engagement

The SSRS Clinicians field many requests for resources from people and organizations in the community. This quarter, SSRS Clinicians were able to consult on resources for: Watertown Health Officers, Public Schools, Watertown Refugee Support Group, City Councilors, State Representative, Project Literacy, and Metro West Collaborative Development. Resources shared were related to food, housing, mental health referrals, clothing donations, MassHealth, and for Older Adults.

The SSRS Clinician leads monthly Human Services meetings with other town providers including Veterans' Services Officer Patrick George, Senior Center Case Worker Sheri Melenciano or Director Lydia McCoy, Housing Authority Social Worker Olivia Fields, Watertown Public Schools Community Outreach Counselors Jaimie Leonard and Stephanie Toyias, and the Watertown Police Clinician Eli Miller.

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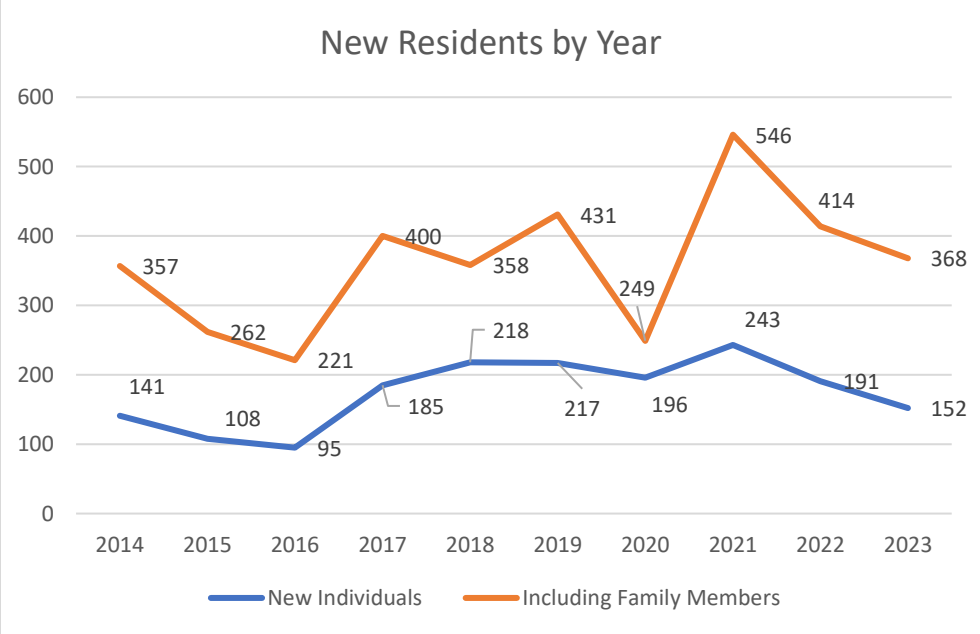

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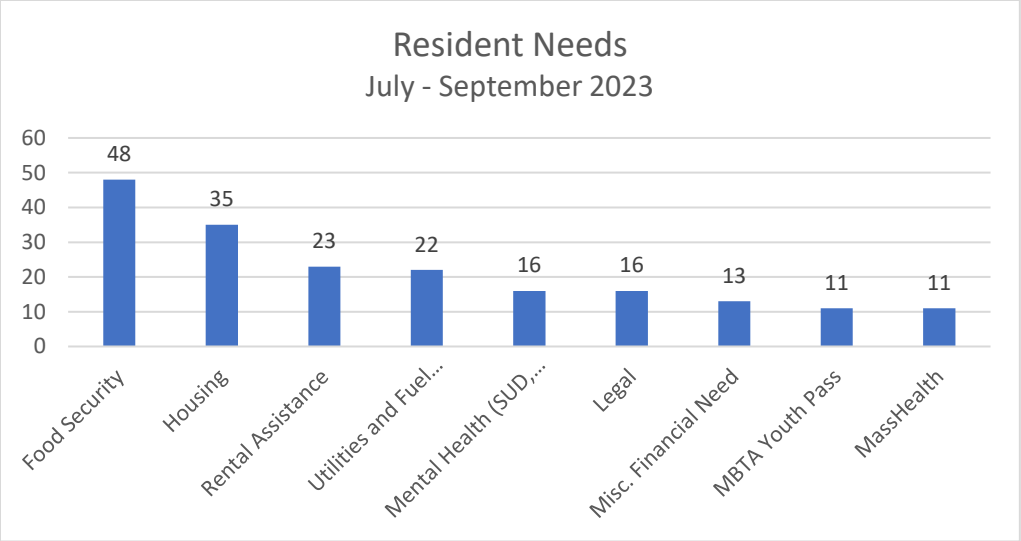

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