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**Sent on:** Friday, November 10, 2023 8:32:42 PM

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**Subject:** Public Comment: Community Engagement: Hospital Sustainability and Act 167 2023-11-10T20:32:39Z

A new GMCB Public Comment has been received.

**Submit Time:** 11/10/2023 8:32:39 PM

**Name:** Roger Allbee

**Affiliation:** Former Vt Secretary of Agriculture for Vermont, former CEO of Grace Cottage Healthcare, One organizers of Windham County Aging Collaborative

**Town/City:** Townshend, Vt

**Topic:** Community Engagement: Hospital Sustainability and Act 167

**Comment:** I had the opportunity to listen to Dr Bruce Hamory during the discussion with Grace Cottage as well as with BMH. A group of us created a Windham Aging Collaborative just over two years ago (see <https://www.windhamaging.com>) to determine what the needs will be of our aging population in 5, 10, 15, and 20 years. We have been fortunate to work with the State Department of Health, DAHL, Dr. Jan Carney at UVM Medical School, and students at Tuck Business School, area hospital leadership, and others in the area to determine the needs. We are also currently working on developing metrics to address and measure the success in meeting these future needs. We have even worked with the State Department of Health to project what the major health conditions might be for this population in these future years. We know that our County has one of the oldest aging populations in the state of Vermont and in the U.S. Among the issues that will need to be addressed in some coordinated way especially in more rural areas like exist in Windham County will be access to primary and preventable care, transportation (very difficult in many rural areas for an older population), nutrition and food security, housing (both owned and nursing homes, independent and assisted living), socialization (see U.S. Surgeon General's Report of impact of isolation on health), mental health, and exercise. Good community healthcare means connecting and coordinating the dot's on all of these, as Chris Dougherty, the CEO at BMH is doing with the integrated Community Health Model. Unfortunately in much of our healthcare today, unlike the day of the Country doctor who knew the patients, their families, and the Community, much of that is gone, and it is all about medical coding for payments, and not primarily about preventable care. Our healthcare system is good at treating people after they have a condition but not in addressing preventable care, unfortunately due to the payment system that exists. At Grace Cottage when I was there we created a very ROBUST Community Health Team that had two nutriscians, two nurses, a medical health counselor, and a diabetics educator, that was connected to the primary care providers. Unfortunately that model, and need for more robust Community Health Teams, could not be sustained without grant funding. Likewise, we investigated Community Servings in Massachusetts that provides over 200,000 nutritional meals each year at home to those with serious health conditions, and has done a peer reviewed study with Massachusetts General Hospital that demonstrates that such meals connected to a nutritionist can reduce hospitalization by up to thirteen percent. I know that Helen Labun, the Ex Director of the Vermont Health Care Association, is a leader of the medically tailored meals initiatives in our state. Also it is encouraging to see both Grace Cottage as well as BMH being part of the AHA Age Friendly Health System Action Community. From my experience both BMH and Grace Cottage compliment each other, and we are fortunate to have both serving area

communities, and Dartmouth in Southern Vermont as a facility for referral for major health conditions. Unfortunately due to the healthcare payment system it is difficult to address access to and availability of primary care and this will be an ever increasing concern with our aging population. We all know what the major issues are and how they might be better addressed, but it takes leadership, and community involvement. I hope the work with Dr Hamory and his team, and with the Green Mt Care Board, and involvement of local communities, will address better the ways to holistically address our aging population and Community Health in our State. Thank you

**Post Comment:** Yes