

Local Health Care Ideas Presented to Obama-Biden Transition Project

By Charlie Darling
Beacon staff

From December 15 through December 31, the Obama-Biden Transition Project encouraged community members across the country to hold grassroots Health Care Community Discussions and report back on the conclusions the participants reached.

Andover resident Don Kaplan, a retired physician, organized one such discussion, held at his home on December 23. Participants included Dr. Duncan Coolidge, a retired physician; Jim Danforth, a former Republican state representative; Al Epperly, a former member of the Danbury Board of Selectmen; Eula Epperly, manager of the Danbury Food Pantry; Howard George; Nan Kaplan, a former medical office manager; Bill Leber, a former Republican state representative; Vicky Mishcon, a member of the Andover Board of Selectmen; and Laura Powers. The group was evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats.

The meeting lasted two hours, and each participant spoke for five or ten minutes. In addition, there was much

general group discussion.

Four specific cases of problems with the current health care system were brought out by the group and included in its report back to the Transition Project:

Case 1 – A family of two earners, with total income over \$50,000, could not obtain group insurance. They obtained a policy for the parents, which provides coverage only after \$10,000 of initial costs. They covered their three children with the federal Healthy Kids Policy.

Case 2 – A family in which the major earner was between jobs for two months and without health insurance had to manage the cost of cancer therapy in the interim.

Case 3 – An individual has had a problem for two years with his primary coverage (Medicare) and supplementary coverage (Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts) not making payments for hospital care.

Case 4 – An individual with Part D bridge payment amounts to \$4,000 in uncovered drug expenses.

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Andover To Undertake Property Revaluation

In 2009 the Town will undertake a "revaluation," updating the assessed value of each property in town to its current fair market value. To understand this important and complex undertaking, the Beacon (AB) interviewed Town Administrator Dana Hadley (DH).

AB: Why is the value of real estate so important to the Town?

DH: It's what property taxes are based on. You take the entire town budget and divide it by the total value of all the land and all the buildings in town.

The result is the tax rate, which says that for every dollar of assessed property value, if we collect so many cents we'll have enough to cover the town, school, and fire department budgets plus the taxes we have to pay the county.

AB: That's not new. So why do we need a revaluation of our assessed property values this year?

DH: Historically, it didn't matter what method you used for assessing property for the purpose of computing taxes, as long as it was fair. Most towns didn't bother updating the assessments very often, because as long as Property A, which is worth twice what Property B is worth, has an assessment that is twice the assessment of Property B, everybody is paying their fair share.

The actual assessment figure didn't matter, as long as Property A's assessment was twice Property B's assessment. They might both be half of what each property was really worth, but ev-

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Cindy Benson of Andover and Linda Francisco-Demers of Wilnot pose with a mounted photo of the new president at Andover's Inaugural Party.

Photo: Caren Swanson

Townpeople Hold Inaugural Party In Stone Chapel

By Cindy Benson
For the Beacon

On Tuesday, January 20, area neighbors and friends gathered at the Proctor Stone Chapel for an Inaugural Party to celebrate the historic swearing in of President Barack Obama. One of thousands of such gatherings held all over the country, the party brought over 60 local residents together to celebrate and recognize the work of the millions of Americans who helped achieve this victory.

"There was an unbelievable groundswell of participation during the campaign around the country, and tonight is our night to celebrate that excitement and accomplishment here in Andover," said Cindy Benson, one of the organizers. Gisela Darling spearheaded the evening, soliciting volunteers to help with decorating, publicity, and food. Participants watched highlights of the day's inaugural events on a big screen, thanks to the help of Jim Cox, technology.

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