

Doyle hired as project manager for creation of ‘Haven’-type campus

July 5, 2017

Charity Doyle will continue to serve the people of Rapid City even though her third term on the city council came to an end Monday night. The Rapid City native is taking on the new role of project manager for what is commonly referred to as the “Haven for Hope project.”

The existing Haven for Hope in Texas is a 22-acre multi-purpose campus that serves San Antonio's homeless population and those with mental health and substance abuse problems. The Haven model was first introduced to Rapid City in 2010, and portions of that model have been implemented locally since that time.

When Pennington County decided last year to reconstruct the former NAU building downtown into a facility for the Crisis Care Center, detox and other programs, Rapid City Collective Impact and several community partners began to consider again the larger Haven model – with its comprehensive, coordinated services – as a means of reducing homelessness in Rapid City and providing a one-stop shop for people who need continued access to wrap-around services.

Doyle’s unique background

Charity Doyle was born in Rapid City and spent the majority of her early years here. She graduated from Rapid City Central High School and became the first person in her family to go to college when she enrolled at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. There, she met her husband Tim, a chemical engineering major. The Doyles relocated in the mid-1990s to Minnesota, where he worked as a process engineer, and she finished her degree in civil/environmental engineering at the University of Minnesota in 1998.

While employed as a water resources engineer in the Twin Cities, Doyle found herself working closely with the firm’s marketing coordinator and helping her with projects. Doyle began doing marketing work “on the side” and eventually started her own business – garnering skills along the way that led down a slightly different path.

“People say I’m a very good teacher, trainer,” she said. “So what happened is people started coming to me to teach and train their team.”

Doyle’s life coach knew of her talent for training and encouraged her to go into the field herself. She did, working as a life coach for eight or nine years and building a client base around the world.

“That was just exhilarating. I loved that work,” she said. “Just helping people get out of their own way and get to whatever better place they needed to get to.”

When her husband decided he wanted to leave his career in engineering for law enforcement and return to Rapid City, Doyle started to phase-out her clients, and their family moved back to the Black Hills around 2006.

Running for office

Upon returning to Rapid City, Doyle said she had many talks with her Ward 1 alderman about the city and specifically about city planning and streets. He suggested she run for the city council. As a mother of two, Doyle thought it could be the perfect way to get involved in the community without working full-time, and she won the seat uncontested in 2011.

Among the lessons she learned during her six years on the Rapid City Council was how much a person can accomplish simply by treating others with respect and communicating well. She said being a life coach in her previous profession helped her facilitate conversations – often about complicated issues – with city staff and constituents alike.

While on the council, Doyle also played double-duty for a couple of years in the non-profit world, serving as the executive director of the Black Hills Soccer Federation, one of five chapters affiliated with the Colorado Rapids. She said it was good experience and a position that came to her at a time when she wasn't really looking for anything.

Doyle jokes that she has the “weirdest resume ever,” but it is that very resume and her life experience that make her uniquely qualified to be the project manager for Rapid City's version of the Haven for Hope, according to Black Hills Area Community Foundation executive director Liz Hamburg, who tabbed Doyle for the job.

“She's an engineer. She has an understanding of our city from her years on the city council. She has insights with the issues law enforcement officers face addressing public safety through her husband, Officer Tim Doyle,” Hamburg said. “And most importantly, she has a heart for serving people. She truly cares.”

Managing the 'Haven' project

Doyle first learned about San Antonio's Haven for Hope in early 2012, when current mayor Steve Allender was still Rapid City's police chief. She said discussions at the time centered around the creation of a tax base that could be a possible funding source for such a facility, but plans never progressed. She said she was glad to hear the Haven idea get revived in Rapid City this past year.

Doyle sees great value in creating a space where multiple agencies can exist under one roof, and where the most vulnerable among us would face fewer barriers to improving their lives.

“There is hope for a lot of them – if they can get what they need, and we don’t make it hard for them,” she said.

Doyle envisions a campus where people willing to put in the effort would come through the door and be living on their own in about two years’ time. They would be taught everything from cooking and managing a bank account to caring for a family, and they would have access to behavioral health services as well. She adds that the Haven model takes into account those people who do not want help. For them, the county facility would at least provide a safe place to sleep.

Doyle’s goal is to get caught up quickly on what has transpired around the project to date. She then plans to establish a case summary, set up a timeline and create a business strategy with a proposed budget. In the coming weeks, she hopes to get commitments from agencies that will likely be involved on the campus. Doing so, she said, will help to avoid the expense of design changes. She expects to have the conceptual plan prepared by the end of summer.

Doyle’s hope for the Haven for Hope project is that the community becomes “the shining example of how to take care of people” and get them to a better place.

“Not just talk about it,” she said. “Do it. And I think we *can* do it.”