Autism Housing Sub-Committee meeting Minutes

November 2, 2016, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

500 Harrison Avenue

Members present were: Dan Burke, Patti Jennings, Chris Supple, Jane Ryder, Nan Leonard, Kevin Barrett, Lea Hill, Victor Hernandez, Karen Mariscal, Dafna-Krouk Gordon, Leo Sarkissian, Joseph Valley, and Kathy Stern

Members accessing meeting remotely were Michelle Brait, Ayana Gonzalez, and Michelle Harris.

Dan Burke, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05pm and welcomed the members to the meeting of this Sub-Committee. Mr. Burke stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee members present would need to vote to approve the remote participation of some members because of their geographic location, whenever any members were utilizing video and/or tele-conferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously. Minutes from last meeting in June were reviewed and approved unanimously.

The Draft Charge for the committee was reviewed and comments were made by the group to make changes. Carolyn said that the current charge was meant as a working draft to initiate a discussion by the group for them to work on together. Some people from the group felt there was too much focus on data as it pertains to housing but others commented that you cannot know the need for housing without the data. The word affordable was questioned as part of the wording, and Carolyn said that the housing sub-committee was charged with expanding affordable housing options and that would come with supports from other agencies depending on person(s) needs – because without the supports being available, housing won’t work for some. Chris Supple said that he wanted to include the important statutory language regarding a plan of action. Carolyn said she didn’t have a copy of the statute with her but that she would review the language to confirm that affordable was part of the housing section.

Carolyn also discussed a report from UMass Medical that will be coming out in the next few weeks and it has information on housing (data). Carolyn will share this report with the committee.

After much discussion on the wording of the charge, Nan Leonard offered to draft some language while Leo focused on motions he said he wanted to make at this meeting.

Ayana asked if the state building code was a barrier and Dafna said that local restrictions can keep housing plans from moving forward. Dafna reported that if you go to a city or town you are up against state building codes – the restrictions need to be looked at more closely.

Dan Burke suggested that we spend more time at our next meeting discussing the Housing Think Tank and the report from the Think Tank since Kathy Boyle was not in attendance. Ayanna commented that the Think Tank was well done and it was a great way start conversations around housing. She commented that it will be nice to follow up and address the many issues that were raised.

Dan addressed Section 8 and the lack of availability and long wait lists – 12 year wait for more urban area. There is a shorter wait in suburban areas but there is no transportation in the areas.

Carolyn mentioned that she sent out Ayanna’s presentation to the full committee, which provided an overview of the housing programs that currently exist. The goal is to see what exists and what supports are out there.

Karen asked if we (the committee) would be putting together the survey. Dan discussed that the Omnibus Law calls for us to do a survey to find out how many homes exist and how many more are needed but we would not do it ourselves but have to outsource.

Ayana said that DHCD could run numbers but there are a lot of private homes and we do not have access to those numbers.

Chris discussed the need to get a sense of what is needed and this may put pressure on funding sources. Leo said it would be great to see the UMass report and its’ findings. Carolyn asked Ayanna if she could give us what is available and what is occupied. She also said that the numbers will not tell the whole story in terms of what “types” of homes are needed and that is more difficult to assess. Leo talked about the possibility of doing a study based on Early Intervention and Department of Education students to get a sense of the range of needs.

Carolyn mentioned that we need information to come up with a true plan of action and that we not only need to know how many, but what is the need. Karen said we need funding to get this survey done and Dan said that that is the challenge – how to free up the money. Leo discussed that we would not want it to come from DDS funding but maybe ANF. Dan said he would start to look at options for the survey. Leo will work on a clear vision of what we are asking for the survey.

Leo Sarkissian made a motion that Motion:  the housing subcommittee adopts the following motion: “That the Governor’s Commission on Autism adopt a motion that the administration release funds for a Massachusetts survey which would identify the housing and related support needs for people with ASD.” Carolyn said that while members could make motions they needed to acknowledge that the sub-committee was comprised of members who work for the Administration and that state employees should not be required to vote on funding issues since there is a separate state budget process, which included the budget allocations for each state agency. She asked that the motion, which was seconded by Karen Mariscal be done by a roll call vote: Dan Burke did the roll call. Roll Call Results: **Yes Vote**: Dan Burke, Michelle Brait, Patti Jennings, Chris Supple, Nan Leonard, Kevin Barrett, Leo Sarkissian, Dafna-Krouk Gordon, and Karen Mariscal. **Abstain**: Carolyn Kain, Michelle Harris, Ayana Gonzalez, Jane Ryder, Joseph Valley, Lea Hill, and Victor Hernandez.

Leo discussed a conference at Brandeis University through the Lurie Center. Paul Shattuck was the speaker and he spoke of data. Possibly have him come and speak to the committee.

Dan brought up the homeless population and shelters. He said shelters can give estimates but they are not sure of the diagnosis. Victor said that they have an assessment for the shelters but the folks that are implementing the assessments are not trained. Joe Finn from the Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance would be helpful. Joe estimated that last year there were 2700 people that were homeless with mental health issues. Victor said that this is a baseline and we can go from there.

Dafna said that a large percent do not even know that they are homeless. They won’t go to shelters and will bounce around and couch surf. That number is hard to capture.

The Homeless Youth Commission was mentioned – they spent two years trying to get a count but found people don’t want to be identified.

Joe has staff that does outreach on how to better identify – they will find the homeless and mentally ill and help with identification.

Next meeting was discussed and the following issues will be addressed:

* Finalize the charge of this sub-committee
* UMass Report to be sent out and reviewed
* Number of newly eligible and how it is being addressed without funding
* Prioritize issues and possibly break into sub-committees
* Survey
* Kathy Boyle to present on the Housing Think Tank
* Short term goals vs. needs assessment

There was more discussion around the newly eligible and no funding for them. DDS is making referrals to the support centers and they cannot provide all the services necessary to help the individuals.

Leo discussed taking a position on the issue of funding cuts. He suggested asking the Governor to provide a supplemental budget and asked this committee to vote on this request.

Leo wrote the motion and it states:

That the Governor’s Commission on Autism adopt a motion that Governor Baker request a supplemental budget for DDS 5920-3020, Adult Omnibus, of $2,000,000 for a total of $14,434,095.  Leo made the motion with it being seconded by Nan Leonard. Carolyn said she was reiterating the same concern that existed with the first motion and asked for a roll call vote. Yes Vote: Dan Burke, Michelle Brait, Patti Jennings, Chris Supple, Nan Leonard, Kevin Barrett, Leo Sarkissian, Dafna-Krouk Gordon, and Karen Mariscal.

Abstained: Carolyn Kain, Michelle Harris, Ayana Gonzalez, Jane Ryder, Joseph Valley, Lea Hill, and Victor Hernandez.

Nan Leonard then gave the draft charge to Leo who read it aloud. Carolyn said she would take the draft and wordsmith it and provide it to the group for further discussion and possible vote at the next meeting. The draft stated: The Autism Commission Housing Sub-committee is charged with making recommendations to increase the range of housing and support options for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, and the funding sources to support these options. Among other things needed, we will review any legislative or regulatory changes, such as the Massachusetts State building statute and regulations, needed to increase the available stock of housing for individuals with ASD; and we will request assistance and funding as needed to accurately determine prevalence including projection of the number of people who will become adults with ASD in the coming decades and their housing needs and related support services. Based on this review the housing subcommittee will recommend a plan of action.

Carolyn restated that she will review the statutory language regarding its direction and that the issue to request funding remains an issue that was not within the statute and would present the same concern for all people who work for the administration, which includes her since she was appointed by the Governor. Carolyn said that the sub-committee was made up of various individuals, some of whom work for advocacy organizations, and that the sub-committee needed to be respectful of each other’s roles and what they can do or should be asked to do individually or as part of their organization.

There being no further business. The next meeting was scheduled for January 11th from 1:00pm – 3:00pm. Location will be 500 Harrison Avenue.

Meeting was adjourned.

End of Minutes

**Statutory Language from Omnibus Law.**

SECTION 30.  The commission on autism, established under [section 217 of chapter 6 of the General Laws](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleII/Chapter6/Section%20217), shall make an **investigation and study of the present, and anticipated future, statewide affordable supportive housing needs** for the commonwealth's population of persons with autism spectrum disorder.  The commission shall develop and conduct a **statewide housing survey to determine the current status of affordable supportive housing stock for adults with autism spectrum disorder and shall make recommendations in regard thereto.** Additionally, the commission shall review the rise in the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder diagnoses among children in the past 30 years and shall make estimates of the number of children, aged 21 or younger, with autism spectrum disorder who will become adults in the coming decades and the resulting need for affordable supportive housing for those individuals and **shall recommend a plan-of-action for the commonwealth** in regard thereto. The commission shall file its report with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives and the chairs of the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities on or before June 30, 2015.

Redraft of charge

*“The Autism Commission’s Housing Sub-committee is charged with conducting a state-wide housing survey on behalf of the Autism Commission to determine the current status of affordable supportive housing stock for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, and to make recommendation thereto. The Housing Sub-committee will review any legislative or regulatory changes, such as the Massachusetts State building statute and regulations that are needed to increase the available affordable supportive stock of housing necessary to meet the needs of individuals with ASD. The Housing Sub-committee will review available data sources from state agencies, the UMass Medical report on Autism Needs Assessment, and request any additional assistance needed to accurately determine the prevalence of ASD, including the projected number of people who will become adults with ASD in the coming decades, their housing needs and their needs for housing support services. Based on this review, the Housing Sub-Committee will recommend a plan of action.”*

Updates:

1. Housing survey—I have met with representatives of EOHHS, DHCD and DDS several times regarding current housing options for individuals with ASD. The Secretary has approved a state-wide affordable supportive housing survey. We will meet with Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), a national consulting organization on the issue of housing with experience in the Commonwealth’s housing portfolio, regarding the scope of this survey.
2. HUD 811 program- DHCD and MRC are re-writing the priorities for this program to include persons with autism. A revised MOU between DHCD and MRC will include persons with autism as a priority population for this subsidy. (No waitlist for this program)
3. Home Loan Modification Program (HLMP) Cathy Boyle has submitted language on the issue of accessory apartments. The language has been reviewed and CEDAC, DHCD and MRC will meet with Cathy Boyle to discuss some revisions to her proposed language. However, there will be revised language for the HLMP included in the new Bond Bill to be filed next year which will more explicitly address the use of the fund for accessory apartments. In the meantime, CEDAC and the HLMP loan committee will entertain applications for this program for accessory apartments for persons with autism as this is an allowable use of this fund within the current bond language and guidelines. DHCD has committed to to request additional capital appropriation and annual bond cap for the HLMP to support this use as needed.