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Minutes of
Virtual Meeting of the
Community Policing Behavioral Health Advisory Council
February 7, 2022 at 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Zoom

Chair Taberner called the meeting to order. Nine members of the Council were present: Scott Taberner, Angela Davis, Mathew Broderick, Robert Ortiz, Chief Brian Kyes, Chief Russell Stevens, Chief Lester Baker, Shelia Gallagher on behalf of Robert Ferullo of the MPTC, and Eliza Williamson and Tim Burton of NAMI Mass. A quorum was determined. Introductions were made by members.

There was discussion of the mandate to the Council under Section 117 of Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020 that it “study and make recommendations for creating a crisis response and continuity of care system”. A key point of discussion was the need to hire an entity to conduct the study as authorized by Section 117(b).

There was also a discussion of a requirement included in line item 4000-0300 of the FY22 General Appropriation Act “to conduct a study of the disposition of 911 calls to determine how many calls and what types of calls were or could have been diverted to social service, behavioral health, community arbitration or other unarmed responders instead of to law enforcement;”

The following comments were offered by Council members:

Ms. Williamson – recommended that the “911 Study” seek data on whether a person had been identified with a mental health diagnosis.

Chief Kyes – noted that if 911 is being called the police should be involved in the response. He further noted that having a co-responder model, in which an officer and a clinician jointly respond to a 911 call, is often a very effective way to address the needs of persons in crisis.

Mr. Burton – suggested that the departments selected to participate in the 911 Study store their data in similar ways; that divergent methods of storage may prove to be problematic.

Chief Baker - concurred that a co-responder model such as that operating in Framingham has been found to be very effective. He also noted that it is quite difficult to recruit and retain clinicians to work with police. Chief Kyes concurred with this point.

Ms. Williamson – noted that due to staff shortages many individuals wait very long periods before being able to see a clinician. She noted that in her role at NAMI, she has encountered waits of 9 months or more for appointments with child psychologists.

Mr. Ortiz – noted work on “988” that is being done in Rhode Island may be worth examining. He also asked whether “dispatch” is located within police departments. Chief Kyes indicated that dispatch is typically located within most, but not all, police departments.

Chief Stevens – noted that smaller communities often do not have the resources to keep dispatch calls beyond three years, and that they may not have the detail that is captured by larger departments. This may impact which departments can contribute data for the 911 Study.

Following the discussion Mr. Broderick made the following motion:

That the Community Police Behavioral Health Advisory Council make a request to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to make a sum of funds available to finance the employment of an independent research or academic institution to conduct a study on the Council's behalf that is responsive to the provisions of Section 117 of Chapter 253, the Police Reform Act of 2020.

The motion was seconded by Chief Kyes. Mr. Taberner called the roll of the Council members in attendance. The motion was approved with 9 members voting to approve, and none against.

Mr. Broderick made an additional motion:

That the Community Police Behavioral Health Advisory Council, within the limits of its authority, requests of and authorizes the Department of Mental Health to take the following actions on behalf of the council:

- a. Enter into a contractual engagement between DMH and an appropriate party to conduct a study on the Council's behalf that is responsive to the provisions of Section 117 of Chapter 253, the Police Reform Act of 2020.
- b. Oversee the performance of the contractor engaged for the study and the submission of work products(s) completed.
- c. Ensure that the findings of a "Study of the disposition of 911 calls" set forth in a budget provision in the General Appropriation Act of FY22, are contributory to the information gathered (in part) to form the basis of recommendations ultimately produced by study required of the Council under Section 117.
- d. Engage a single contractor to perform the Council's study regarding a crisis response and continuity of care system, under a concurrent deadline and in tandem with the 911 Study, if the Department determines this approach in the best interest.

The motion was seconded by Chief Kyes. Mr. Taberner called the roll of the Council members in attendance. The motion was approved with 9 members voting to approve, and none against.

Public comment was encouraged by Chair Taberner, none was given.

Motion was made and passed to adjourn at 12:30 p.m..