**Meeting:** Greater Lowell Advisory Board Meeting

**Date:** September 26, 2023

**Time:** 12:00 p.m.

**Attendees:** Dan O’Connor, Maura Fitzpatrick, Garrett Casey, Maricia Verma, Jean Marc Tchazou

**Guests:** Gerard Frater, John Kirton

**Absent:** Adriana Giraldo, RJ Lawson, Gianna Sandelli, Jaime Dillon, Scott Wallace

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| **Topic** | **Discussion** | **Assignment/Task** | **Point Person** | **Notes** |
| Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes | The minutes were approved for June 27, 2023. |  |  |  |
| Renaissance Club Presentation- John Kirton, Program Director | Board Members introduced themselves to John Kirton, Director of the Ren Club Mr. Frater also introduced Florence Thomas, the clerk for the DMH Lowell Site Office. Mr. Frater opened the meeting by welcoming everyone back from a long break. Minutes was also approved.  Mr. Frater introduced Mr. Kirton and stated that he would be presenting on the Renaissance Club. He also encouraged members to feel free to pose their questions. Mr. Kirton gave a brief history of the clubhouse. He said the clubhouse model dates to 1940 at a hospital in New York. Some of the members, when the hospital closed, continue to have meetings on the steps in front of an old library once a week. The group was called WANA (We Are Not Alone). In the 70s a social worker came on and developed a model for the clubhouse. The model was based on the idea that it’s not only important for folks to meet and support each other in the community, but it’s also important that they have a sense of belonging. | Information Sharing | N/A | N/A |
| Renaissance Club Presentation- John Kirton, Program Director (Continued) | The program is also run by the members. Reportedly there are over 300 clubhouses throughout the world. Clubhouse is organized to support people living with mental illness. Clubhouse offers members access to opportunities to rejoin the worlds of friendships, family, employment and education, and to the services and support they may individually need to continue their recovery.    There’s a training center in Worcester, that’s called Genesis Clubhouse that trains clubhouse from all over. The club house has work units. For instance, the Ren Club has a culinary unit where members work with staff to develop a menu, cook in the kitchen and served. There is a unit where members work on technology and update the social media account. Members also help develop a newsletter. The Renaissance Club also have a membership unit which helps facilitate new members coming in for intakes, gives tours and helps people with paperwork. Potential members can self-referral and sometimes folks are referred to by DMH, Vinfen or other outside services. There’s an accreditation process that happens with all clubhouses.  Mr. Frater asked Mr. Kirton to talk about the employment program they have at the clubhouse. Mr. Kirton said that the clubhouse has vocational specialist on staff who help members with education and work goals. According to Mr. Kirton, there are three different kinds of employment: There is Transitional Employment (TE), Supported Employment (SE), Independent employment (IE). Mr. Kirton describes the following programs as follows: TE- enables members to return to work without going through job interviews or other screening processes. Provides time-limited entry-level employment placement with on-the-job training and coverage for absences. It is ideal for those who are just starting to go back to work and, at completion, provides a recent work history and reference to go on to other work. SE: assists members with obtaining their own permanent job in their field of interest/expertise. Support can include transportation, job leads, introduction to employer, assistance with training and benefits counseling.  IE: assists members with finding employment independently. |  |  |  |
| Renaissance Club Presentation- John Kirton, Program Director (Continued) | Mr. Frater asked Mr. Kirton to tell the board members about the hours of the clubhouse operation. What’s a typical day like at the club? Mr. Kirton said the hours are Mon to Wed 8am - 4pm and on Thursday and Friday the club normally opens 8am -6pm and Sat 10am – 2pm. There were several groups throughout day but the club is transitioning away from groups towards accredited work order day. As part of the clubhouse model is you’re not supposed to have social groups during the work order day. The only time you can have social program groups is at lunch time or sometime after your work order day ends or on Saturday.  Mr. Frater asked Mr. Kirton if the club still provides transportation for members to get to the club. Mr. Kirton said that the club provides transportation for some members in Lowell. The club has a van that provides ride only in local Lowell areas. For members outside of the Lowell area, the club submits a request to the state for HST transportation and members are picked up in all the surrounding towns within our catchment area.  Mr. Frater asked if the club provided the opportunity for members to participate in club activities remotely, for member who do not want to come into the club.  Mr. Kirton responded that there are not many members who like to use zoom, but the club does have a zoom component for members who want to participate in the morning meeting or Wednesday business meeting. The club also provides outreach everyday to members whom they haven’t seen for a while. He also stated that the membership unit sends out birthday cards and get-well cards to people as part of their work unit task.  Mr. Frater asked if members have to get involved in one of the work units if they show up at the club. Mr. Kirton stated that as part of the club house model, members cannot be forced participation. Staff try to encourage people to participate. Club house staff let member come to them in their own time. | Information Sharing | N/A | N/A |
| Renaissance Club Presentation- John Kirton, Program Director (Continued) | Mr. Frater asked about the TAY population attendance at the club. According to Mr. Kirton, the club probably has 6-8 TAY individuals here at the. Staff at the club do outreach to Youthquake and they sent over one person who came a couple times, but it did not appear that the club was for that individual. The TAY population is a tough population. Mr. Kirton said that he and staff were working on changing one of their rooms into our IT unit. That room will have laptops, gaming system. The club is trying to set it up as a hang out center with couches for young people to work on their social media.  Mr. Frater asked if somebody who hears about the club can just show up or do they need to make an appointment? Mr. Kirton stated that it was easier to make an appointment, but people can still walk in. The club also has a website where people can go and fill out a form for self-referral, as long as that individual can get proof of diagnosis. He would get the referral in his email and reach out to the individual and set up a time to meet.  Mr. Frater asked about linkages and serving diverse populations. Mr. Kirton stated that it hasn’t been easy, but staff was still working on it. Mr. Kirton said he went to the Cambodia Mutual Assistance Center, but he has not made a lot of headway.  Mr. O’Connor asked about funding considering all the things the club is trying to do. Mr. Kirton responded that they are doing the best with what we have, and that they have figured out a way to make it work.  Ms. Fitzpatrick: What are the selected times for recreational activities that take place at the club and what kind of activities? Mr. Kirton: We have poetry groups, gaming groups, pool tournaments, and movie groups. It’s strictly social and fun, nothing gears towards symptom management. As part of the clubhouse model there’s not supposed to be any clinical activity going on at a clubhouse. |  |  |  |
| Renaissance Club Presentation- John Kirton, Program Director (Continued) | Ms. Fitzpatrick asked if there are also member meetings? Do you meet with everyone at the clubhouse? Mr. Kirton: Yes. We have a business meeting every Wednesday at 1pm. If there’s an issue in the clubhouse, a member has a question or wants to buy something for the club we put it on the agenda and discuss it during the meeting as a clubhouse and vote on it. We come to an agreement as staff and members about changes or things we want to buy. Ms. Fitzpatrick: Do you have any data about how well this model has worked and what the numbers are?  Mr. Kirton: I can ask HR if they have the data because they were talking about how often people who attend the clubhouse are hospitalized compared to the general public. Ms. Fitzpatrick: What’s the percentage of people who participate in the clubhouse who are homeless? I’m asking because our homeless folks create their own community as well. Mr. Kirton: I will say 5%. We have some homeless people that comes in from time to time because they hear about our program. Even if they don’t want to be enrolled in the program, I make sure they get free a lunch for coming in.  Mr. Frater asked Mr. Kirton to talk about the laptops that were given to some members of the club. Mr. Kirton said that last year they received $16,000 to buy any technology people at the club need like Chromebook, laptops, iPads and tablets that could help them with job search or staying connected with each other and the club. It’s great to see those people thrive. Some of our members started taking college classes online because they now have laptops. Mr. Kirton reported that members are benefiting from the laptops. Mr. Kirton also said other members are asking if the club is getting anymore. We just found out we’re getting another grant sometime in October.  Mr. Frater thanked Mr. Kirton for taking the time to come and talked about the clubhouse. The information you provided was good. Also thank you for providing an essential service to our clients. | Information Sharing | N/A | N/A |
| Announcements | Mr. Frater said that they met with Maura on 9/25/23. Ms. Fitzpatrick: we have asked Gerard and Brent Rourke, DMH Housing Coordinator attend the Homeless Task Force Group in a couple of weeks to talk about the Safe Haven Program and how it will be implemented in Lowell. This program will start sometime next spring.  Mr. Frater: It’s a 7-bed program for people who are chronically homeless, DMH eligible with substance abuse issues. They have to meet the criteria of homelessness. The meeting is on October 16th and Vinfen has been awarded the contact to open and run this program. Vinfen staff have also been invited to the meeting. Mr. Casey: Where are the 7-beds shelter going to be located?  Mr. Frater stated that the program would be located at Wannalancit street.  Mr. Casey: What meeting is on October 16th and what is that about?  Ms. Fitzpatrick: It’s a meeting focusing on housing. We’re looking to take the first step connecting with the state and feds and making ordinances in the city.  Mr. Frater stated that at our last meeting we had the Vinfen staff because they’re the ones doing the Mobile Crisis and evaluation. We had a good discussion and engagement with them. Scott from Lowell General was not in attendance; however, we had talked about having a monthly meeting with people from CO-OP and other agencies. Scott was g going to get in contact with Gina regarding follow up. Mr. Frater asked Maricia if Gina had been in contact with Scott. Ms. Verma said no not yet. Mr. Frater stated that if the Board needed to get CBHC to another meeting, he could arrange it. The CBHC Varnum Ave site is still being worked on, which will house the CCS units.  Mr. Frater asked if anyone else had any questions.  Mr. O’Connor asked what happened to the Christmas party.  Mr. Frater stated that the problem with having the Christmas party is that we don’t have our own place to have such a party any longer, plus the cost of having the party Mr. Mr. O’Connor suggested that we can have the Christmas party at the Greek Orthodox Church on Fletcher Street in Lowell. Mr. O’Connor said the church has a big space for parties and a big parking lot as well. He thinks they may be willing to allow the Christmas party there. Mr. O’Connor said there will be no fee as well. Mr. Frater said he would follow up on that.  Mr. O’Connor stated that another major issue going on is the government shutdown and how it’s going to affect services across the board. Mr. O’Connor stated that SNAP benefit will go out in October. Social Security and SSI as well.  Mr. Tchazou stated that Trinity has hired more clinicians and ae currently accepting more clients for medication management. He also stated that they also got approved by the state to become an urgent care clinic. | Information Sharing | N/A | N/A |
| ADJOURNMENT/  NEXT MEETING | Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.  The next meeting will be held on Tuesday October 24th, 2023, at 12:00pm. | Information sharing | N/A | . N/A |

**DMH staff:** Minutes should be emailed to **DMH-DL – Open Meeting Notices** after they are approved by the Public Body.