



**Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission**  
**Monday, November 17, 2025**  
**11:00 AM – 12:00 PM**  
**Virtual**

**Minutes**

Attending Commission Members:

Peter Koutoujian, Sheriff, Middlesex Sheriff's Office, Co-Chair  
Danna Mauch, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, Co-Chair  
Cindy Friedman, Senator – 4<sup>th</sup> Middlesex District  
Roy Frost, Chief of Police, Billerica Police Department  
Lydia Conley, Association for Behavioral Healthcare  
Matthew Broderick, Department of Mental Health

Staff:

Scott Taberner, Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Kevin Maccioli, Middlesex Sheriff's Office  
Elizabeth Ganz, Association for Behavioral Healthcare  
Michael Kane, ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School  
Meaghan Dupuis, ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School  
Chelsea Thomson, ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School

Invited Attendees:

Jean Yang, Vinfen  
Kim Shellenberger, Vinfen  
Katie Tyler, Vinfen  
Sophie Hansen, Vinfen  
David Brown, Vinfen  
Jonathan Chines, Vinfen  
Muriel Kramer, Vinfen  
Zach Martin, Vinfen  
Amy Albrecht, Vinfen  
Peggy Johnson, Vinfen

## **Welcome and Roll Call**

- Co-Chair Sheriff Koutoujian welcomed attendees and opened the meeting. Chelsea Thomson completed a roll call of Commission members.

## **Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting**

- Sheriff Koutoujian accepted a motion made by Lydia Conley and seconded by Senator Friedman to approve the meeting minutes from the last meeting held on July 28, 2025. Sheriff Koutoujian conducted a vote of the yeas and nays. All those present and voting voted in the affirmative. The Commission approved the meeting minutes.

## **Vinfen Implementation Updates**

### *Staffing*

- Jonathan Chines introduced the four new Vinfen leadership staff supporting the Restoration Center:
  - Katie Tyler, Vice President of Behavioral Health
  - Muriel Kramer, Director of Program Development and Clinical Practices at the Restoration Center
  - Zach Martin, Director of Service at the Restoration Center
  - Amy Albrecht, Clinical Program Director of Respite at the Restoration Center
- Vinfen posted ten roles and plans to hire 50 staff to fill these positions over the coming months.
- To support the development of the Sober Support Services and associated workflows, Vinfen is bringing on a consultant who has experience with Boston Health Care for the Homeless and the Supportive Place for Observation and Treatment (SPOT) program.

### *Facilities*

- The General Contractor revised construction timelines, moving the anticipated completion date from mid-February to mid-March. Vinfen indicated that the change should not affect the start date of April 1, 2025.

### *Services*

- Mobile Respite, launched in August, continues to fill a critical gap within the Greater Lowell care continuum. The program served 16 unique individuals to date.
- Vinfen launched the Connections to Care team, leveraging Restoration Center resources, in Spring 2024 to provide care coordination for individuals who would be likely Restoration Center clients and were uninsured or underinsured. The launch of the Mobile Respite has allowed staff to serve those who meet that criteria. Therefore, Vinfen will sunset the Connections to Care team at the end of 2025.

### *Law Enforcement Engagement*

- Vinfen established a working group, Restoration Nexus, of stakeholders from the Lowell Police Department, Lowell General Hospital, Pridestar Trinity EMS, and the City of Lowell to discuss workflows related to law enforcement drop-off at the Restoration Center. The group has met weekly since early October to walk through various scenarios to identify who could be dropped off at the Center and articulate the associated mechanisms for drop-off. The group has also developed a universal principles of care document. This resource will guide law enforcement drop-off policies and protocols for all departments across the County. Vinfen will work closely with Chief Frost to review

the guide before sharing it with the Middlesex Chiefs of Police during an upcoming meeting.

- Vinfen developed a draft law enforcement drop-off workflow and decision-making tree to help officers and departments understand appropriate clients for the Restoration Center. Vinfen presented a plan to the Commission, proposing that during the first six months after opening, primarily the Lowell Community Opioid Outreach Program (CO-OP) and Lowell City Health Department will drop-off individuals to the Center. Drop-offs from all law enforcement will be welcomed upon launch. Vinfen would slowly start to broaden engagement with other departments in Fall 2026.
  - Sheriff Koutoujian, Chief Frost, and Katie Tyler discussed this phased approach and the feedback that was gathered during the Nexus meetings to inform the proposed plan. Vinfen shared that the plan reflects the balance between engaging law enforcement and ensuring drop-offs go well to encourage future buy-in. The CO-OP has committed to drop-offs and Vinfen is leveraging that to build success and iron out challenges prior to deeper engagement with other police departments.
  - To further involve the Lowell Police Department, the Commission discussed potential avenues to engage Lowell leadership in the project and Commission.
  - Commission members also discussed the challenges faced with ambulance drop-off. One challenge shared from the Nexus meeting included a requirement that once EMS arrived on the scene, they must transport directly to the Emergency Department. The CO-OP has a waiver for this requirement.
  - Senator Friedman encouraged the group to identify challenges and barriers to engaging communities beyond Lowell as soon as possible so that solutions can be developed.

#### *Ambulance Drop-off*

- Vinfen developed a potential pathway to receive ambulance drop-offs at the Restoration Center that is founded upon the process for drop-offs at the Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHC). The Department of Public Health amended regulations to allow for ambulance drop-offs at CBHCs but has not finalized a point of entry plan and no CBHCs have met the licensing criteria, preventing drop-offs. Vinfen is awaiting a clearer regulatory pathway before moving forward.
- Commission members discussed the challenges the above barrier poses for the Restoration Center, concerns surrounding the liability/risk of transportation, culture shifts that will need to occur, and the history behind the regulatory framework.

#### **Sustainability Working Group Update and Next Steps**

- Vinfen shared the work they have undertaken on the sustainability/Sober Support Services working group, including identifying potential funding sources and licensure pathways. Potential opportunities for the three main components of the Restoration Center include:
  - Site-based Respite: DMH Respite contract (executed)
  - Sober Support Services: Mobile Crisis Intervention (MCI)+ proposal
  - Living Room: Resources from the Department of Mental Health, aligned with funding for the other Living Rooms within Massachusetts
- In exploring potential funding pathways for the Sober Support Services (SSS), Vinfen developed an Adult MCI+ model as Adult MCI aligns with the SSS model as it is a short

term, rapid response program. Vinfen previewed this concept with the working group in October and will present a financial model to the group in December.

### **Funding and Budget Update**

- Scott Taberner and Chelsea Thomson provided an overview of resources secured to date, possible additional funding sources, and the amount of funding needed to be raised in different scenarios. Scott Taberner acknowledged Senator Friedman's leadership in securing ongoing annual appropriations to date and recognized this funding source as the most realistic in future years. Other funding sources to potentially explore include additional Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund resources and DMH funding for the Living Room.
- The group discussed the timeline for potential funding options and the impact that gaps in resources could have on service provision. There will be a clearer picture of potential state resources in the Spring. Vinfen is modeling potential funding scenarios to discuss with EOHHS and the Commission.

### **Next Steps**

- Sheriff Koutoujian and Chief Frost will connect and discuss the proposed law enforcement drop-off approach.
- Commission leadership will meet to discuss the barriers with ambulance drop-off and funding strategies.

### **Adjournment**

- Co-chair Sheriff Koutoujian accepted motion made by Danna Mauch and seconded by Senator Friedman to adjourn the meeting. Sheriff Koutoujian conducted a vote of the yeas and nays. All those present and voting voted in the affirmative. The meeting was adjourned.