

MINUTES – NOT YET APPROVED BY THE MANDATED REPORTER COMMISSION

Office of the Child Advocate
Mandated Reporter Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday December 21, 2020
9:00am-10:00am

Meeting held virtually via WebEx pursuant to the Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, s. 20 signed by Governor Baker on March 12, 2020.

Mandated Reporter Commission Members Present:

Maria Mossaides – Child Advocate - Chair
Officer Elizabeth Fleming –School Resource Officer, Waltham Public Schools
Andrew Rome – General Counsel, DCF
Katherine Ginnis – Sr. Director of Child, Youth & Family Policy Program, EOHHS
Angela Brooks – Dir. Child and Youth Protection Unit, AGO
Nina Marchese – Director of Approved Special Education Schools, DESE
Lisa Hewitt – General Counsel, CPCS
Ann Reale – Undersecretary of Education, EOE
John High – Chief of Staff, DPL

OCA Staff:

Cristine Goldman
Alix Rivière
Christine Palladino-Downs
Lily Powell, intern

Members of the Public

Lauren Koster- Skadden Fellow, Children’s Law Center of MA
Philip Lynch- Vice Chair Garlick’s Office
Michael Gregory- Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative of MA Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School
Chris Lisinski- State House News Service
Elizabeth McIntyre- Greater Boston Legal Services
Emily Paradise- Children’s Law Center of MA
Kate Nemens- Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee

MRC= Mandated Reporter Commission
OCA= Office of the Child Advocate
DCF= Department of Children and Families
CPCS= Committee for Public Counsel Services

Meeting Commenced: 9.03am

Welcome and Introductions:

Maria Mossaides, Chair of the Mandated Reporter Commission, called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda. Chair Mossaides explained that this meeting is dedicated to discussing the Status Report draft. Members will vote on the minutes of the previous meeting at the end of this meeting. She thanked members of the public for coming to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves via the chat function. Cristine Goldman, the OCA's Director of Policy and Legal Counsel, explained that members of the public can participate in the meeting only through using the chat function unless the Chair of the Commission approves verbal participation. Members of the Commission participate verbally and can participate via the chat function.

Chair Mossaides then discussed the reasons why this Commission is submitting a Status Report to the Legislature, rather than a full report with recommendations. Although the Commission worked diligently, members have not yet been able to complete a full examination of all the topics on the Commission's agenda due to the complexity of the topics and the in-depth nature of the discussions. The Commission has not had time to hold a public comment period to seek stakeholder and expert feedback on proposals that the Commission is considering and the Commission feels that a public comment period is critical to its work. The Commission intends to ultimately present a comprehensive package of recommended legislation which requires additional work by the Commission to ensure that recommendations are actionable.

Chair Mossaides welcomed feedback on the content of the report itself. Members expressed their satisfaction with the work conducted by the OCA throughout the past year and in drafting this report and thanked both Chair Mossaides and Ms. Goldman for their dedication to the purpose of this Commission. The Commission discussed how best to phrase the report to indicate there is still ongoing discussion about the recommendations and that consensus has not been reached. Some members noted they had not had the time or opportunity to confer with stakeholders in their networks to receive feedback on the issues discussed by the Commission.

Commission members agreed that there was not a need to vote on the Status Report that would be presented to the Legislature. The Commission discussed whether the report would be presented as a report coming from the Commission itself or coming from the OCA as the agency chairing the Commission. The Commission members agreed that further individual feedback could be given to the OCA on the drafting of the report prior to the submission to the Legislature and that a further meeting of the Commission was not necessary prior to the end of December.

Commission members agreed that the OCA should send another draft copy of the report based on the discussion held at the meeting today and any additional individual feedback provided to the OCA about the draft report prior to submission to the Legislature.

Review and Approval of the December 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Formal discussion was opened on the December 3, 2020 meeting minutes. No Commission member had any topics for discussion. A roll-call vote was held and the following members approved the minutes: Maria Mossaides, Katherine Ginnis, Lisa Hewitt, Angela Brooks, Ann Reale, Andrew Rome, John High, Nina Marchese, and Elizabeth Flemming. The December 3, 2020 meeting minutes were approved.

Closing Comments

Chair Mossaides noted that the OCA will revise the draft Status Report, then provide another draft via email. Assuming there are no further objections, the OCA will decide when it will submit it to the Legislature and then post it on the Mandated Reporter Commission website as a public document. The Commission expects that in the next few meetings it will determine determine how to gather public feedback on the proposals presented to the Commission for consideration. The OCA is working on a schedule for 2021 that leaves enough time for input from the public, an internal briefing process for members and their respective agencies, and Commission deliberations. Chair Mossaides thanks the members for their hard work and wished them happy holidays.

Adjournment: 9:33am