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Justice Involved Women Panel

Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2019

Members Present:

Maureen Gallagher
Diane Fasano, Probation
Gloriann Maroney
Allison Hallett
Beth Connolly
Sarah Ruiz
Andrea James
Patty Murphy
Representative from Senator Friedman's office

Others Present:

Arielle Mullaney
Anne Marie Resca
Mallory Hanora

The meeting began with introductions around the table.

Chair Hallett asked if everyone had a chance to review the meeting minutes from the last meeting and if any changes needed to be made. After no changes were offered, Chair Hallett asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes. Maureen G. made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Andrea J. seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion carried.

Chair Hallett then acknowledged Patty M.'s hard work in creating the survey to be submitted by the Sheriffs to the Panel.

Beth Connolly presented to the group on her experience as a formerly incarcerated woman. She recalled how she grew up in Lynn and began using drugs at an early age. Beth was incarcerated at MCI-Framingham on two separate occasions. She said that Framingham changed her life. She first went to MCI-Framingham at the age of twenty-two for seven months. She spoke highly of the program she was in and said it helped her immensely. When she was released, she did attend

meetings but found she did not fit in. She relapsed and was incarcerated at MCI-Framingham for one year. She said during this sentence, there was not enough time for her to enter into a CRE program. She was sent to pre-release, where she spoke to women in the community who helped her transition back into the community. They helped her find a job and a place to live in a shelter and also connected her with a counselor, Barbara. Barbara had originally helped her during her first incarceration at MCI-Framingham. Barbara continued to help her for the next few years. Beth subsequently relapsed again and was arrested. She described this experience as being her lowest point and when she made a decision to change her life. She was sentenced to one year on probation out of Framingham. She remained dedicated to changing her life – she kept her job at the café and eventually got promoted. She began working at the South Middlesex Opportunity Counsel in their Women's Transitional Program. She was asked to be a case manager helping women at MCI-Framingham. She thought she'd love to do that but wasn't sure she'd be given the job, given that she had been formerly incarcerated there. She was initially denied, but her boss sent a letter to then Commissioner Dennehy who approved Beth for the position. She began working as a case manager at MCI-Framingham on February 15, 2009—9 years to the day when she was released from MCI-Framingham. She was a case manager for the next 5-6 years, then was promoted to manager. She loved the program, but it was ultimately eliminated from the budget. Beth relayed that she cannot speak to the services today at Framingham but that it was able to help her greatly by providing her access to treatment, one on one counseling, and mentors after release. When she was a case manager, she formed relationships with women while they were incarcerated and helped them leave and transition out to the community. She believes that initial relationship is *so* important. Beth said she still feels guilt and shame over her past and doesn't discuss it much. She said Lynn Lizzotte recommended her for this and believes it is so important. Beth stated that it is crucial to hear from women and their experiences. She said the Panel needs to hear from women who have recently been incarcerated as she was released twenty-three years ago.

Beth then offered to answer any questions the group may have for her. Chair Hallett asked which mentor program Beth was in. Beth stated she believes it was run by a woman named Linda Gray. She thought Linda picked who she thought would benefit from the program. Chair Hallett expressed how important these programs are for the women and relayed how Lynn Lizotte is trying to get more programs up and running now.

Andrea James then thanked Beth for sharing with the group. She said how important her story was and commended her for being willing to share. Allison echoed this sentiment and said when she looks at Beth, she sees courage. Allison said it's so important to hear from women like her because that is who the women currently incarcerated are going to believe in.

The rest of the group echoed Andrea and Allison's statement and thanked her for sharing with us.

Next, the Panel began discussing data collection. Allison again thanked Patty for her work and asked if anyone had anything to add to Patty's revised survey which had been distributed to the panel. Patter reiterated that she added everything in from the last meeting and had prepared instructions as was discussed at the last meeting. She also said that she spoke with Sheriff Cocchi who will work on getting the survey out to the facilities and get it back to the panel ASAP.

Mallory asked how the survey will work. Specifically, she asked if the panel would be hearing from the women directly. There was then a discussion about follow up questions and perhaps regularly getting this info. Patty said she would speak to her colleagues about both. She said she doesn't believe it should be a problem for the women themselves to compete. She also mentioned that there are annual reports submitted for each fiscal year with a ton of statistics. She said she would look at these reports and ask for copies of them for the panel as she thinks a lot of the info the board is looking for may already be in these reports. Allison agreed and said it would not be an issue to get these reports from the DOC. She also stated that there is an entire research division at the DOC and on mass.gov there are a lot of statistical information available to the public and the information is updated regularly.

At 12:05pm, quorum was lost. Patty Murphy made a Motion to Adjourn the Meeting, Andrea James seconded it, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned.