



**Middlesex County Restoration Center  
Wednesday, April 7, 2021  
10:00 am – 12:00 pm  
Zoom**

**MINUTES**

Attendees: Danna Mauch, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, co-chair; Senator Cindy Friedman; Representative Ken Gordon; Chief Robert Bongiorno, Bedford Police Department; Nancy Connolly, Department of Mental Health; Deirdre Calvert, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services; Scott Taberner, MassHealth; Lydia Conley, Association for Behavioral Healthcare; David Swanson, Office of Senator Cindy Friedman; Catia Sharp, MAMH; Sonya Khan, MSO; Jennifer Honig, Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee.

**10:00 AM: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Danna Mauch called the meeting to order.

Danna Mauch shared Sheriff Koutoujian's apologies for having a conflict and not being able to attend the meeting today.

Danna Mauch asked members of the public to introduce themselves.

Danna Mauch asked for a round of introductions.

**10:05 AM: LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET UPDATE**

Senator Friedman mentioned that her office is pushing for the funding in the budget process at \$1.85 million.

Representative Gordon suggested that their offices speak offline to ensure that the requests they are making are aligned.

10:10 AM: APPROVING THE MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

Danna Mauch accepted a motion from Senator Friedman to accept the minutes from the public portion of the meeting.

Vote was unanimous.

Danna Mauch accepted a motion from Senator Friedman to accept the minutes from the Executive Session from the last meeting.

Lydia Conley abstained from the vote. All others were unanimous.

10:15 AM: FUNDRAISING SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Catia Sharp talked to the Commission about establishing the subcommittee, and asked any members who wished to participate to reach out to her.

Senator Friedman asked Representative Gordon to promote the trust fund in the budget in order to enable the Commission to seek and obtain external sources of funding.

Senator Friedman also recommended looking at funding from the Behavioral Health Redesign Roadmap and Opioid Trust Fund, as well as the federal COVID relief act.

Danna Mauch noted that SAMHSA money is available in multiple rounds of relief acts – some money has yet to be allocated in MA. She is tracking it. There will also be money for police reform and criminal justice reform that we should keep an eye out for.

Chief Bongiorno added that, with police reform coming, it's important that people remember that, for those people that needed help the most, police have been left to make changes to better support those people on their own. Progressive police chiefs would be best served by getting that funding and handing it off to the right people to implement. All these programs should be done at a higher level, and you shouldn't be relying on police to run these programs. You shouldn't have resistance from police to divert those new sources of funding to support services police can't and shouldn't provide. Police aren't the solution to the epidemic of substance use and mental health conditions – this is a community-based issue that's at a higher level than the services police are prepared to deliver.

Senator Friedman agreed, and added that this is what the Restoration Center is intended to do. Police aren't trained to treat people who have an illness – they can't deal with a person having a heart attack, so what makes us think we could train our way to police dealing with mental

health? We can make a good argument that some of these funds should be used to do that.

Danna Mauch welcomed Sonya Khan to the meeting.

Senator Friedman said she is happy to stay connected to the fundraising – if there are ways that she can help let her know, and keep her on the list for meetings.

Danna Mauch asked whether the Attorney General's office is consulting with BSAS on the opioid settlement spending?

Deirdre Calvert responded that DPH has not been included. She would welcome inclusion to avoid duplication of services and efforts. BSAS just expanded their naloxone standing order to allow folks to hand out naloxone outside a pharmacy to bystanders – that will open the floodgates to people wanting naloxone, and they would like to distribute these for free, so one idea for the money would be naloxone. She doesn't think the group is formed yet, but is hopeful BSAS will be included.

Danna Mauch asked Deirdre to keep the Commission posted. She also asked if there are other things BSAS is working on that the commission should be aware of?

Deirdre said that the American Rescue Plan Act dollar spending plans are being developed. She said that she is also working on the Behavioral Health Redesign Roadmap team, and is trying to keep the Restoration Center in mind at all times. DPH received \$37 million through a block grant, which is about \$14 million/year after set asides. They are releasing an RFI for ideas on how to spend this money soon, and don't want to do a bunch of small initiatives but instead want to do something more bold. She noted workforce as a major challenge and noted they are seeking ideas for how to be bold on workforce. Partnerships with colleges, recovery coach supervision, and other ideas might help bolster workforce. They are also looking at housing, thought there are strong limitations on what they can do for housing but maybe duplicating the Housing First model in Suffolk County.

Danna Mauch asked Nancy Conolly what else, in addition to a budget line item for housing that MAMH is advocating for, can be done?

Nancy Connolly said the things the Chief was talking about are important. DMH has a history of doing trainings using jail diversion money and is moving in the direction of the co-response model; there is now more money for that bucket of work. It is cheaper to train people than to hire people.

Danna asked Chief Bongiorno how to get the police departments in Middlesex County who don't have these grants to apply for them?

Chief Bongiorno responded that DA Ryan sent out survey to see who is applying for a federal grant. Upwards of 30 communities have participated in jail diversion programs at DMH through regional or individual grants. From the beginning when Arlington had the co-responder, the Chief thought this was the way to go. Having a professional clinician embedded in the police department provides a higher level of training than CIT. Chief Bongiorno applauds the shift toward co-responders, and said they are working.

Nancy Connolly added that 90 police departments have had training, including campus police. The first step is to train everybody with an informational training, and the second is to train a specialized team on the PD to be more professional and increase the sophistication level.

Senator Friedman asked what's the expectation? We want police to be able to walk into a situation and assess what's going on. We want them to be able to use words initially to do that assessment. Who is going to actually seriously engage with someone when they're in a MH crisis? That will be somebody else with training/expertise in MH. Police still need someone who can bring someone to a restoration center and get them comfortable being transported. It's important how we set our expectations about what everybody's role is.

Sonya Khan added that there are also a number of communities who are using their own money to support clinicians in addition to those using DMH JDP grants. MSO is piloting with Tewksbury and the partner communities who share their co-responder to create a BH report form that clinicians can use to track info that they would through their reporting for DMH, but it would go into this database they could share with clinicians in other communities if a person were to cross jurisdictional lines.

Scott Taberner provided an update on the ongoing work at MassHealth/Human Services to seek an exemption to the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy, as he has shared previously with this group. They are readying a proposal in the 1115 waiver update this summer. This would open up federal dollars to the Commonwealth to support access to BH care in facilities, as well as other related purposes. One of the buckets they are identifying with Secretary Sudders, Secretary Turco, the Sheriff's Association, and others are other community-based projects this funding could be used for. Could the restoration center access a portion of these new federal dollars?

Danna Mauch said that she hopes this conversation encourages people to join the subcommittee for external sources of financing, and moved on to the Year Three Report.

### YEAR THREE REPORT

Danna Mauch said that the Commission has a report due to the legislature this month. A draft was shared with Commission members, and will be signed by co-chairs and legislative members

of the Commission. Catia put together an overview and outline of the last year that summarizes the contents of the report.

Catia Sharp summarized the report, and requested any written comments or edits to be sent to her by email.

Senator Friedman said it was great work.

Representative Gordon added that the landscape has really dramatically changed since last year's report and highlighted the need for a restoration center.

Chief Bongiorno thanked Catia for the work.

Danna Mauch added that she applauds everyone here – the Commission has gotten a lot done in the last three years. She said that now is the time to argue effectively for the resources needed to bring this vision to a reality, and thanked everyone in advance for reviewing and providing feedback.

10:45 AM:     NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING

Sheriff Koutoujian adjourned the meeting.