



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
One Ashburton Place, Room 2133
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Tel: (617) 727-7775
TTY Tel: (617) 727-6618
Fax: (617) 727-4764
www.mass.gov/eops

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lt. Governor

THOMAS A. TURCO, III
Secretary

MEETING MINUTES
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Second Meeting-The Planning Subcommittee

Date: March 23, 2021

Time: 12:00PM-1:00PM

Microsoft Teams Virtual Location: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only) **857-327-9245** Phone Conference ID: 520-115-662#

Agenda Items:

1. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 12:09pm

		<u>Video/Call</u>	<u>Absent</u>
1	Chair- Erin Freeborn	X	
2	Strong Oak Lefebvre	X	
3	Mary Quinn	X	
4	Becky Michaels	X	

EOPSS Staff: Arielle Mullaney, Anjeza Xhemollari and EOPSS intern Bethany VanAntwerp

Others in attendance:

Over 6+ members of the public attend the open meeting.

2. Welcome and introduction of everyone present

Erin Freeborn- works for C4RJ. She is here with excitement and optimism since this is the first opportunity to have dialogue about where to go with RJAC planning.

Strong Oak- she hopes to restore communities to wholeness by fighting racism.

Armand- he works for C4RJ and Transformation of Prison Project. As a product of restorative justice, he brings the perspective of a lived experience into the conversation. He hopes to bring restorative justice from a solely academic space into a lived space.

Brenda- she agrees with Strong Oak and wants to bring communities to wholeness.

Kathy- she has experience in criminal justice reform and criminal justice systems and wants to bring in voices of people with lived experiences.

Becky Michaels- she is an attorney with Northwestern District Attorney's Office and brings perspective of a prosecutor in the criminal justice system. She is interested in bringing values of restorative justice into the way people who work in the criminal justice system do their work.

Jo-Ann- she started her work with restorative justice at the Alternatives to Violence Project. She is a professor at Bridgewater State University where she teaches a class that incorporates restorative justice and worked on creating a certificate that includes restorative justice at Bridgewater State. She wants to expand the work of restorative justice, particularly concerning reentry.

Selina- she has a few years of experience as a facilitator in the prison system and is here to listen, learn, and provide any insight.

Jill- she was a student of Jo-Ann's and is now also a professor at Bridgewater State. She brings passion, as it has been a dream of hers to use restorative justice to bring healing within prisons and bridge the gap between prisons and communities.

Mary Quinn - she works at the Chicopee Women's Correctional Facility and wants to provide answers to the questions of people whose voices are not often heard.

Barbara- she works in the Chicopee Sheriff's Office in the victim and family service unit and hopes to see people who have already done restorative justice work come together.

Jen- she also works in the victim and family service unit at the Chicopee Sheriff's Office.

Ariel Mullaney- she is an attorney at EOPSS and is here to help with the committee's statute and mandate.

Anjeza Xhemollari- she works at EOPSS with Undersecretary Peck.

Darrell- he recently returned home after being incarcerated for 30 years for a murder he didn't commit.

3. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 23, 2021

Roll call is taken to approve the meeting minutes. All present members vote in favor to accept the meeting minutes. Motion passes unanimously.

4. Discussion: What do you believe the purpose/mission of the RJAC should be?

Strong Oak- she says that there needs to be an understanding that the criminal justice system right now is deeply flawed, it is based on winning and losing, and the police system negatively impacts people based on their skin color. She wants to work on getting to a place where everyone realizes that the system is racist and has a deeply racist history.

Armand- RJAC should bring services of restorative justice to communities throughout the commonwealth and should provide communities with the services that their citizens need.

Brenda- it's about looking below the surface to root causes of harm and finding how those can be changed and healed. She wants to see everyone do restorative justice and hopes there will be collaboration among people both inside and outside of the system. She cautions against the state taking over the work that communities are already doing.

Kathy- she wants restorative justice to be incorporated in a way that has equity and equality and also wants to bring the community into the process of restorative justice to make sure that the community's wants and needs are heard rather than just assuming what they want.

Becky Michaels- she sees this committee as one that can support constituents in whatever their restorative justice needs are and supports organizations that already exist and work that is already happening.

Jo-Ann- sees the purpose as multilayered: supporting anybody doing restorative justice and promoting collaboration between restorative justice programs. Education is part of this, the way restorative justice is presented in the media is not accurate and because society is looking at restorative justice right now, people need to be correctly educated as to what it really is.

Jill- this committee has the opportunity to change the lens through which crime is viewed. We could be a role model for the wider system and take responsibility for the harm that the system has caused.

Mary Quinn- the purpose of this committee is consciousness and tolerance. We all need to become more conscious of our actions and we need to empower people who have had no voice in our society.

Barbara - this committee is providing tools and information to people already doing this work so that we are not all trying to do the same thing. This should be a place people can go to learn how to implement effective programs.

Selina - there should be more support in communities to repair harm. There is a lot of harm that needs healing, the harm that's been done to individuals and the community needs to be addressed, and there should be more community outreach.

Erin Freeborn- she is excited to have people from all parts of the system working together.

The themes that came up during this discussion were:

1. Creating comprehensive list of current programs and practitioners
2. Connect programs and practitioners
3. Support advancement of restorative practices within the system
4. Support programs and practitioners in ways they identify it would be helpful

Strong Oak- adds the theme of an internal assessment of how the criminal justice system is not a just system and is not a restorative process. We should be learning from community programs that practice restorative justice and we should be open to learning how to make the system better from the restorative practices that are already present in communities.

Darrell- agrees with Strong Oak. He started the restorative justice systems in Norfolk and Walpole prisons. The people talking about the criminal justice system do not actually know what it is like and they need to be reeducated about what the system is.

Jo-Ann - we also need to educate MA residents as to what restorative justice is.

...additional themes that came up during the discussion were:

5. Reeducate those who work in the system about the system by creating a way to learn from those who have been impacted by it
6. Educate the citizens of the Commonwealth about what restorative justice is

5. Discussion: The Legislature directed that the RJAC “may monitor and assist all community-based restorative justice programs to which a juvenile or adult defendant may be diverted.” What does ‘assist’ mean to you?”

Erin asks: as a community member, what does assist mean? How can we assist you or the people you work with?

Strong Oak- the word assist makes her worry about control and she wants to change the wording to support.

Armand- assistance is giving aid needed to do work within institutions.

Brenda- worried about states controlling what communities do because communities have different needs. She remembers that mediation programs were doing great work in schools in the 80s and 90s, but they disappeared when the funding was gone. There needs to be a plan in place for these programs for when there is not as much funding. Confidentiality is also important in terms of those who have done harm as well as those who have been harmed, this is needed to build trust. The question of how systems stay out of communities is also important, there is uncertainty about how partnership can happen without the state powering over communities.

Kathy- assistance is about making sure that communities know about restorative justice and then take it upon themselves and own it. She liked Selina's point about reaching out to people, especially those who say they're fine, with the hope of bringing individuals and communities to wholeness.

Jo-Ann- it is all about information. She suggests creating a website that has all the restorative justice information and provides connection to programs. She is also hesitant about how much the state controls programs and recognizes the need to be cautious about funding.

Jill- this is a question we need to be asking communities as we engage with them in restorative justice. She, too, is concerned with the word monitor in the same way Strong Oak is concerned with assist.

Mary Quinn- also has issues with monitor and assist. Being a part of this committee, she knows that nobody has all the answers, and this group should function as a learning community.

Barbara - echoing what has been said, it should be about support rather than assisting and monitoring. We should not assume what the needs are but should ask communities.

Selina - also agrees with Strong Oak about using "support" rather than "assist."

The themes that came up during this discussion were:

1. Not control
2. Support
3. In community and learning from community
4. Sustainable funding sources
5. A learning community

6. Open Session for Topics not Reasonably Anticipated within 48 Hours of the Meeting

Erin Freeborn suggest the next meeting should be for two hours so that nobody feels rushed. Vote was taken by committee members to extend the time. Strong Oak will be the facilitator the next meeting. At the next meeting, we should ask about short term and long-term vision in terms of support. The next meeting will be 12:00-2:00 on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

7. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 1:06