



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
Third Meeting-The Planning Subcommittee

Date: April 27, 2021

Time: 12:00PM-2:00PM

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. Welcome and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 12:01pm

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

EOPSS Staff: Anjeza Xhemollari and EOPSS intern Bethany VanAntwerp

Others in attendance: Brenda, Jo-Ann, Kathy and Darrell

2. Welcome and introduction of everyone present

Strong Oak is the circle leader for today. All members of the subcommittee and members of the public went around the circle as a way of checking in with everyone and spoke about their feelings about this meeting and the purpose of RJAC.

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

Becky moved to approve meeting minutes. It was second by Erin. Roll call was taken to approve the meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Discussion: short-term vision and long-term vision in terms of support

Becky - Talked about the survey and data collection. She stated that collecting data statewide should be a continuum that should never end because as new programs start, they should be added to the database. She was struck by the idea of educating people in the restorative justice system from the last meeting, it requires the person to engage with the harm they have done and the people they have harmed. She wants the committee to think about ways they can educate the people they are in communities with.

Erin - sees short term as two categories: what is the next step with the list of programs they have collected and then wants to ask what the committee wants to accomplish this year? She sees the long term as the full six-year term and wants to consider how restorative justice should be changed and shaped by the end of these six years.

Mary - has seen that RJ is on the periphery of the correctional facility she works at for 20 years and is sad that it is still on the periphery. She wonders why more has not been done with the opportunity of restorative justice and she thinks it is because it can seem like too much work and it can feel overwhelming to ask what the next step is. She wants to know what the next step is for her in her position. She sees the change of systems as a long-term goal.

Brenda - education (for everyone) is an important aspect of RJ so that communities know justice is not about only punishment, but it should be about healing. It is also important to look at legislation and question the lack of confidentiality for victims and the families of victims, not just perpetrators of crimes. She also wants people and communities to find true healing and not just use diversions.

Anjeza – talked about lack of survey responses. She asks that people continue to forward the survey to members of their community. There have only been twenty responses so far.

Strong Oak - It is important that education is based in the community. If trials were done in a circle structure, they would do much less harm than they do now. We need to look at the role of law enforcement and how they engage with the community. She has hope that in the long-term there can be healing in how the police interact with and engage in their communities.

Becky - listening to Strong Oak she was reminded of how new she is to RJ. She agrees with much of what Strong Oak has said, but wonders what RJAC can do to move toward this healing because this committee is limited in what they are able to accomplish. She sees what Strong Oak has talked about as something even larger than long term... it is a complete restructuring of communities that we should be working toward, but how can movements in this direction be made in the short-term?

Jo-Ann - important to look at prisons and houses of correction as well as re-entry, many of the people who were doing RJ in the prisons are now out in society and do not have the support they previously had.

Darrell - just finished 32 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. We need to advance RJ and change the language to fit the people we need to get the message to. We cannot just keep talking in the same circles but need to expand to a platform where people who do not know about RJ can learn about it. Even if people have good intentions they can still get things wrong because they lack the knowledge.

Kathy - wonders how we can start RJ and then hand the power over to the community. Also wants to elevate people like the men at Norfolk who are doing RJ.

Strong Oak - there is a lack of diversity in this community and we should address that. Suggests that there be people added to the committee who are doing RJ from within the prison system. Notes that there is a trust issue between people doing RJ and the criminal system, and that could be why there has been so little response to the survey. A short-term goal should be to involve the right people in the conversation to build that trust. She almost left the committee because she did not want to be a part of something that creates more harm but got excited about involving more voices.

Erin - focused on the people who responded to the survey. We will continue to send the survey out, but the people who have responded are the first group gathered to work to handle cases differently. She wonders what the next step should be to involve these groups because they have self-identified that they want to be a part of this conversation.

Mary - she agrees with Erin about bringing those voices, but she also wants to bring in the voices of people who have been in the system or people in the community who have been directly affected by the criminal justice system. A next step would be to bring more voices that are different into the conversation.

Brenda - she has experienced the effects of harm through the stories of people in her life. When harm happens, people need to be brought in, not excluded or punished, so that healing can happen. We have been conditioned to call the police or law enforcement when we should first be talking to our neighbors or people in our community. We need to begin internally by changing the way we think about justice.

Darrell - Defund the Police was a ridiculous movement because no defunding actually happened—the police actually made more money during that because they were working overtime. When it comes to education, people need to learn how to make choices and how to know what options are available to them.

Kathy - people who have been inside the prison system need to be invited into these conversations so that people outside of the system can be educated. There also needs to be this kind of interaction with law enforcement so they can know about the harm they have done.

Strong Oak – short-term goals need to be based on a long-term vision. The whole system is broken and capitalism gave birth to the broken law enforcement system. It is problematic that this committee is mostly white and there is not a lot they can bring to this community. There have been better RJ practices inside the system than outside of it. The voices of white people and law enforcement should not be the ones leading this conversation. Another short-term goal would be to reexamine how people get on this committee.

Becky - much of what Strong Oak said is why this subcommittee was created—there was the desire to bring more people in. The legislature dictates who can be a voting member, but this subcommittee is a place for all voices to be heard equally. This meeting is for the public and includes the voices of everyone who is here, so there needs to be work done to get more people to join the meeting. What steps can be taken to invite more people to this meeting?

Erin - agrees that more people should be intentionally invited to meetings and suggests that there is a personal invitation to people who responded to the survey to join in the meetings.

Mary - there were more people in this meeting last month—where are they this month? Also agrees that the circle should continue to be widened, and she is committed to bringing at least one woman from the facility she works at to the meeting next month.

Brenda - also wants to widen the circle, she notes that it would be easier to have the notes from the previous meeting.

Anjeza - The agenda for this meeting has been up for over a month so people have known about the meeting. There was a question on the survey if they wanted to be contacted by RJAC, some said yes and some said no. When the survey went out, committee members and members of the public know how to access the meetings, it

is up to them whether they join or not. Members of the public can access the meeting minutes once they are approved.

Jo-Ann - this has been one of the only meeting she has been able to talk as a member of the public. There are formerly incarcerated people that she would like to invite to this meeting but they are working during this time. Her community is Bridgewater State, and she works to engage younger people in RJ. Part of what this committee could be about is making connections between individuals and programs.

Darrell - He is observing that the people on this committee do a lot of talking to each other, and people who join the meetings see that the committee is not looking to learn from others so they do not come back to the meetings. He wants to know what the people on the committee are actually doing.

Erin - tomorrow she is presenting to a foundation to receive funding for people coming out of Norfolk to be paid to do RJ work in their communities. She invites Darrell to share what some of the short-term steps are that the RJAC can do to help RJ grow.

Darrell - tomorrow he will be in a courtroom for someone who is finally coming home after 47 years, and he wonders why nobody else on this committee will be there, and he asks Erin why she isn't bringing anyone who has been in the system with her.

Erin - she is bringing Armand with her.

Kathy - we should not assume people would just come back; we should be re-inviting people to the meetings. She is committed to inviting two more people to this meeting. She is actively involved with violence prevention and talking to returning citizens and people who have been involved in violence, and is working on policy to reduce violence in prison.

Strong Oak - The application for RJAC excludes anyone who has been in prison—the application process needs to be re-examined and changed.

Becky - Suggests that today's agenda items are continued next month so that we can continue in the information gathering stage.

Strong Oak – she closes the circle and thinks that the open meeting law is a problem in terms of inclusion.

5. Discussion: are there action items that we can bring to the RJAC as recommendations?

Not enough time to address this topic.

6. Topics to address at next meeting

Agenda topics from this meeting will continue into the next meeting.

7. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 2:04.