



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

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RESTRICTIVE HOUSING OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Date: January 19, 2023

Time: 11:00AM-1:00PM

Place: Microsoft Teams (virtual)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:05AM and roll call was taken.

Present:

Undersecretary Andrew Peck, Chairman

Kevin Flannagan

Kyle Pelletier

Justice Gerri Hines

Hollie Matthews

Atty. Bob Fleischner

Atty. Bonnie Tenneriello

Dr. Brandy Henry

Joanne Barros

Atty. Tatum Pritchard

Absent:

Sheriff Tom Bowler

Review/Vote on the December 2022 Minutes

There was a motion by Dr. Henry to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Atty. Flesichner. All members voted in favor with one abstention from Kevin Flanagan. The motion carried and the minutes passed.

County CJR and DOC Reporting Update

Chairman Peck stated that the county's annual data should be posted today as well as the DOC monthly RHU sheet with BAU numbers.

Falcon Implementation Update: Kyle Pelletier

Kyle stated that the DOC has rolled out a third SAU and have had two groups of admission and it is going well. She stated that the DOC is having Falcon come out on the tours and they had some observations which they will be shared with DOC. They are looking to get the fourth and final SAU at Souza (2nd at Souza) up and running in the Spring of 2023. They are finalizing the program track and robustness of the intervention with Falcon.

Update on BAU and SAU Tours

Concord and Souza taken place so far. Atty. Tenneriello stated that the RHOC toured Concord but did not budget time for interviews in units. There were seven people in the SAU at the time the tour took place. While they did not conduct any interview in the unit, there were plenty of cell-side chats. Atty. Fleischner and Atty. Tenneriello spoke with one individual in the SAU. They appreciated the staff being so open and allowing the RHOC in. Bonnie is looking for updated handbooks for all these units. She is requesting follow up on that. Scott Semple said these handbooks could potentially be accessible on their tablets so that would be a suggestion as well. Bob said the group interrupted a wellness group held by Spectrum and had an opportunity to speak to the two people. The inmates thought the wellness group was helpful but they felt it was unfair not to be eligible for good time. They have about 45% in the mental health groups, one run by Spectrum and one by Wellpath. The canteen is limited which is interesting. The food is limited to snacks and is not a very healthy array of food. Everyone we spoke to complained about canteen. African Americans complained about soap and hygiene materials they were receiving which were not appropriate for African Americans. One person was on orientation level and he had just finished a DDU hearing and was in a therapeutic module when they spoke with him. He did say that he thought he had been misled about what the SAU was. He was not sure how long he would be there or what the purpose of it was. That may be something we need to look closely at. Bob also stated that he did not get a clear picture of how often mental health was present doing rounds and seeing inmates. He heard two different things. They did not speak to any mental health professionals which would have been helpful. Overall, he agreed that people were very open, and it was very useful. Everyone they spoke to call the SAU/BAU the “hole” or the “box” so in terminology, there was not any difference and no acknowledgement about more time out of cell or showers. The interview with the staff person, a sergeant, was very instructive. One thing that struck Bob was that she felt the SAU was not a valued placement for officers. Their comment about mental health was that they have a different view about what should be happening and a different mission, but the sergeant was fairly positive about the unit. About training, she had a couple days of training on the Spectrum program but it did not seem like there was an awful lot of other training. He did not sense any negative things from that officer. Chairman Peck stated that the canteen is being discussed and looked at as well as the culturally appropriate items they can offer that Bob mentioned.

Dennis Everett stated that there is a lot of work that has to happen around mental health and we need to start thinking about the direct care people. Dennis said that it is not the “hole” from his observation. Dennis said this is very important work and underscored the need for support for security staff and direct care workers.

Member Comment

Dr. Henry asked about any changes in the structure of the Committee. There were no changes in membership or anything else to anyone’s knowledge. Bonnie mentioned the work of the Section 35 Commission and recommended that we have a proposal in place by February for a format for the report.

Public Comment

Mary Valerio brought up an article in the Boston Herald analyzing the payroll for those working in Massachusetts government and those in the DOC listed some officers making as much as 300k. She would like to see what some of these new units are costing on the payroll side and recommended that overtime be looked at.

Cassandra Bensahih is hoping for some bold leadership. We talk about statistics and things we already know. We need to push for the implementation and change in these systems because it's not just about the cost of staff; we need to be doing a job we can be proud of. The problems in prison are not healthy for prisoners, staff, and the community. How long do we wait before we do more? We have so much violence in our communities. We do not get better if we do not change. We need to buy into things to make the environment safer. She is all about accountability and state employees need to be accountable.

There was a motion to adjourn from Atty. Pritchard and seconded by Atty. Fleischner. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 11:51AM.