

Department of Mental Health Inpatient Study Commission
Public Hearing
Worcester State College, Worcester
June 4, 2009

This was the second of five scheduled hearings of the DMH Inpatient Study Commission. It was held at Worcester State College, Student Center, Blue Lounge, 486 Chandler Street, Worcester, MA, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Commission members attending included: Marylou Sudders and James Brett, Co-chairs, John Bove, Philip Hadley, Cathy Levin, Paul Barreira, Jim Durkin, and Peggy Johnson.

Ms. Sudders called the meeting to order, introduced members of the Commission, and articulated the Commission's goals. She noted that the Senate was in session so some members of the Commission would be late or not present. The current economic downturn and resulting fiscal realities has created a set of challenges for the Department that include:

- an immediate structural deficit of \$24M;
- an already significant reduction to DMH community services; and
- more than 200 of 788 adult patients are ready for community services.

Ms. Sudders posed four questions to public hearing participants:

1. How should the Department balance its vision of Community First (defined as supporting persons with mental illness so that they can live independently in the community) with the need for adult inpatient capacity?
2. Given current budget challenges, should the Department increase community based resources by reducing its adult inpatient capacity?
3. In evaluating the Department's adult inpatient system, how should inpatient resources be prioritized?
4. How can the Department best serve individuals transition from its adult inpatient system to less restrictive, more independent living in the community?

Approximately 40 persons attended the hearing. The following 13 individuals testified before the Commission:

The Honorable George Peterson
Massachusetts State Representative

Albert Powers
DMH

Barry Walsh
The Bridge
(see submitted written comments, post hearing)

Carole Deneault
President, Board of Trustees, Worcester State Hospital

Linda Lolli
M-Power
(see submitted written comments, post hearing)

Jeffrey Geller, M.D., MPH
UMMS
(see submitted written comments, post hearing)

Linda Fountas
M-Power

Leonard Morse
DPH City of Worcester

Carolyn Droser
Community Health Link

Alan Brown, M.D.
UMMHC
(see submitted written comments)

Marie Hobart, M.D.
Community Health Link, UMass Psychiatry

Deborah Delman
Transformation Center
(see submitted written comments, post hearing)

Bill Olivier, LICSW
Westborough State Hospital

Ms. Sudders acknowledged the presence of Representative James O'Day and Jim Kersin from Representative Pedone's Office.

During the hearing, responding to testimony, Commission member Philip Hadley mentioned at this time the hospitals need to be repaired due to the embarrassing conditions of the present hospitals. He also stated that a new facility is coming out of a Capital Budget not the DMH operating budget. Not all hearing participants agreed with his comments and expressed strong feelings against building a new state hospital.