

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: Friday, March 20, 2009

TIME BEGAN: 8:02am

TIME ENDED: 10:00am

FACILITATED BY: Andre Paquette

SUMMARY BY: Judy Buswell

PRESENT: COUNCIL MEMBERS: Andre Paquette, Deb Rosato, Micheline Roy, Nancy Porosky, Rasim Gusinac, Emily Clement, Gil Schohan, Jim Pilliod, Sarah Fox, Betty Anson **COUNCIL ASSOCIATES:** Dick Wallace, Bud Martin **STAFF:** Alan Robichaud, Judy Buswell

1. **Balanced and Restorative Justice Work Group Report** - *Andre Paquette* Council members reviewed the draft of report prepared for the County Commissioners, based on the work of the BARJ Work Group and input from JJAC. This report will respond to the Commissioners' request in late December 2008 to secure state funding for "diversion," including the Belknap County Restorative Justice Program.

Comments made in the general discussion that followed included:

- Belknap County Incentive Funds may be reduced by as much as 50% for this next year and will be managed through the County Administrator's office. Peer Review panels for Incentive applications will still be part of the award process.
- Because of statutorily imposed confidentiality restrictions and the resulting inability to share longitudinal information freely among providers, it is difficult to show with hard numbers how many juveniles have actually been diverted from jail or prison because of juvenile court diversion. As well, the definition of "recidivism" is inconsistent. Is it one year? Or longer?
- Information is now available that shows that there has been a 500% increase in the number of incarcerated adults in NH, yet at the same time the number of crimes has decreased. We need to understand why this is happening. Nationally, one of the fastest growing areas in state budgets is in corrections.
- The Citizens Council will not have an ongoing role in administering or managing this unified juvenile system.
- There will be several opportunities to explore juvenile and adult crime in NH and to influence decisions through two recently organized state-level task forces.
- Without knowing yet some of the variables such as where this unified program could be housed, the combined budgets, currently at \$340,000. could be reduced by \$120,000. or more.

A motion was made by Sarah Fox that the Belknap County Citizens Council completely supports the "Report to the Belknap County Commission" on the County Juvenile Justice System as prepared by Andre Paquette. Second provided by Nancy Porosky. Motion carried.

2. **Future Direction for the Citizens Council** - *Alan Robichaud* Per a directive from the County Commissioners, County funding for the Citizens Council will also expire on December 31, 2009. Various options need to be considered.

Current Council activities The Council needs to understand the impact of its model to promote lay citizen involvement in civic matters. Has it made a difference? Are citizens more engaged in community work and able to make more informed voting decisions? Should the Council seek ongoing funding for this Council infrastructure that couples volunteer leaders with Council staff to address community needs?

Over and above this need, Council members and others should also understand that the current major initiative of the Council, the Belknap County Systems Integration Initiative (BCSII), is well underway because of the leadership and administrative support of the Citizens Council. BCSII is a conscious effort to coordinate the juvenile justice and child protection systems so that children and families receive more efficient and cost-effective services. Recently collated statistics indicate that 1 in 6 children involved in the juvenile justice system in the Laconia DHHS District Office is/or has had prior involvement with the child protection system. Across the country, there is also recognition that child maltreatment is a strong factor in juvenile delinquency. This systems integration project here in Belknap County is a huge undertaking that involves a national consultant and requires strong partnerships with state and local stakeholders. We need to better understand what will happen to this initiative if Council leadership for BCSII is withdrawn at the end of the year. Will the initiative have its own strong legs by that time to continue without Council support?

Direction Needed Alan reviewed several different thoughts and possibilities for future funding for continuing the Council after December 31, 2009 when County funding ends. Council Chair, Andre Paquette, asked Council members to evaluate these ideas and offer additional suggestions. The Council should be pro-active and decide within the next few months if and how funds for the Council can be procured. Unfortunately, this 12/31/09 deadline does not mesh easily with differing fiscal years, early negotiations underway around the juvenile justice system, the BCSII and the uncertainty of state reorganization priorities.

ACTION: Council members will study the handouts and take the time to think through the numerous ideas in preparation for future discussion. Council leadership will schedule another meeting to discuss the future of the Council and what - if any - efforts should be made to continue the Council beyond 2009.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

WHEN: Friday, April 17, 2009, 8-10am

**WHERE: Belknap County Complex,
36 County Drive**