

**Mental Health and Substance Abuse Minutes
January 17, 2023 at 6:30 PM
Council Chambers**

Present: Christopher Heffernan, Chair
Fred Happel, Vice Chair
John Abbott, Councilor
Maureen Kiely, Councilor
Michael Molisse, Councilor

Also Present: Ted Langill, Chief of Staff
Keryn Jacobs, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator
Brian Connolly, Town Auditor

Recording Secretary: Diane Hachey

Opioid Settlement Disbursement

Chair Heffernan called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. He announced that this is a public meeting but not a public hearing. If citizens have questions, they may be submitted to the chair.

Mr. Langill explained that in 2018 the town joined the opioid litigations and hired outside counsel to control and he ensured that the town wouldn't pay any more than other surrounding municipalities. In March of last year the town signed a settlement to bring money in through 2038. The state's opioid remediation represents 35% of the state's settlement and it was later increased to 40%. The town's portion is ½% and we have used this in efforts in making substantial progress in the area of substance abuse. In 2015 through 2017 the town received an average of 204 calls and experienced 33 deaths; compared to the time period of 2018 through 2021- we received 114 calls and experienced 12 deaths. Mr. Langill noted that he would like to expand on our efforts by utilizing ARPA funding.

He further explained that last year we lost the Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator and Ms. Jacobs filled that position in September. The position was upgraded to obtain the best possible candidate and it took a while for recruiting. The position is grant funded.

Ms. Jacobs presented via a handout that all members received that day. The total payments received thus far (billable through November) are \$250,123. Forecasted payments through 2038 total \$1,189,352. Other payor settlements (CVS, Walmart etc.) result in possible future settlements.

The Department of Public Health has stringent guidelines regarding fund disbursement:
-Opioid use disorder treatment
-support people in treatment/recovery
-connections to care

- harm reduction
- address the needs of criminal justice involved individuals
- support pregnant and parenting women and families including babies with neonatal abstinence syndrome
- prevent misuse of opioids and implement education for prevention

Weymouth is required to submit an annual report of expenditures of the prior fiscal year, commencing in FY 2023.

The following programs are approved for pilot:

- Weymouth Connect is a transportation program to link individuals to treatment centers
- social media
- communication campaigns
- increase efforts of peer recovery outreach programs
- expand on hours of operation for Bridge Clinic

Addiction medicine pharmacists are not approved to provide safer opioid prescribing guidelines.

Ms. Jacobs continued and explained that future programming options are:

- universal youth prevention programming which oversees prescription opioids and is DPH backed
- expand harm reduction
- provide youth mental health first aid
- collaborates with local fire stations as “Safe Stations”
- Police Shield training-gives tools to prevent overdoses and drives decisions and collects pertinent data
- hire a recovery coach with a peer to peer model

Possible partnerships are South Shore Health, Bay State Community Services, Weymouth sober homes, Manet Community Health Center and Wellspring Multi Service Centers. It was highlighted that going forward, as the Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator, it is very important to conduct needs assessment through focus groups, community feedback and Town Council/Mental Health and Substance Abuse Committee updates.

Mr. Langill noted that there is access to important updates, links and forms in the public folder. Chair Heffernan asked that these also be shared on social media. Administration is devising a section on the main page of the town’s website. Chair Heffernan pointed out that \$250,000 as part of the budget as a whole is miniscule and represents less than 1%. He extended his gratitude for the information provided to the committee.

Councilor Abbott asked about the distribution of funding—is it used solely for opioid prevention or also mental health treatment.

Ms. Jacobs explained that it would be strictly used for opioid treatment and there would be limitations on mental health versus opioid treatment. It was further noted that mental health treatment often overlaps with opioid treatment.

Mr. Langill noted that when there is an overdose the town sends someone to the residence in an effort to limit reoccurrence-this has been very successful. Going forward they will identify the need and base the budget on that, in an effort to handle this situation.

Councilor Happel noted his concern with the tobacco program from years ago which was only 2% of the budget. Ms. Jacobs stated that many lessons were learned from the tobacco program.

He asked that administration update the committee accordingly and Mr. Langill will update the committee and the website as things develop.

Councilor Kiely is happy that the numbers are decreasing as this is a critical situation and is glad to see the town's commitment. She said the sooner we get to our younger population, the better. She would like to see efforts with our Veterans. Ms. Jacobs confirmed that she has met with the Veteran's Director to capture that audience.

Councilor Molisse thanked administration for their proactive approach and he appreciates that the budget has incorporated this program.

Chair Heffernan noted that these issues are so important and asked that going forward it is requested that they update the committee, possibly appearing quarterly. No vote will be taken as this meeting was informational and he will report with an update later at Council.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:02 PM, there being no further business, Vice Chair Happel motioned to adjourn and motion was seconded by Councilor Kiely and unanimously voted.

Respectfully Submitted by Diane Hachey as Recording Secretary.

Approved by Christopher Heffernan as Chair of Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Approved unanimously on 6 February 2023
Attachments