

Jail Study Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes (same as Notes) – Approved 7-20-17
Thursday, June 15, 2017 5:00 PM
Legislature Chambers

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Rich John	Chair	Present
Anna Kelles	Vice Chair	Present
James Dennis	Member	Excused
David McKenna	Member	Present
Martha Robertson	Member	Present
Catherine Covert	Clerk of the Legislature	Present
Joe Mareane	County Administrator	Present
Paula Younger	Deputy County Administrator	Present
Patricia Buechel	Probation & Community Justice Director	Present
Ray Bunce	Jail Administrator	Present
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present
Dooley Kiefer	Legislator	Present

Guests: Benay Rubenstein, College Initiative Upstate Program; Diahann Hesler, TST BOCES; Sheila Vakharia, Long Island University Assistant Professor; Bill Rusen, CARS (Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services); Reed Steberger, City of Ithaca resident

Call to Order

Mr. John, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:19 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no member of the public who wished to speak.

Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Minutes Approval

May 11, 2017

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	David McKenna, Member
SECONDER:	Martha Robertson, Member
AYES:	John, Kelles, Dennis, McKenna, Robertson

Report on College Initiative Upstate Program

Benay Rubenstein distributed information pertaining to the College Initiative Upstate program and the new College Prep program. The mission is to promote economic security and stability, civic participation, leadership, and long-term success for formerly incarcerated people and their families

Minutes
Jail Study Committee
Thursday, June 15, 2017

through the elimination of individual and structural barriers to higher education.

Ms. Rubenstein provided an overview of the enrollment data during the 2016-2017 academic year. It is anticipated that 25-30 students will enroll for the Fall 2017 semester.

She briefly reported on the new College Prep ATI (Alternative-to-Incarceration) program that will begin in July 2017. It is a collaborative program of College Initiative Upstate, TST BOCES, and TC3 staff. Probation has offered the use of their Community Justice Center classrooms.

Ms. Kelles asked how many students in the College Initiative Upstate program are also working. Ms. Rubenstein said she could provide that information.

Report on Education Services Provided at the Jail

Diahann Hesler provided an overview of the programs TST BOCES offers within the Jail facility and distributed information. She spoke of the youth program offered and said the teacher works with all students in conjunction with the school district. If a student 16-21 years old is not enrolled in a school district, BOCES will work with the student to provide TASC (Task Assessing Secondary Completion) Prep education and exam.

She spoke of monthly meetings held with all service providers within the Jail to discuss what is on the docket and the needs of inmates. She believes that the services provided have improved and become more streamlined and partnerships have been built. Because of this effort, BOCES has added vocational training, case management upon exit, and incorporated re-entry services that includes weekly group session that focus on woman's empowerment group and conflict resolution skills. The BOCES teacher at the Jail has been able to get every student a one-to-one tutor; however, space is an issue, but it is hoped that there will be better success rates on tests. The tutors are volunteers through the Tompkins Learning Partners.

Ms. Hesler spoke of how important it is to have the educational programs offered at the Jail. She believes the more services that can be provided the better off people will be. The benefits include partnerships being formed, connecting with them as they transition, and serving their needs. In the three years she has been involved, she has seen a significant difference and programs are being run more efficiently and more people are being served. She spoke of the trainings that are offered and said they have a great relationship with all the service providers at the Jail.

She also stated that BOCES provides vocational training at McCormick and Finger Lakes Residential and the TASC Prep program. There are also two teachers at Day Reporting and there are discussions about adding more programming.

In response to Mr. John's question about what more would BOCES want to be more effective, Ms. Hesler said with additional funding there could be ongoing training, more mental health services, mandated educational services for the TASC program; however space would be a serious challenge.

Chair's Report

Mr. John reported on the Jail Study by CGR and said it is in process. A final review is being done and an executive summary is being prepared. It will be released publicly in early- to mid-July and the Committee will begin discussing it at the next meeting.

Understanding a Harm Reduction Approach to Drug Use Intervention

Dr. Sheila Vakharia provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled “Understanding a Harm Reduction Approach to Drug Interventions” and shared her philosophical view. She spoke of drug use being on a continuum and described the point in which drug use can be harmful noting use can vary from substance to substance and not all use is problematic or necessarily considered “abuse”. She explained that people use drugs for various reasons and how drug use is a meaningful activity to the user. One of the important principles of harm reduction is to understand what the role the drug has in the person’s life. She spoke to the relationships people have with drugs rather than an addiction to them. People who continue to use drugs matter. Abstinence is great, but it’s not for everyone. Not everyone is ready, willing, and able to abstain but everyone deserves help and compassion. If people are going to continue to use drugs, make sure they are safe and know how to reduce risk to self and others. Lastly, she spoke of Low Threshold Services. Systems of care should be on a continuum to have an impact and services and programs such as detox, treatment readiness groups, harm reduction groups, etc. need to be available. However, it is important not to selectively create programs that make us feel like we are helping, we need to find out what help is and think about how to get people to come to us.

Mr. Rusen said he found the presentation to be “illuminating”. In the addiction field he works in, they see the end-stage users. He agrees the concept of how drug use occurs needs to be looked at differently than in the past for both people coming in for treatment and those who are not. In response to Mr. Rusen, Ms. Vakharia commented that harm reduction does have a space for people who are never going to stop using.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.