

**FINAL Minutes of July 9, 2009**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jennifer Carroll, Chair; Carlos Colon (with Kettle Guerrin); Jack Frost; Jim Heffernan, Vice Chair; Tom Kalal; Peter H. O’Meara, Ex-Officio; Dr. John Pelegano, Secretary; Patrick Vingo; Ted Walen.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Morey, Sheila Mulvey, Lou Richards.

DDS STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Kathryn du Pree, Deputy Commissioner; Rod O’Connor, Legislative Liaison; Sarah Kasacek, Director of Investigations.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Jody Winn Rodiger from Creative Living Community of CT (CLCC) discussed her organization’s efforts to develop a community for adults living with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). She cited two grants that the organization had received, as start up funding to conduct a housing needs assessment for persons with ASD. This assessment is being conducted through a survey on the organization’s website, through the mail, through focus groups and with phone interviews. Tom Kalal asked for website information. Ms. Rodiger said the survey could be found at the CLCC website at: creativelivingcommunityofct.org.

Ted Walen asked about CLCC’s ideas for land and the size of the property needed for this community. CLCC is seeking a donation or a shared use of land in Manchester or Tolland County. The group is interested in serving adults with a focus on self-sufficient farming and artistic or creative endeavors. Jennifer Carroll asked if the group had connected with Friends of Autistic Persons (FAP) and Ms. Rodiger said that they had been in contact with the group. Mr. Kalal asked about the group’s interest in farmland in particular. CLCC wants to create a self-sustaining community while preserving the land and natural resources. This vision is in their mission statement.

Maryanne Ceván, Project Director, CLCC, shared a CLCC fact sheet, discussed the group’s mission and asked for a letter of support from the Council in their on-going efforts. Mr. Kalal asked about CLCC’s funding sources. The organization is seeking funding and has received some grant funding. Ms. Ceván asked for the Council’s assistance especially in regards to the housing needs assessment. CLCC would like both qualitative and quantitative information from the assessment process. Mr. Walen asked about whether national models for this type of community had been looked at and if they could be replicated in Connecticut. Ms. Ceván said they had looked at several models around the country. Ms. Carroll asked if the group was asking the Council for help. Ms. Ceván requested help with a letter of support for the housing needs assessment and any other collaboration with the Council.

Commissioner Peter O’Meara explained briefly the DDS service delivery system. DDS has knowledge of “intentional communities” and understands the importance of them for participating families. He suggested having CLCC meet with Kathy Reddington, DDS Autism Coordinator, and other DDS staff as well as DDS Council members to discuss ways of collaborating with CLCC.

APPROVAL OF JUNE MINUTES

Ms. Carroll asked for a review of the June minutes. Rod O'Connor indicated a few changes that corrected wording, grammar or were technical changes. He also reported a change Sheila Mulvey had requested. Dr. John Pelegano made a few suggestions, which were noted by Mr. O'Connor. Jim Heffernan recommended that the pages of the minutes be numbered. Jack Frost moved to accept the minutes as amended. Patrick Vingo seconded the motion, which was then approved unanimously.

OMBUDSPERSON REPORT

Ed Mambruno was unable to attend the Council meeting. Mr. Mambruno's June Ombudsperson Report will be e-mailed to Council members. At the September Council meeting, Mr. Mambruno will provide a combined July/August Ombudsperson Report

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (ROD O'CONNOR)

Mr. O'Connor prepared a written summary of this session's legislation. The veto override session is scheduled for July 20, 2009. In order to achieve an override, a super majority of each house needs to be present to vote. The budget session has not been scheduled and at the earliest would be towards the end of July. Any of the DDS bills that weren't passed during the regular session will probably not be in a budget implementer bill during a special session. The DDS Registry is continued at least through July 2012. Commissioner O'Meara assured Mr. Walen that the DDS Meriden property is not in the Conveyance bill.

Mr. Vingo asked about the article that was in Council Members' information packets. It is about privatization of DDS services and may be from the Connecticut Post.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner O'Meara introduced Captain Sarah Kasacek who has 29 years with the Department of Public Safety (DPS). She has extensive background as a trooper and a captain. She has worked in Internal Affairs and has a Masters in Public Administration. The Commissioner expressed his appreciation to the DPS for continuing this relationship between DPS and DDS. Connecticut is the only state with a formal relationship between the two departments to oversee and coordinate investigations.

The Commissioner noted that the department had expedited payments to private providers in the last month. In the Governor's budget allocation for July, DDS had received 100% of the department's allotment for private provider services and DDS private providers would be receiving 100% of their anticipated payments.

Commissioner O'Meara discussed the impact of the Retirement Incentive Program (RIP). The department lost 395 employees due to retirement, which is about 8% to 9% of the department's staff. DDS has developed its replacement plan and submitted it to OPM. The request is for 72 permanent refill positions and more than 160 temporary worker retirees (TWRs) rehired for 120 days at 75% of their former salary. The TWRs will be used primarily for direct care, nursing and clinical services. The long-range plan for residential services is to convert 16 CLAs from public to private operations as is reflected in the Governor's budget proposal. The Commissioner explained the conversion process, which was implemented in 2004 during the last retirement incentive program and the use of temporary worker retirees, which help the department reduce overtime and the costs associated with it.

Mr. Vingo asked about the cost savings, which Deputy Commissioner du Pree estimated to be approximately \$6 million. Mr. Hefferman asked about the distribution of the homes to be converted. The breakdown is eight CLAs in the West Region, four in the North Region and four in the South Region.

Commissioner O'Meara then referenced an op-ed piece about privatization, which was written by two legislators. Some of the cost comparison does not fully account for statewide department functions that are necessary for the total overall responsibilities of the department. It also doesn't reflect family support services that assist hundreds of families. The state also has contractual obligations to its employees. As the department implements a conversion plan, the administration needs to remain sensitive to the impact on families, consumers and employees who will be affected by change.

Mr. Walen asked the Commissioner to what extent will there be a need for residential and day services for new consumers during the next two years. DDS will rely on existing capacity, funding for school graduates and respite services.

Mr. Vingo commented on the trend to develop private services. The Commissioner indicated DDS would maintain core public services. There is a need for a safety net. Ms. du Pree discussed that regions' planning to provide specialized services to individuals who present challenging behaviors or medical conditions requiring specialized care. The Commissioner discussed the state's efforts to contain and reduce costs.

Dr. Pelegano asked how the homes for conversion were chosen. Ms. du Pree explained that a number of factors were taken into consideration including consumer need, location and environmental issues.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Kalal asked if there was any response to the Council's letters to legislators about case management services. Ms. Carroll shared that she received two responses, one from Senator Williams and one from Representative Guerrara.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Frost asked what support the Council could provide for the department's current initiatives. Commissioner O'Meara indicated that the Council's normal response to sentinel events and assistance and advocacy if the budget changes from what is projected now.

Ms. Carroll referred back to the speakers during the public comment period. If there were a departmental meeting with CLCC, Ms. Carroll, Mr. Walen, Mr. Kalal and Dr. Pelegano would like to join the department's representatives at this meeting.

Mr. Heffernan told the Council about HARC's celebration of Sara and David Hadden's 25 years of volunteerism.

Ms. Carroll offered to meet before the September meeting if there were any changes or new developments.

Mr. Kalal made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Walen seconded. The committee unanimously approved and Ms. Carroll adjourned the meeting at 7:55 PM.