

Maine Recovery Council

June 12, 2025

Chair Pat Kimball opened the meeting. The public comment section was the first agenda item, no one had signed up. The request was made to make an effort to advertise the opportunity to a wider audience. After a review of the agenda, the minutes of May 8, 2025 and the minutes of the special May 15, 2025 meeting were approved (McLoughlin/Blackwell-Moore, 10-0).

Board vacancies were announced. Three seats are currently vacant, no nominations have been received from the Governor's Office, the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House as yet. The positions of Vice-Chair and Treasurer were also vacant owing to resignations. Deb Poulin was nominated and elected as Treasurer (Everett/Fitzgerald, 10-0). Tess Parks was elected Vice-Chair (Hackett/Vinsel, 10-0).

Committee Reports were next. Paul Vinsel presented the Finance Committee report. He directed attention to the revised spreadsheet that reflected payouts of approximately \$6 million made in May 2025. There is still discussion regarding funding a position in the AG's office to coordinate budgets. Mary Coyne reported that she had received the Council files from the outgoing Treasurer and Grayson Havens of the AG's Office has agreed to step in and assist tracking the funds.

Paul then went on to report on the discussions of the Governance Committee. He suggested an adjustment to Section 4.6 of the Bylaws that references FOAA. By deleting the first sentence, "Public Notice shall be given of all meetings of 3 or more council members," the concern regarding a count of members would no longer impact Council activities. Brendan O'Neil agreed that this change would be appropriate. Grayson observed that as no notice of the possible change had been included in the meeting notice, the actual action would have to be postponed until next month. A second topic referenced members testifying at various venues. "Maine Recovery Council members may be asked by reporters to comment regarding Council business. When this occurs, the members should refer the reporter to the Executive Director... MRC members should avoid explicitly or implicitly stating that their statements represent a position of the MRC...If MRC members are asked to speak to legislatures, in their capacity as an MRC member regarding the member's particular expertise, the member should include the MRC Executive Director and the Chair in this discussion." There was general agreement this was appropriate.

The Programs and Grants Committee, reported Joe Everett, has not met for a month but would be reconvening in July.

Sara Yasner and Elizabeth Fortier reported next on their evaluation of the grant process. Sara explained the evaluation approach focused on surveys of grant applicants and Council member reviewer interviews. The grant applicants were sent sixteen-questions, forty-eight of one hundred eleven responded.

The review focused on the following categories:

- Application Structure and Format
- Support and Guidance
- Application timeline

Evaluation process
Accessibility
Application Review
Scoring Rubric and Evaluation Criteria
SMARTER Selection Grant portal
Decision-Making process

The grant reviewers answered ten questions. There were six external reviewers and nine Council members involved. On average, each reviewer read 25 applications, with an average review time of one hour. It was strongly suggested that an ideal number to review was ten and there should be five to six reviewers per application. Most reviewers agreed that the scoring rubric was helpful. Several suggestions were made in advance of this process occurring again: increasing the number of external reviewers; focusing on evaluators with specific expertise and/or lived experience; allowing more time for deliberation of lower scoring applications; having reviewers meet prior to the full Council; and reviewing all grant executive summaries prior to full Council discussion. A solution for holding program funded discussions open to the public and the unintended consequences of that discussion was not found. Pat thanked Sara for her work.

Mary presented her last Executive Director's report. She reported work was progressing on the MOU for the support coordinator position, the funding for which would come from the Maine Prevention Network funds and funnel through the Maine CDC. The motion to approve included funding over a three-year period (Blackwell-Moore/Vinsel, 9-0). A grant management RFP was reviewed. The contract term and renewals was clarified and accepted (Vinsel/Poulin, 9-0). The Governor's Summit will be held July 10 in Augusta. Chasity and Pat will be reviewing the past year and talking about lessons learned. Liz asked if it would be possible to have a few minutes for a short presentation summarizing the work of the Prevention subcommittee, she would provide a draft tomorrow. The July 11 MRC meeting will be held by zoom to eliminate the need for traveling two days in a row to Augusta.

Mary concluded her report with some reflections on her tenure with the Council. She suggested that the Council should be more than just a funding source, it should lead in thought and action, and find and bridge the gaps. Based on her interactions with other organizations doing the same work, she said the Council was unique within the context of settlement funds, and had the ability to support recovery efforts beyond the typical grant process. Several Council members added their appreciation for her work and her professionalism.

Liz provided an update on the schools portion of the funding and said they were ready to go. Paul mentioned his presentation before the Lewiston City Council regarding a syringe services program. He suggested funding, Maggie asked the role of the Council and thought the request ought to go to the Programs and Grants Committee first. Immediate grant requests need a mechanism, Pat observed that the Council started that process and then tabled it.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.