

Maine Recovery Council

August 14, 2025

Chair Pat Kimball opened the meeting and asked for Council members to introduce themselves. She then introduced the public comment portion of the meeting. Needlepoint Sanctuary's Willie Hurley spoke about the importance of supporting peer-led programs, especially in light of the cuts to federal funding programs. He also expressed some frustration in the directive that the term "harm reduction" was to be eliminated from the conversation. Sarah Lewis from the Maine Access Immigrant Network and Yvette Unezase from the Maine Association for New Americans, partners on a MRC grant that was awarded to Gateway Community Services, were present and spoke to their appreciation for funding. They represented several organizations (Sarah Lewis, Maine Association of Americans, and Gateway Community Services) who were working together to address the needs of immigrants and refugees.

The agenda was reviewed and the July minutes were approved (McLoughlin/Vinsel, 9-0). New committee assignments were approved (Fitzgerald/Vinsel, 9-0). A procedural clarification for Council members – individual financial disclosure forms were to be completed after leaving the Council as well as before joining. Liz reported that the schools subcommittee had been waiting for additional members, including a representative of the school districts.

The Programs and Grants Committee met July 29. Joe reported updates on contracts and mitigating details that delay funds being spent within time limits. Data synthesizing was the next item. Currently there is not enough staff time to manage the reporting needed. The Executive Director's chart was highlighted, Chasity did express disappointment that the executive order noting the term "harm reduction" was to be eliminated. It was noted that the order didn't really change what can be funded. Joe will send the actual verbiage of the order to the Council.

The Governance Committee met July 25. Paul introduced the Clerk of the Council issue and provided a language amendment to the bylaws, which he read into the record: "...appointed by the Chair of the Council and will be either a current member of the Council or a current member of the Council's staff. The Chair may change the Clerk appointee from time to time, and any such change may be altered by the council pursuant to Section 4.7 of these Bylaws." The motion to accept the change (McLoughlin/Fitzgerald, 10-0) passed unanimously. Next was the public forum. After a doodle poll, it was determined by consensus to hold the forum from 12-4pm on November 13, 2025 in Augusta. The location would have to have the capacity to host a Zoom connection and be a room large enough to accommodate attendees.

Several other issues were discussed. The issue of a needs assessment to guide priorities for the next funding cycle was sent to the Programs and Grants Committee for consideration. Returning to the first funding cycle discussion, a process was needed. Brendan clarified that the Council is not a state agency. A statute change would be needed. Representative Stover will be consulted. Existing language might be available. A change the MOU would need the approval of the litigating subdivisions. Tess encouraged a quick resolution to the issue as the next funding cycle was imminent. A motion was made to review the grant process particular to deliberations that could be exempt from public meeting requirements of FOIA (McLoughlin/Vinsel, 8-0).

The Executive Director's report covered a variety of items. Chasity asked how Council members wanted to receive information, particularly regarding funding, new requests, and funding re-distributions. Did members want a short email and a link to a file in Google docs? She also announced the Executive Committee would meet August 29 from 12-1:30 to review grant management services applications. Council access would be available via a YouTube live stream. A link to the webinar would be sent to those who register.

She said already requests had been received regarding additional funds. Liz suggested the Council needed to establish a process as it was clear the grants were for two-years. Brendan said new settlements were coming on line in 2026, approximately \$15 million over ten years. The Defendants were requiring all the litigating subdivisions had to sign in agreement. There is a formula with award reduction percentages should some choose not to participate.

Brendan described the challenges of the York County grant that had been reduced from \$1 million to \$300,000 during the grant award process. The opioid settlement funds are directed at uses that are evidence based opioid abatement activities. York County was developing a new facility focused on recovery support for the pre-incarcerated. They needed the funds to outfit the kitchen in the new facility. Following a robust discussion, it was agreed that a kitchen was a fundamental component of a recovery facility.

Elizabeth reported on the contracts. Fifteen are set for a September 12 start date. Three are finalized, six are being reviewed and seven are still in the draft stage. Reporting templates have been distributed and the first quarter deadline is the end of September. RWI (Recovery Wellness Initiative, aka Piscataquis County Recovery Center) did provide a report of their activities, having served over 1000. Their efforts have garnered the positive attention and support of the Sangerville area.

There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 pm.