

Maine Recovery Council

October 9, 2025

Vice-Chair Tess Parks opened the meeting and asked for members to introduce themselves. The public comment portion of the meeting featured several speakers. Jasmine Sinclair read a statement from Serenity Cushing from Dennysville describing her experience administering Narcan and her request for dollars to support recovery centers. Kirsten, from Deer Isle, Matthew, from Bangor, and Freow added their comments. Courtney Gary-Allen added her request that the Council continue to listen to the voices of young people. Several Council members thanked the speakers.

The agenda was reviewed. Minutes were approved (Everett/ Poulin, 12-0). Committee assignments were updated: Raegan LaRochelle was added to the Executive Committee, Jamar Williams was appointed to the Programs/Grants and Governance Committees (Everett/Fitzgerald, 12-0).

Committee reports came next. The Finance Committee (Deb Poulin) report showed \$5,961,603 allocated to contracts, \$21,942.79 for staff expenses and a stacap standard of \$28,301.11. Joe asked about interest dollars being generated, could that be broken out and what was the rate of interest? Could the Council shop for a higher rate? The former Treasurer was informed that was not possible according to Brendan. Deb said she would have that information for the next meeting.

The Programs/Grants Committee (Joe Everett) described their work scoring and evaluating proposals from PCG and Berry Dunn for grant management services. The applicants were asked to provide additional information, particularly addressing the numbers of hours needed in relation to the work load. Chasity asked that, based on the new information provided by the applicants, would any evaluator change a score. That question elicited a robust discussion that covered a wide range of opinions and perspectives. Gathering additional information and adjusting scores is permissible, a good practice and part of the process said Brendan. Maggie added that vendors would not have seen the others' scores or heard the weaknesses. Understanding the need to make a decision in order to move forward, the motion was made. The five reviewers would incorporate the new information and update their scores as necessary and transmit their scores to the Executive Director, the highest score would indicate the winning vendor and the contract would be awarded pending a successful negotiation (Everett/McLoughlin, 11-1).

Tess provided the Governance Committee report and explained the proposed by-law change. Pat explained that the change would facilitate a more efficient process for processing paperwork. When asked, it was clarified that the Executive Director could only sign pre-approved actions.

Addition to Section 5.4 Chair: The Chair may designate the Executive Director to approve, within limits established by the Council or the Chair, such routine or preapproved expenditures as the Chair deems appropriate (including reasonable travel expenses, administrative expenses, and payments to vendors and grantees previously authorized by the Council). Any such designation must require periodic reporting to the Chair of all delegated approvals. (Fitzgerald/Everett, 12-0).

Liz reported that the school funding sub-committee will be meeting to talk about an agenda and membership within the next two weeks. They have identified a schools representative and will be holding a public meeting. Melissa encouraged others to join the committee.

In the Executive Director's report, the first item was the distribution of \$225,000 originally designated for the SSPs that lost their certification. A new SSP, Kennebec Behavioral Health has not received certification as of yet. Maggie recused herself, citing a conflict of interest prior to the discussion. Pat suggested splitting the funds among the programs not currently receiving funding, Raegan inquired as to whether the funds needed to be spent now, they are already allocated was the response. By consensus, it was agreed that the question be referred to the Programs/Grants Committee for more discussion and a recommendation to the Council.

Tess recognized Gordon Smith. Gordon explained that the landscape has changed since December, 2023 in that there is no HEAL, no COSi and a presidential election. The dollars allocated to HEAL were never paid and ought to be made available to the Bangor area groups stepped up to meet the needs. Gordon mentioned the financial report, said he had met with Sanford and Lewiston this past week and, based on other factors, the harm reduction pillar was most at risk.

Continuing the report, Chasity explained that the MeCDC MOU needed attention. The motion: "...To approve the updated budget/cost allocation from the MeCDC for their MOU with the Maine Recovery Council. Of the \$1,000,000 total project amount, \$335,000 shall be allocated in year 1 for the Project Coordinator position, and \$645,000 shall be allocated in year 2 to fund state and local prevention efforts." The motion passed unanimously (Kimball/Poulin, 11-0).

Elizabeth explained the need for formal approval to correct a mathematical error to the Maine Pretrial Services contract. The motion: "...To increase the grant award for Maine Pretrial Services, from \$65,000 to \$75,000, to reflect the award amount currently listed in their grant contract", (Option #2), passed unanimously (Kimball/Fitzgerald 10-0).

Council members were informed that freedom of information training would now be required following the Legislature's new mandate. Online training may be an option. More information will be forthcoming.

There was no new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 pm.

Testimony to Maine Recovery Council

10/09/25

Good Afternoon Chairperson Parks and members of the Maine Recovery Council,

Hi everyone, and thank you for giving me the space to speak today.

My name is Kiersten and I am from a small island in Maine, named Deer Isle. I am here because I want to use my voice and presence to stand up for what is right. Addiction speaks to me specifically as I know and love many who suffer from substance abuse.

I'm here as a community member—and as someone who refuses to let youth voices be left out of the conversation when it comes to opioid settlement decisions. Because this isn't just about dollars and programs—it's about real lives. It's about the kids growing up in homes where addiction is present. The kids who are often the quietest in the room because they don't fully understand what's happening around them.

We talk about prevention. We talk about treatment. But what we're missing is education—*education that empowers kids* to recognize what they're living through and speak up without fear. Because here's the truth: *a child will not advocate for themselves if they think speaking up means getting taken away.* They need to know that help doesn't mean punishment. That support doesn't mean separation.

And support can't just be for the individual—it has to be for the whole family. Addiction isn't a one-time issue; it's a *lifelong disease*. There is no magic cure. A person who has used substances, whether in active use or recovery, is still fighting that battle every single day.

Testimony to Maine Recovery Council

So let's stop pretending we can "fix" people—and instead start building systems that teach, support, and most of all, love.

Programs funded by these settlements need to reflect that reality. They need to include youth voices. They need to focus on long-term care, not just crisis response. And they need to be built with compassion—not shame.

Programs similar to Family-Based Recovery Programs. However not exactly as this program is sadly flawed. We need this program for the community—and not just for a select age group, but for families of all ages. We often speak about supporting our community's adolescents, yet we face restrictive requirements that limit our ability to do so. Currently, children must be between 72 months and 6 years old to participate. But addiction — and the impact it has on families — does not have an age limit.

It's time we acknowledge that every family, regardless of the child's age, deserves access to the same level of support, education, and opportunity. This program provides more than resources — it offers hope. And hope is not only wanted; it is desperately needed

If we truly want to see change, *don't settle without us*. Don't settle without the voices of the kids who are living this. Because we're not just the future—we're the present. And we deserve to be heard.

Thank you.

Kiersten Heroux
Deerisle, Maine

Good afternoon, Councilwoman Parks and members of the Council.

My name is Mathew Davis, and I live in Bangor, Maine. I'm here today to speak about the opioid settlement and how I believe the funds should be used.

This issue is very personal to me. I have friends, family members, and acquaintances who are in recovery from opioids and alcohol. I've seen the struggles they face and the strength it takes to rebuild their lives. I also live in low-income housing, and in my neighborhood, opioids are a real problem. We've had overdoses in our community, and while I haven't had to respond personally, I did witness one when I was younger — and it left a lasting impact on me.

I believe this settlement money should go toward helping low-income individuals and families who are in recovery from opioids and other substances. These funds could be used to support housing, food, transportation, treatment, and other essential needs. When people are trying to recover, having stability in these basic areas can make the difference between relapse and lasting recovery.

Investing in recovery support for low-income Mainers would save lives, strengthen families, and improve the safety and well-being of our entire community. This funding is an opportunity to bring real change to the people and neighborhoods that have been hit the hardest by the opioid crisis.

Please consider directing this money toward programs that help people recover and rebuild their lives. Doing so would make Bangor — and Maine as a whole — a stronger, safer, and more compassionate place to live.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to this important issue.