

Fall River Opioid Settlement Funds Advisory Committee Meeting

Location: Fall River Government Center *REDACTED* (with Zoom remote video option)

Date: Tuesday, January 23rd, 2024

Time: 4:15 PM

Attendees: Brianna Raposo, Tess Curran, Seth Aitken, Michael Coughlin, Maria Ferreira-Bedard, Father Rob Nemkovich, Kim Smith, Lynn Iadicola, Keith Parker, Raquel Pellerin, Ashley Simons-Rudolph (PIRE)

Absent: Trott Lee

Minutes:

- **Meeting opened by Brianna Raposo:** 8 members attended the meeting in person and 1 member plus Ashley from PIRE joined via Zoom. Reviewed the meeting agenda.
- **Attendee Introductions:** Attendees provided a brief introduction to the group.
- **Presentation by PIRE Team on SWOT Analysis and SMART Goals:** Ashley Simons-Rudolph from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) presented a supplemental report that highlights findings of their first evaluation report from June 2023. The SWOT analysis and SMART goals were explained in detail in a report titled “Fall River SMART Goals for use of the Opioid Settlement Funds.” The report was sent out ahead of the meeting and will also be sent out with the minutes.
 - Members are encouraged to review the full report before the next meeting. Ashley reviewed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats determined from the initial stakeholder interviews conducted for the evaluation report.
 - Stakeholders identified Fall River as a regional “hub” for people seeking assistance with a broad range of available support services. Limited interagency cooperation and information sharing were the key weaknesses determined. Convening this Committee is one step in addressing the opportunities brought by the stakeholders. Also, there is a recommendation for a paid position created for the administration and oversight of these settlement funds and related programming. Threats include agency competition and stigma regarding those who use drugs.
- **Committee Discussion Points:**
 - Keith raised concerns about the lack of collaboration between many local agencies who are already involved in OUD related work. As a close collaborator with these agencies, he has seen hesitancy from agencies and organizations to publicly share data and information through intra-agency cooperation. Additionally, he has seen a strain on the network of resources from an influx of people outside of Fall River coming to the City for services. Kim highlighted the importance of recognizing that the Committee likely does not have the full picture of what agencies are doing with their programming and how successful they are because that information is not publicized. Father Rob and additional Members agree that requesting and collecting data from grantees on their

services and the populations they serve would be an important part of the grant agreement in the future. Tess indicated that the FAST (Fall River Addiction Support and Treatment) Team is working with a new software platform that would expand their data sharing processes. Ashley indicated that including data requests in the RFP is something that can be added ahead of the release.

- Michael suggested encouraging interagency cooperation through the grants, rather than adding to any existing competition. Tess presented the possibility of working within an existing Shared Services Agreement to partner with Swansea and Seekonk (if they are also interested) to take a regional approach by pooling all our funds. Ashley highlighted the opportunity to prioritize scoring the applications based on “plans to meaningfully collaborate with at least one other organization.”
- The suggestion from stakeholders to hire a specific administrator to oversee the settlement funds from the financial side but also as a grantee manager was discussed. Seth felt like the job functions would fall under two separate roles: one more legal/financial focused and another more on grant programming and grantee assessment needs. Maria highlighted that someone in that role should have a sense of the current local landscape and work as a liaison between grantees, the community, and the work of other agencies. Raquel proposed a question on how grantees would be expected to report back their spending and how that would be tracked. Kim explained the typical grant process would allow for grantees to submit projected program budgets with their proposals, funds would be dispersed, and then there would be follow-up requirements that would report actual spending. This spending would be compared to the projected budgets and flags could be raised. This would be one key task of someone hired to this specific staff position. Members seem to agree that hiring a full-time person for this position, nested under the Health Department and Tess’s guidance and management, makes sense.
- **Review of Reporting Dashboard and Meeting 1 Q&As:**
 - Brianna Raposo presented the [Municipal Opioid Abatement Funds Data Dashboard](#). This dashboard includes submitted expenditure report data from all Massachusetts municipalities taking part in the statewide opioid settlements.
 - The dashboard is limited to the fiscal year 2023 reporting period but will be updated at least annually to include future expenditures.
 - Members are encouraged to explore the interactive map to learn more about how other municipalities have or have not spent their allocations. Most municipalities have reported \$0 spent for FY23.
 - Brianna reviewed information put together in response to questions posed by Members in the last meeting.
 - The document reviewed the financial management strategy of the stabilization fund that holds the settlement money, possible public input options to explore in the future, and the expected future payment timeline in more detail. This document titled “FROSFAC Meeting 2 Q&A” will be sent out with the minutes.

- All spending from the stabilization fund must get Mayoral approval and must go in front of the City Council. The Committee will have to work out a process to request funds and/or receive approval for their recommendations. Raquel brought up issues with possible FOIA disclosures that might conflict with some of the data and sensitive information the RFP would request. Seth suggested providing the City Council with a summary of the goals and activities of the Committee and the grants that serve as a request for a lump sum of spending per cycle.
 - Additionally, the spreadsheet “Opioid Settlement Funds Year Payments” will be included for future reference. These payments are still projections until the settlements are out of arbitration. As of this meeting, 5 settlements are still in some stage of negotiation.
- **Future Meeting Schedule:** Meetings will be held *REDACTED* **every month.**
 - Barring any conflicts, future dates will include:
 - *REDACTED*
 - All meetings will be held *REDACTED*
 - Members are encouraged to attend the meetings in-person; however, we will have a Zoom video call option for those unable to meet at *REDACTED*
 - Below is the **standing Zoom link** that should work for every upcoming meeting:
Join Zoom Meeting
REDACTED
- **Important Links:**
 - [Guidance for Municipalities Utilizing Opioid Settlement Abatement Payments](#)
 - [Frequently Asked Questions About the AG's Statewide Opioid Settlements](#)
 - [Learn about the AG's Statewide Opioid Settlements with Opioid Industry Defendants | Mass.gov](#)
 - [Massachusetts Abatement Terms document \(mass.gov\)](#)
 - [Municipal Abatement Payments | Mass.gov](#)
 - [3.7.2023 MA Statement Opioid Settlement Funds Forum.pdf \(mass.gov\)](#)
 - [Appropriation of Opioid Settlement Funds - MAHB](#)
 - [Municipal Opioid Abatement Funds Data Dashboard](#)