



PALM BEACH COUNTY'S PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT
Palm Beach County Reentry Task Force

July 28, 2021, 12:00-1:30PM
WebEx Virtual Meeting

Summary Meeting Minutes

Members & Guests Present:

Chair, Dr. Angela Bess, Palm Beach County School District
Vice Chair, Gregory Starling, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
Adam Davis, PBC Library
Alan Johnson, State Attorney's Office
Alia Spencer, Palm Beach State College
Alicia Reno,
Armando Fana, City of West Palm Beach
Arnia Perpignand, Florida Department of Corrections
Ashley Houlihan, Supervisor of Elections Office
Bert Winkler, Criminal Justice Commission
Calli Cain, Florida Atlantic University
Calvin Sloan, Florida Atlantic University
Carey Haughwout, Office of the Public Defender
Cassandra Atkin-Plunk, Florida Atlantic University
Charisse Van Biesen, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
Charles Vercillo, Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
Craig Spatara, GEO Group
Darren Romelus, Palm Beach County Fire Rescue
Dhiny Mercedes, CareerSource of Palm Beach County
Elizabeth Hopkins, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Emily McBay, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Erika Ray, The Lord's Place
Fernando DeCardenas, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Geeta Loach-Jacobson, PBC Youth Services Department
Jacqueline Jackson, Criminal Justice Commission
Jeanette Marshall, Healthier Neighbors
Jennifer Loyless, Office of the Public Defender
Joey Nieves, The Lord's Place
Judge Jeffery Dana Gillen, 15th Judicial Circuit
Judge Kathleen Kroll, 15th Judicial Circuit
Julia Dattolo, CareerSource PBC
Kevin Jones, City of West Palm Beach
Kimberly Comer, NAMI

Laura Waterman, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Linda Porter, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Lynn Trimble, Choice to Change
Maggie Witherow, Restoration Destination
Marcia Bahia, Palm Beach Sheriff's Office
Marsha Martino, National alliance on Mental Illness: PBC Chapter
Negaysha Walcott, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Nikki Girard, The Lord's Place
Orie Bullard, The Reentry Center of Riviera Beach
Oswald Newbold, The Reentry Center of Riviera Beach
Pam Berry, Salvation Army
Peter Noel, Alpha & Omega House
Ramona La Roche, African American Research Library, Broward County
Regenia Herring, Criminal Justice Commission
Rishma Holt, Community member
Rosalind Murray, Criminal Justice Commission
Sade Lyons, The Lord's Place
Serena Marlow, Florida Department of Corrections
Shirlon St. Amour, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
Tamara Starks, Palm Beach Sheriff's Office
Tarcel King, The Lord's Place
Wenfred Dorsey, The Lord's Place
William Freeman, The Reentry Center of Riviera Beach

Public Safety Department Staff Present:

Arlene Griffiths, PBC Public Safety Department
Chenise Bonilla, PBC Public Safety Department
Jessica Hidalgo, PBC Public Safety Department
Nicole Bishop, PBC Public Safety Department
Randi Taylor, PBC Public Safety Department
Sarah Sanchez, PBC Public Safety Department
Stephanie Sejnoha, PBC Public Safety Department

I. Welcome, Opening Comments, and Introductions

Chair Dr. Angela Bess, PBC School *District* extended welcome to all and invited members and guests to sign their names in the chat box in lieu of roll call.

II. Approval and/or Additions to the Preliminary Agenda

Agenda was unanimously approved.

III. Approval and/or Corrections to the 4/28/2021 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. PBC Reentry Task Force's Chair – Term Expiration

Dr. Bess announced the end of her term as chair of the Reentry Task Force, and asked members to think about nominations for the October meeting. She recommended that Public Defender Carey Haughwout consider the position of Chair, highlighting the need for a strong, passionate individual, given the many challenges facing reentry at this time. Ms. Bonilla thanked Dr. Bess for her service, and asked if there are any individuals interested and stated that nominations and appointment will take place at the next meeting.

V. Meredith Powers-Lupo, Chair, Sexual Offenses Subcommittee

Chair Dr. Bess announced that Ms. Power-Lupo has stepped up as the new chair of the Sexual Offenses Subcommittee, and thanked former Chairman Ted Rodarm for his services.

VI. FDC Sago Palm Reentry Center - Introduction and Updates

Assistant Warden Serena Marlow provided update on Sago. Florida Department of Corrections and Palm Beach State College have partnered to offer HVAC and plumbing certification programs at the facility. NCCER online testing started. New Second Chance Pell program coming in August 2022 for hospitality management, culinary arts, and tourism. Ms. Griffiths commented about the recent reentry seminar held at Sago, to which AW Marlow noted will take place on a quarterly basis, targeting the participation of various resource partners such as the Clerk's Office to inform residents of obligations and options for paying fines and fees, to allow them to obtain their driver's license. Further discussion with regards to informing residents about their fines and fees prior to release ensued, and it was noted that DMV was going to Sago prior to COVID-19 in preparation of getting their license, and are in the process of resuming the visits. Public Defender added that the PD's Office is trying to get the community service hours approved prior to release.

VII. Engagement at other FDC Facilities (excluding Sago)

Public Defender Haughwout expressed concerns with the low number of enrollments, and highlighted the importance of engaging individuals prior to release. Various ways of engagement were explored, and a work group was established to further look into the matter to determine other effective ways of doing outreach, including the use of technology. Mr. William Freeman remarked about the benefits of including individuals with lived experience, to show that reentry programs work. Ms. Kimberly Comer, Program Manager of NAMI PBC and a returning citizen herself, advised of her experience working at state and national level. She mentioned the forensic peer specialists that are certified through the Florida Certification Board as peer specialists with lived experiences, and suggested that they too be involved in the engagement process. She also advised that a Forensic Endorsement curriculum that was recently completed for the Florida Certification

Board and said that the Department of Children and Families is looking to incorporate it into the peer specialist certification. Mr. Oswald Newbold shared his experience with engaging individuals at the County jail, using video visitation through the Public Defender's Office. He also remarked about the presentation of letters going to the prisons and provided suggestions on how to capture the attention of individuals so that the letters don't get thrown in the trash. Ms. Arnia Perpignand discussed FDC's Reentry Initiative, which involves the designation of five mentoring sites, which would include the South Florida Reception Center. Contact for this initiative is Nicole Landrum. Ms. Bonilla discussed an overview of the current reentry outreach process for state prisons.

VIII. PBC Reentry Task Force By-Laws

Ms. Nicole Bishop remarked about the recent undertaking to amend the bylaws, noting that upon review of suggested amendments, it was pointed out by Director Stephanie Sejnoha that some changes such as membership, require approval from the Board of County Commissioners. This is due to a resolution that moved reentry from the Criminal Justice Commission to Public Safety Department, as well as another resolution that dictates the number of individuals to serve on county boards, task forces, and subcommittees. She highlighted the current members included in the bylaws, and stated that while this amendment can be made, it involves a further step in obtaining this approval. Director Sejnoha provided further explanation noting that the Board prefers membership of 9 to 11 members, and cautioned against having non-voting members vote on matters before the Taskforce.

IX. Reentry Program Office Updates

Ms. Bonilla provided an update of the recent work completed by the program office. This included upgrades to the RENEW database, completion of multiple funders reports, hosting of case manager workshop, trainings, meetings and other administrative duties. She also mentioned the new vocational programs at Sago Palm Reentry Center through Palm Beach State College, and the Road Map to Restoration initiative by FDC where Secretary Inch will hold a community conversation in Palm Beach County.

X. Subcommittee Updates

- **Employment, Training, & Education Subcommittee** – Chair Dhiny Mercedes of CareerSource highlighted the progress made with employers that are willing to provide transitional jobs and on the job training to returning citizens. He also provided an update on the job readiness program offered by CareerSource at Sago, as well as the HVAC training available.
- **Sustainability Subcommittee** – Vice Chair Tamara Starks Palm Beach Sheriff's Office reviewed the subcommittee's objectives and progress made.
- **Data & Evaluation Subcommittee** – Chair Jennifer Loyless of the Public Defender's Office reported that Dr. Atkin-Plunk of FAU is moving towards the end of task one of the Task Force's agreement with FAU in terms of creating an improved data framework. To date she has conducted focus groups with various stakeholders and is scheduled to conduct one with case managers in August. Feedback will also be sought from past reentry participants. This will culminate in an evaluation of the reentry program.

- **Youth Reentry Subcommittee** – Chair, Honorable Kathleen Kroll, 15th Judicial Circuit, discussed that the major efforts towards achieving the objectives are focused on improving the pre-release engagement process with youth, enhancing education /employment/vocation opportunities for reentry youth in PBC, improving the leveraging of county resources to best support and serve PBC youth housed at Palm Beach Youth Academy, defining services and processes, and continuing to build the framework to move committed youth closer to home in PBC. She also discussed connections with Broward County’s Youth Reentry Program to coordinate and gather information on innovative practices in reentry. Judge Kroll mentioned taking a look at the Roadmap of Reentry for youth, in reference to FDC’s Roadmap to Restoration efforts. Vice Chair, Geeta Loach-Jacobson added that the committee is looking at various data points, outcomes and how to measure these outcomes to ensure that the youth are successful.
- **Housing Subcommittee** – Chairman Armando Fana of the City of West Palm Beach reported on available resources identified that he is cautiously optimistic about, including emergency vouchers that have been issued to local housing authorities that can be used for reentry. He reported having conversation with two housing authorities in this regard. He advised that newly appointed HUD Secretary Fudge, has outlined guidance about the utilization of these vouchers for the reentry population as well as additional actions to address resources for reentry. Since this has become a focus for HUD, he is hopeful that individuals will realize benefits over the next few years. He also advised that the City of West Palm Beach has partnered with the PBC and Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network on a project on North Tamarind Avenue that recently had a ribbon cutting ceremony for the facility to provide 22 units for homeless individuals with behavioral health issues. He said that it was a good private, public partnership that he hopes can be replicated as it required very little public funding. He feels that with the potential resources coming from federal government will prove beneficial for returning citizens. The subcommittee is also working with the local housing authorities in loosening up their restrictions to allow reentry participants access to public housing.

AW Marlow remarked about the struggle with returning residents finding deposits for rentals when they are released. Chair Fana mentioned resources available in that regard.
- **Sexual Offenses Subcommittee** – In Chair’s absence, Ms. Griffiths reported that Ms. Meredith Powers-Lupo of West Palm Beach Veterans Affairs is the new chair of the subcommittee, and applauded her for the work she has been doing during the absence of former chairman Rodarm. She also provided an update on the COSA program, reporting a total of 50 volunteers and the near start of the first circle. She also mentioned a legislation regarding regular movement of individuals required to register that failed, and highlighted the continued challenges for individuals with sexual offenses.

XI. Additional Member and Guest Comments

- a) Ms. Maggie Witherow of Restoration Destination inquired about the homeless individuals with sexual offenses camping under a bridge. It was pointed out that

individuals with sexual offenses that are required to register, are currently housed in tents under the bridge at Southern Boulevard and Haverhill.

- b) Ms. Ramona La Roche discussed the African American Research Library's recent event with special guest Desmond Meade, President and Executive Director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, and author of *Let My People Vote*, in Broward County.

XII. Next Steps

a) Recap Action Items

- i. Create a small workgroup to improve and evolve the reentry outreach process at FDC facilities, to include innovative communication technology, video reentry marketing, family postcards, letter improvements, connection with South Florida Reception Center mentoring, and incorporating use of peer specialists and relentless engagement practices
 - 1. Anyone interested in participating in this workgroup, please email Arlene Griffiths: agriffiths@pbcgov.org
- ii. Chenise will distribute PBC Reentry Task Force Resolutions pertinent to bylaw reforms
- iii. Invite *Chair Dhiny Mercedes*, Employment, Training, and Education Subcommittee, to next Youth Reentry Subcommittee meeting
- iv. Reentry Task Force members shall prepare for making and approving nominations for new RTF Chair at next meeting on October 27, 2021

b) Next Meeting Date: October 27th

XIII. Adjournment