



Mayor's Opioid Task Force

October 21, 2024

**Bristol City Hall
111 N Main Street
Bristol, CT 06010**

MINUTES

In Attendance: (in person) Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano, Stephen Bynum, Chad Layton, Sandra Kames, Lt. Robert Osbourne, Nicolas Travisano, Monica Finkle, Maria Theam.

Via zoom: Marisa Ortiz, Jessica CHW BBHD, Lisa Coates, Christie Ganavage, Tina Tanguay.

1. Call to Order and Member Introduction.

The meeting was called to Order at 5:01 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Acceptance of July 15, 2024 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION to approve the July 15, 2024 Minutes by Sandy, Seconded by Chad.

All in Favor. Motion Carries.

3. Update Items

a. Cobra & Bristol Police Partnership

Mayor Caggiano announced that Lt. Osbourne is set to be promoted to Deputy Chief.

Lisa Coates has prepared a box of flyers for police officers to distribute, directing people to our opioid awareness website. EMS and the Police Department already have these flyers, and additional boxes are available. She is seeking input on further distribution opportunities. The Bristol-Burlington Health District (BBHD) has expressed interest in receiving a box, and arrangements will be made for pickup. Stephen Bynum and Chad have also requested boxes to distribute at Community Services and the Elks Lodge. Additionally, the Mayor suggested distributing the flyers at local homeless shelters. Lisa mentioned that Wheeler is offering a Suboxone program, and the flyers can help spread awareness of this resource.

Lt. Osbourne also discussed the important work of our community wellness officers, Officer Travisano (day shift) and Officer Finkle (night shift), who focus on supporting

individuals facing crises and mental health challenges. They are actively collaborating with local organizations such as Agape, Brian's Angels, and St. Vincent de Paul to assist those in need. Officer Travisano highlighted their efforts, and Officer Finkle introduced herself as part of the evening wellness team. Community members are encouraged to contact dispatch for their services.

Chad also shared news about a clothing drive at the Elks Lodge and welcomed suggestions for donations. In addition, he is organizing a Christmas event for three families in need during the holidays and is seeking contributions to support these families.

b. B.E.S.T

Stephen Bynum provided an update on **Red Ribbon Week** and the ongoing efforts in substance prevention, highlighting the theme, "Life is a Movie, Film Drug Free." He discussed a new **four-point program**, which includes the installation of vape detectors in school bathrooms. Students caught vaping are now offered an alternative to suspension through this program, which reduces suspension time if they participate. A parent involvement component is also being added to the program.

Stephen also commended the police department for their compliance checks at local smoke shops, noting that only one shop in Bristol was found to be out of compliance, indicating that the message is making an impact.

The Mayor addressed Chad's suggestion to invite a Rocky Hill police officer, Officer Foss-Rugan, as a potential speaker to discuss drug prevention and compliance initiatives.

c. Mayor's Update

The **Journey Home** initiative remains ongoing, with recent progress made in cleaning up local homeless encampments. However, a larger issue persists on state-owned property. During a recent visit, the Governor and Mayor participated in the "Trail Wars" Challenge, and discussed the possibility of expanding the Journey Home initiative to address the encampment near Route 72, which the Governor took an interest in.

Through the **Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee**, \$200 million has been collected, with an additional \$400 million anticipated. Efforts are underway to secure interest in utilizing these funds to further support the Journey Home program. However, the state is cautious due to recent concerns regarding the mismanagement of funds by the social equity sector.

Our overarching goal is to transform the approach to homelessness by providing support for individuals struggling with substance use, including access to treatment. We are focused on ensuring that the opioid settlement funds are used effectively to prevent future deaths and address the root causes of these issues.

Sandy also referenced a recent article highlighting staffing shortages at Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH), which could impact the availability of treatment services.

4. New Business – Mayor discussed the schedule for 2025/2026 which is as follows: Tuesday January 21, 2025 at 5pm. The meeting would normally be on the third Monday of the month, but that date falls on Martin Luther King Jr's birthday, which is a holiday. Monday April 21, 2025 at 5:00 p.m., July 21, 2025, at 5pm, and Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – again being held on a Tuesday due to the holiday.

MOTION to approve new schedule by Chad, second by Sandy. All in favor. None Opposed. Motion Carries.

5. Old Business

Tina Tanguay reported that there have been five overdoses in October, with one fatality. In September, the numbers were significantly higher, with 20 overdoses and five fatalities, while August also saw 20 overdoses and three fatalities. In July, there were 13 overdoses and two fatalities. Tina noted that historically, September tends to have the highest number of overdoses. Although earlier this year we had zero fatalities, the recent rise is still not as severe as last year's figures. The Mayor requested insights into the possible causes of this trend.

Sandy expressed concern that there may be a substance more dangerous than fentanyl circulating on the streets but was unsure of its name. Tina mentioned additional substances they are seeing such as Zylazine, Nitazene, Metatomadine, and BTMPs, which are not used for medical purposes and are commonly found in plastics and is now being found in the Fentanyl supply. There are also concerns that cocaine is being spiked with Fentanyl. A lot of the deaths have been cocaine-based users overdosing on opioids. Of the five fatalities in September, four were associated with cocaine use, and the fifth involved a known cocaine user. The Mayor emphasized the importance of disseminating this information to the public.

Stephen offered to collaborate with Tina to create a public outreach message and provide resources to raise awareness. Lisa Coates added that once the message is developed, they can share it across Facebook and Instagram to maximize reach.

It was also noted that the number of overdoses in October has dropped significantly as the month nears its end. Efforts are being made to encourage users to test their cocaine for other drugs using test strips.

6. Announcements

Chad discussed his clothing drive and proposed inviting the police officer from Rocky Hill for a speaking engagement. He emphasized the importance of enhancing communication between the committee and the Elks Lodge to foster collaboration and initiate projects effectively. The Mayor suggested establishing an email distribution list to facilitate announcements and updates between meetings.

Lt. Osbourne announced that there will be a prescription take-back day on Saturday, October 26, 2024, from 10 AM to 1 PM at the Walgreens located on Farmington Avenue. Additionally, a green bin will be available in the lobby for convenient disposal.

Officer Travisano reported on a meeting with the Wheeler Clinic scheduled for this week, where they will inquire about resources that may be beneficial. Tina also mentioned that there will be a Bristol Employee flu clinic on October 29, 2024, at Bristol Eastern High School from 2:30 PM to 5 PM, which is free for employees.

7. Adjournment

MOTION to Adjourn by Lt. Osbourne, Seconded by Sandy, and the meeting was so adjourned at 5:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maria Theam, recording secretary