

Mayor's Opioid Task Force Meeting

January 21, 2025

City Hall

111 N Main Street

Bristol, CT 06010

Room 1-3

MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Member Introduction

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The members then introduced themselves as follows: Christy Burns, Sandy Kamens, Chief Mark Morello, Chad Layton, Matt Norton, Stephanie Carol, Deedra Willingham, Tina Tanguay, Lisa Coates.

2. Acceptance of the October 21, 2024 Minutes.

Motion to Accept the minutes by Sandra Kamens, second by Chief Mark Morello, all in favor. None opposed. Motion carries and Minutes are accepted.

3. Update Items

A. Cobra & Bristol Police Partnership

Lisa Coates provided an update regarding an individual who recently visited the firehouse seeking assistance with substance-related challenges. Officer Travisano, one of the department's wellness officers, responded to the call. The individual was transported for evaluation but did not require admission. They were subsequently connected with community resources, including Wheeler Clinic, to ensure ongoing support.

B. BEST

Deedra shared that they have created a Public Service Announcement (PSA) on opioid education, which will be distributed to members following the meeting. They are considering sharing the PSA via social media. Additionally, Deedra provided information about Southington's campaign, which is organizing a meeting with legislators on February 5, 2025, as part of Prevention Advocacy Day. This event will include a breakfast and discussions with legislators about emerging drug trends. Deedra mentioned participating in a related call last week. While the Youth Coalition expressed interest in sending a representative to the event, Deedra is unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.

C. Mayors Update

A total of \$56 million will be allocated to assist individuals experiencing homelessness who are also struggling with opioid-related issues. The Mayor collaborated with the Governor to secure these funds. This initiative builds on the success of the Journey Home program, which was spearheaded by the task force.

Regarding the opioid settlement funds, the committee has engaged in discussions about effectively utilizing the significant amount of funding received. Over the past two years, the committee has fulfilled \$21 million in requests. During their analysis, they noted a 13% increase in homelessness over the last year, with many affected individuals also dealing with opioid-related challenges. As part of the response, \$5.8 million will be directed toward rental assistance, trauma treatment programs, financial literacy for budgeting, and education on deposits, utilities, and other essentials.

The importance of creating a stable home environment, including ensuring individuals have belongings in their homes, was emphasized. Challenges such as the rising cost of rent and the lack of available housing units were also discussed. Sandra brought attention to an article exploring the potential of repurposing churches into residential spaces.

Additionally, the Elks Lodge, with its 1,000 members, was suggested as a potential avenue for creating a bulletin to encourage donations for items to support unhoused individuals. Storage solutions for larger donated items were also addressed, with recognition of the efforts of Hand to Hand Thrift Store and Thy Eagle's Nest. A committee member will follow up with the Mayor to determine if space is available within the City of Bristol for storage of larger donated items.

4. New Business

Tina Tanguay provided an overview of overdose statistics for 2024. According to OD MAPS, Bristol experienced 148 overdoses in total during the year, 21 of which were fatal. This represents a significant decrease compared to 2023, which recorded 218 opioid overdoses and 35 fatalities. In January 2025, there have been five reported overdoses, two of which were fatal. One fatality involved crack cocaine, while the other is currently under investigation and appears related to prescription medications. It was noted that crack cocaine is increasingly being tainted with fentanyl, highlighting the importance of targeted education to prevent overdoses among individuals who primarily use cocaine. At this time, there is no data available on whether the individuals who overdosed were housed or unhoused.

Phyllis Delmastro introduced herself as a new attendee. It was also shared that the Salvation Army located at 19 Stearns Street, in Bristol, is currently operating as a warming center. On the previous evening, the center accommodated 11 individuals, and they anticipate a higher turnout as temperatures drop.

Stephanie from Wheeler Clinic shared their upcoming plans to meet with the Mayor on February 3rd to discuss how best to meet the city's cold weather protocol needs. They also plan to meet with Harley to further refine these protocols. Tina opened a broader discussion on strategies to further reduce opioid use in Bristol. Ideas were exchanged among the various departments, with a focus on collaboration and resource sharing.

Stephanie from Wheeler highlighted the clinic's capacity to distribute Narcan and fentanyl test strips and emphasized that many of their services remain underutilized. Tina suggested including education on the proper use of fentanyl test strips as part of these efforts. However,

funding remains a challenge in expanding education and outreach initiatives. BEST expressed interest in training additional Narcan trainers to enable broader distribution of Narcan kits.

Lastly, the group noted that **International Overdose Awareness Day** will take place on **August 31, 2025**, providing an opportunity to increase awareness and outreach efforts.

5. **Old business**

None.

6. **Announcements**

None.

7. **Adjournment**

Motion to Adjourn by Chad Layton, seconded by Sandy Kamens at 5:52 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maria Theam, Recording Secretary

