



## **Criminal Justice Advisory Committee Minutes** **Tuesday, March 25, 2025**

**Members Present:** Dawn Baxton, Mike Sistrom, Tonia Rogers-Dixon, Duane Brinson, David Crispell, Dorothy Hairston Mitchell, Jesse Battle, Lao Rubert, Dr. Angeloe Burch, Michael O'Foghludha, Maggie Clapp, Thomas Cote, Angela Winchester, Eric Johnson, Walter Tate, Mayor Leonardo Williams, Nida Allam

**Guests:** Irene Lawrence - Community Development Specialist with NC's Department of Adult Corrections, Jaeson Smith - Opioid Settlement Committee Representative, Catherine Constantinou - Assistant Public Defender

**Staff:** Roshanna Parker, Ontario Joyner, Janice Williams

**Excused Absences:** Dr. Rodney Jenkins

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Dawn Baxton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:05pm, welcomed all attendees and asked all in attendance to introduce themselves.

### **2. Approval of January 2025 Minutes**

Chair Baxton called for a motion to approve the January 28, 2025, minutes. Hearing no corrections, Dorothy Hairston Mitchell moved to approve the minutes as presented; the motion was seconded by David Crispell. The motion to approve the January 28, 2025, CJAC minutes was unanimously carried.

### **3. New Member Orientation:** Roshanna Parker, Justice Services Department, Director

Ms. Parker stated that CJAC recognizes that there are several new members on the committee. A new member orientation presentation is in the process of being developed which will provide history and insight into who CJAC members are and what the committee actually does. The presentation will be virtual only and the allotted time will be 2hrs. to allow for a question-and-answer session.

❖ ***This meeting will be scheduled before the May 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.***

### **4. Criminal Legal System Round Table Task Force:** presented by Mike Sistrom, Vice Chair, Community Member, Professor

Mr. Sistrom began by stating that he was one of the county's at-large appointees to the Durham City County Community Safety and Wellness Task Force and served on the Criminal Legal System Roundtable. It is within these arenas where a set of fairly detailed proposals covering various aspects of the criminal legal system were developed. After discussions with Chair Baxton, Ms. Roshanna

Parker, Lao Rubert and others, it was agreed that CJAC was the best venue to discuss, present and forge ahead with those proposals.

Coinciding with one of CJAC's guiding principles to reduce the jail population, the related Task Force proposals are:

- achievable bail reform policies
- expansion of pre and post arrest diversion options
- expanded reentry support and
- improving the abuse, neglect, and dependency on court processes.

Mr. Siström stated that he would be glad to share the section of the final Task Force Report that displays the summary of those proposals (as well as the document that contains the full version of all proposals). In conclusion, Mr. Siström also shared that it was agreed upon that the Family Court proposal would be considered first before discussions took place regarding the Task Force proposals.

**5. Opioid Settlement Fund:** presented by Jaeson Smith, Opioid Settlement Program Manager

Mr. Smith reported that from 2022-2038, Durham will receive close to \$21million for the Opioid Settlement Fund. With these monies equally spread over a 16-year duration, ~\$1.3 million would be allocated for expenditures per year.

There are 12 eligible evidence-based strategies the funds can/will be used for. The bolded strategies are the initiatives that are currently being funded. The 12 strategies are:

**1. Collaborative strategic planning:**

- a. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) mandates the formation of an advisory group/board to steer, guide and become a resource to the community by providing insight to how the funds are spent. The plan is to have 10 – 13 open seats for a diverse group of individuals to serve on this board. Applications will be made available sometime in the coming fiscal year for anyone interested in becoming a member.

**2. Evidence based addiction treatment**

**3. Recovery support services:**

- a. This is peer support driven, community link to care programs provided in partnership with Recovery Innovations.

**4. Recovery housing support**

**5. Employment-related services**

**6. Early intervention**

**7. Naloxone distribution:**

- a. Ms. Morgan Culver was hired as the Harm Reduction Coordinator to facilitate utilization of these funds. In meeting with Durham community leaders, Ms. Culver has already established access points for the distribution of naloxone throughout the community.

**8. Post-overdose response team:**

- a. Currently, two (2) community paramedics have been hired through Emergency Management Services. Due to the strict guidelines of this funding, the paramedics are solely dedicated to opioid responses.

**9. Syringe Service Program:**

- a. Syringes are distributed throughout the community utilizing a fixed pharmacy site in addition to Ms. Culver's distribution efforts.

**10. Criminal justice diversion programs**

**11. Addiction treatment for incarcerated people**

**12. Reentry programs**

Mr. Smith went on to report that these strategies are structured as prevention and treatment efforts. It is still being navigated as to how to best leverage this funding given the fact that this process is still in its initial formation phases.

❖ ***There will be an RFP process opened in coming months to explore more funding venues.***

- There is no risk of federal government interference since these funds are not derived from the federal government.
- In order to keep abreast of the distribution of the settlement fund, a Data Dashboard is currently being developed as well as an 'all-encompassing' newsletter containing updates. These reference sources will be posted on the county website soon.
- Other counties and states process of disbursing Opioid Settlement Funds are being taken into consideration as reference points (although everyone is in the beginning stages of this process as well).
- Mr. Duane Brinson stated the budget that was drafted during the budget season has maximized the county's annualized revenue stream, however, it's taking longer than expected to get the strategies up and running.

6. **Family Treatment Court Update:** presented by Catherine Constantinou, Assistant Public Defender

Ms. Constantinou introduced herself as an Assistant Public Defender who specializes in representing parents in abuse and neglect cases. There was a large committee formed to re-establish a Family Treatment Court in Durham which will include an evidence-based process for addiction treatment. Now Ms. Constantinou is part of a smaller committee along with Ms. Roshanna Parker, JSD Director, that was created to begin an outline for a grant proposal to recreate a very successful Family Treatment Court in Durham. To date, the committee has an outline of a budget, an abstract to create a family court team and the beginnings of a draft for a successful grant request. Also, currently in process is the recruitment of actual community members who will be part of the Durham Family Treatment Court. Also, a draft of the Bylaws and rules for Durham is in place due in large part by referencing Orange and Chatham county's rules and bylaws.

Ms. Constantinou went on to report that 80% of her caseload is addicted to or suffers from opioid addiction syndrome. As a result, they are losing their children and are having their constitutional rights violated. The creation of an evidence-based treatment program such as Family Treatment Court will set up stakeholders for success (which is the reunification of families).

In conclusion, Ms. Constantinou emphasized that there is not just a criminal aspect to address and consider in the creation of a family court but a civil aspect as well. In particular, the trauma inflicted on children who are removed from their families and homes. The goal is the creation of healthy families which will make a healthy Durham. A trauma-based module will not only be useful for Durham's Family Treatment Court but other specialty courts as well.

7. **Local Reentry Council Update:** presented by Ontario Joyner, Local Reentry Council Coordinator

Mr. Joyner reported:

- **Clients Served:**
  - received 42 referrals

- completed 32 intakes
- 17 clients gained employment with an average salary of \$14.17/hr. Mr. Joyner stated that LRC is working diligently on trying to secure wages above the \$14.00/hr. average that is consistently being given for clients
- Three (3) clients are enrolled in the Durham Tech GED program; five (5) clients **received** their Forklift Certification; three (3) clients completed their Serve Safe Certification where one (1) client was offered a managerial position upon completion
- One (1) client is enrolled at the Kramden Institute
- Assisted six (6) clients with long-term permanent housing
- LRC is preparing for Second Chance month in April as follows:
  - LRC will be attending a Resource Fair in Raleigh on Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup> at the Women's Prison
  - LRC staff will attend a Reentry Conference from April 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 in Raleigh which is sponsored by the Department of Adult Corrections
  - In partnership with StepUp and NC Works there will be an Employment Resource Fair on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the Main Library from 1pm – 4pm. This event is open to the public (not limited to justice-involved individuals); there will be Second Chance Employers present
  - April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – there will be A1c testing, dieticians on-site for early detection of diabetes and a Diabetes Education Seminar from 10am – 1pm at DHHS
  - A Backpack drive will be conducted during the month of April from the 7<sup>th</sup> – the 30<sup>th</sup>. All items will be collected at 326 E. Main Street. Also accepted are other types of bags such as draw-string bags and duffle bags so that reentry individuals can carry their belongings and documentation safely

Mr. Joyner stated that a calendar will be sent out within a week detailing all of the Second Chance month events.

Chair Baxton recognized Mayor Leonardo Williams and opened the floor to him for comment.

Mayor Williams thanked the committee for the invitation to the meetings and for the update. The Mayor stated, for the sake of transparency, a frustrating factor is that it seems that there is a policy response to everything that's going on in the city except gun and gang violence – meaning, having a comprehensive, multi-agency operation to address this consistent and constant growing concern. Mayor Williams reached out to every entity represented in the CJAC meeting to present a violent crime reduction policy and to put together a comprehensive team to bring back to all of his constituents in these various convenings in order to put advocacy, policy and investment behind these issues. The mayor recognized that this work has been done before and has received many recommendations, but no action was placed behind it. The mayor stated that he is working on 'connecting the dots' to having a more holistic impact on saving children's lives.

Chair Baxton thanked Mayor Williams for his commentary.

**8. Brief Member Updates:**

- Ms. Roshanna Parker stated that the federal funding received by JSD has not been impacted as of yet. Programs Managers are keeping abreast of any changes implemented by the federal government.
- Chair Baxton updated the committee by stating that the letter to the governor requesting the continuance of The Violence Protection Task Force has been completed.

Chair Baxton recognized Commissioner Nida Allam's attendance.

**9. Next meeting dates:**

- **May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025**
- **July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025**
- **September 30, 2025**
- **November 25, 2025**

Chair Baxton adjourned the meeting at 3:53pm.