

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY
PROGRAM & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
July 28, 2021
8:30 a.m.
Teleconference

Originating at:
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 120
Anchorage, Alaska

Trustees Present:

Verne' Boerner, Chair
Chris Cooke
Brent Fisher
Anita Halterman
John Sturgeon

Trust Staff Present:

Mike Abbott
Steve Williams
Carol Howarth
Miri Smith-Coolidge
Kelda Barstad
Luke Lind
Michael Baldwin
Carrie Predeger
Katie Baldwin-Johnson
Valette Keller
Eric Boyer
Autumn Vea
Travis Welch
Josephine Stern
Jerry Jenkins
Allison Biastock
Kat Roch

Also participating:

Kristin Vandagriff; Lisa Cauble; Bev Schoonover; Lisa Morely; Stephanie Hopkins; Myranda Walso; Troy Payne; Terri Tibbett; Ann Ringstad; Beth Goldstein; Adam Rutherford; Greg Stocker; Avram Slone; Nikole Nelson; Danielle Reed; LMThompson; Dewayne Harris.

PROCEEDINGS

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR BOERNER (Native language spoken) called the Program & Planning Committee meeting back to order. She asked for any announcements, and then moved to the first agenda item, continuing the FY23 Trust budget recommendations. She did a roll call to reestablish a quorum. She stated that Rhonda Boyles was excused. Present were Trustees Cooke, Fisher, and Halterman; making the quorum.

FY23 TRUST BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTATION

DISABILITY JUSTICE FOCUS AREA

MR. WELCH stated that in the disability justice focus area, the Trust works with stakeholders to limit the exposure of beneficiaries to the criminal justice system, whether they are victims or alleged offenders, by investing in projects and programs that are in line with the COMP Plan strategies. These goals and objectives support diversion of beneficiaries away from the criminal justice system when appropriate, and provide access to clinical and case management resources for beneficiaries who cannot be diverted out of the criminal justice system. He moved to the sequential intercept model, SIM. He explained that it was a nationally recognized model that provides the conceptual framework for communities to organize targeted strategies for justice-involved individuals with behavioral-health disorders. He continued that the earlier beneficiaries can connect to services, the better outcomes there are, the greater the public safety, and it is more fiscally responsible. He recognized the great work the Department of Corrections did in providing services within their institutions for Trust beneficiaries who find themselves incarcerated. He stated that, in talking about criminal justice and providing services, there is a term called “freedom of movement.” When incarcerated, there is no freedom of movement, and the State has to incur all of the costs for providing services. The other sources of pay, such as Medicaid, cannot be accessed. He moved to the disability justice budget which was broken down by section based on the SIM. He noted the training options or opportunities that law enforcement and first responders have in responding to behavioral health crises. He added that the Trust had been alongside law enforcement in this state since the beginning of crisis intervention teams. This expansion will open up training opportunities for law enforcement and first responders to go beyond just CIT academies. It would also be developing CIT refresher courses for officers who attended the CIT academy. He then looked at a few of the other programs that demonstrate how the SIM has been used. He continued to an amendment to the FY23 budget, and stated that the Trust had been engaged in reentry work for some time and currently funds four reentry coordinators that bring providers together to provide services to reentrants. He added that one of the largest obstacles is housing, and the amendment would look for approval of increasing that budget line from \$150,000 to \$200,000, which would enable the reentry coalitions to be able to provide reentry housing supports and services.

CHAIR BOERNER shared that Trustee Sturgeon joined the meeting.

MR. WELCH thanked all for the comments regarding Alaska Legal Services which provide impressive services for Trust beneficiaries. He continued that they are looking for increased diversion for Trust beneficiaries away from the criminal justice system and decreasing the rate of recidivism. Trying to provide services to people outside of the prison before they have to go to jail is a success. He added that the pandemic had huge impacts on the criminal justice system.

BENEFICIARIES EMPLOYMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

CHAIR BOERNER moved to beneficiaries employment and engagement and recognized Jimael Johnson.

MS. JOHNSON gave an overview and some level of detail to the work happening in the beneficiary and employment focus area. She noted that there were no recommended changes to the FY23 budget at this time. She stated that the primary goal of this focus area is to improve outcomes and promote recovery for beneficiaries. She continued that evidence-based strategies and best practices that increase opportunities in all of the areas are promoted, and then beneficiaries are able to achieve improved outcomes in their personal lives, their work lives, and in their communities. The work of this focus area lines up with the COMP Plan.

CHAIR BOERNER appreciated the presentation and welcomed Steve Williams to present the nonfocus area allocations for the FY23 Trust budget recommendations.

NONFOCUS AREA ALLOCATIONS

MR. WILLIAMS began the section that showed the increases recommended both in MHTAAR funding and Authority Grant funding spread in the other nonfocus area allocations of the budget. He noted that the numbers do not include the Trust Land Office or the Trust Authority Office agency budget numbers. He explained that the funds being recommended fall outside of the focus area work and the other priority work. He explained the funding recommendations that provide direct services and supports to the beneficiaries. The other broad area of the section of the budget is direct support to agencies that provide either the treatment, services, or advocacy on behalf of and for the beneficiaries. He went through his presentation answering questions as he went through the different sections. He moved to the recommended amendments, and continued that the advisory boards spoke to the amendments in regard to the statutory advisory boards and their increments. He continued that the only other place with recommended increments is to the mini-grant program. He added that there is an increase in each of the mini grant programs that target each of the beneficiary cohorts of \$50,000. This is a modest increase that is based on the volume of applications received.

CHAIR BOERNER called a quick break.

(Break.)

CHAIR BOERNER brought the meeting back to order and asked Mr. Williams to finish up his presentation.

MR. WILLIAMS went through the mini-grants and asked if there were any questions about the recommended increase of \$50,000 for each of the mini-grant programs.

TRUSTEE COOKE asked if these programs are being fully utilized.

MR. WILLIAMS replied that the increase would allow more funds to be provided directly to beneficiaries in each of the three mini-grant programs. It would meet the current capacity to get the money out. He moved to the statutory advisory boards and stated that staff supports the

requests. He reminded trustees that a placeholder of \$200,000 was placed for an anticipated rural outreach trip in FY23. He stated that the intent is to actually hold a rural-outreach-type trip in FY22, which is why this decrement is being recommended in FY23. Historically, the rural-outreach trips are not done every year.

MR. ABBOTT explained that it was budgeted for both of the two years. Since then, it was resolved to tentatively plan the trip for late winter of 2022. That is what is being planned, and there is funding in the current budget year for that.

CHAIR BOERNER moved to the FY23 Trust budget recommendations, and recognized Mike Abbott.

FY23 TRUST BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. ABBOTT stated that the plan would be using the initial portion to discuss with trustees the strategy for using General Fund recommendations inside of the budget. He continued that this statute section talked about the budget generally and its responsibilities. One of the requirements is that “The budget must include the Authority’s determination of the amount recommended for expenditure from the General Fund during the next fiscal year to meet the operating and capital expenses of the Integrated Comprehensive Mental Health Program work (COMP Plan).” This is the root of the challenge. He suggested that there are a range of options available to determine how to meet this requirement in the statute. It is clear that to fully implement all the different pieces in the COMP Plan would be hundreds of millions of dollars. He gave credit to Commissioner Crum for accepting the challenge that is written in this, which requires resources far beyond what the State and/or the Trust is currently applying. One way to meet this requirement would be to issue a couple hundred million dollars of recommendations for General Funds. He explained that the Trust has never taken that approach in the 27 years that this statute has been in place. Instead, the Trust has had different strategies in different years going back. Last year he advocated for a more aspirational approach, and staff submitted General Fund recommendations to the Administration and the Legislature, trying to encourage the State to consider larger funding amounts for some of the programs. That was not successful. This year there is an obligation to give the Governor the budget, including recommendations, by the 15th of September so that he can take advantage of that before producing his proposed budget on December 15th. He added that there is a lot of independence in terms of determining the recommendations, and staff is hoping for some guidance.

CHAIR BOERNER asked for input from trustees.

TRUSTEE HALTERMAN stated the need to take a realistic approach to this budget and wanted to hear from the Administration on each of the GF funding areas that were vetoed in the budget because there may be things to be considered.

TRUSTEE FISHER stated that he was in line with what Trustee Halterman said and that it would behoove us to consider and look at what is of most value and should be included. This will either help reduce expenditures in the long term for the State or provide some important needs that need to be fulfilled with the Trust’s help in fulfilling them.

TRUSTEE STURGEON stated that he would vote for the more practical presentation. He

continued that if something will save the State a lot of money, we should push the concept that it will save money in the long run. He recommended to give an option of what the Trust thinks is most important and outline the priorities, if we are looking for an increase.

TRUSTEE COOKE noted the importance of the Crisis Now proposal, which has been well explored and publicized and has a broad base of support. He stated that we should dig our heels in on this and move forward with these recommendations.

CHAIR BOERNER asked Trustee Cooke to take over the chairmanship so that she could share her thoughts.

CHAIR COOKE asked Trustee Boerner for any comments or questions.

TRUSTEE BOERNER stated that there has been a level of restraint that had been utilized by the Trust and trustees in creating and recommending these budgets and taking into consideration the fiscal circumstances. The history lesson is critically important in this, and she appreciated Mr. Abbott's willingness to be accountable for the recommendations. She stated that she was accountable in the recommendations she had put forward and fully owned what was presented to the Legislature and to the Governor. There was an obligation and responsibility that was tested by the lawsuits that were put forward. She appreciated the challenge in thinking about the fiscal crisis, but it is not the trustees' duty to tell officials how to meet those obligations. It is the trustees' responsibility and accountability to the beneficiaries of the Trust to be able to say the State needs to meet its legal and moral obligations that are enshrined in the Constitution.

TRUSTEE COOKE turned the chair back to Trustee Boerner. He added that he did not know what staff is looking for from the board at this point.

MR. ABBOTT stated that he was grateful for the thoughtful comments and feedback, adding that it had been very helpful. He noted that he did see a path forward to a productive process to land on a decision to meet that obligation at the August meeting. He stated that Mr. Williams had some wrap-up comments.

MR. WILLIAMS recognized and thanked all the staff that were involved in putting together the budget documents and the packet and for all the additional information. He also stated appreciation for the trustees and the dialogue and questions that have been asked. He also appreciated Trustee Boerner's comments going back to the history, because that is very important. He expressed his appreciation for the dialog which is needed from the board to be able to come forward with recommendations for board consideration.

CHAIR BOERNER thanked Mr. Williams and entertained a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: A motion to adjourn was made by TRUSTEE HALTERMAN; seconded by TRUSTEE COOKE.

There being no objection, the MOTION was APPROVED.

(Program and Planning Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.)