

**OPIOID ADDICTION COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2021  
4:15 P.M.**

PRESENT: Janet Sutherland, Chairwoman  
Kevin W. Hines, Kevindaryan Lujan, Rob Sassi, Darcie Miller

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman  
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader  
Leigh Benton, Legislator  
Barry Cheney, Legislator  
Thomas Faggione, Legislator  
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator  
Peter Tuohy, Legislator  
John Vero, Legislator  
Betsy Abraham, Legislative Counsel  
Annette Kahrs, President, Tri-County Community Partnership,  
Hope Not Handcuffs Program  
Dominick Blasko, Former President, Police Chiefs' Association of  
Orange County  
Paul Rickard, President, Police Chiefs' Association of Orange County

Ms. Sutherland called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. All committee members were present.

Ms. Miller provided an update on the Opioid crisis (See original minutes). Ms. Miller reviewed the Orange County Overdose Report comparing 2021 to 2020. She was happy to report that fentanyl overdoses are down.

Ms. Bonelli asked if they were getting a report from all the police departments to get an accurate picture.

Ms. Miller pointed out that not all the police departments are included in the overdose (OD) process. It has to do with how they handle the emergency calls directly or they come in through 911.

Ms. Sutherland asked Chief Blasko if there was a reason why there has been a reduction in fentanyl overdoses and was there something different that the law enforcement was doing.

Chief Blasko stated that they are trying to be proactive with enforcement with all the changes in the laws. Most of the police agencies are connected with "Hope Not Handcuffs." They report through 911 to the county but he was not sure what the other agencies are doing or why things are not being reported. He planned to bring it up at the next Police Chiefs' meeting.

Ms. Kahrs provided an update on Hope Not Handcuffs. She stated that there are twenty-two active police departments that work with the program and seven more that will be

coming soon. They provide cards to the local police departments so they can interact with the community and talk about the program. They reinforce to the police departments that it is their program to be offered to the community. They were one of eight organizations that received a one-year grant which allowed them to hire staff. They have seven peer recovery coaches that handle phone calls. They launched a family support group called, "Stronger Together." They purchased billboards with the grant money provided to them from the Legislature. The billboards are in Middletown, Port Jervis and Goshen and Route 302 in Circleville. They purchased mini billboards for lawn signs. The angels go out and put them wherever they can.

Ms. Sutherland asked how often the support group meets.

Ms. Kahrs responded that they meet every other week.

Ms. Kahrs mentioned that there is a "Black Poster Project" where they take three to four hundred people who lost their lives and put them on black boards with a biography about them. Two of her board members' sons are on the posters. The posters are lined up like a silent exhibit. There are no refreshments or food, no speakers, it is not a fundraiser, the posters are lined up as an exhibit. They were lucky enough to have the "Black Poster Project" come to Orange County on August 7<sup>th</sup> but they need a location.

Ms. Miller stated that they can collaborate to see how they can support the best location.

Ms. Kahrs stated that they have a Paddle Run scheduled for June 12<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. It is their annual fundraiser which is a 5-mile kayak and canoe race.

Mr. Hines asked about the speakers from a facility in Middletown and Newburgh that came before the Opioid Addiction Committee a few years ago. They were getting a \$2 million grant from the state to open up. He was not impressed with those facilities when he brought people there. He asked if those facilities still exist if there were any positive results from those facilities.

Ms. Miller responded that Mr. Hines was referring to Access: Supports for Living, Inc. and they were funded with federal dollars. They are still open and they are still providing 24/7 support. Most of their support is more so with mental health and mental illness.

Ms. Miller offered Mr. Hines to feel free to share additional comments on his unimpressive experience with Access and she would address it.

Mr. Hines thanked Ms. Miller.

Chief Rickard introduced himself as the President of the Orange County Police Chiefs' Association. He has been working with Ms. Kahrs on a few projects. He offered his services to the committee and suggested they reach out to him at any time.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.