

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOL, OTHER DRUGS & YOUTH SERVICES

December 17, 2024 at 5:15 PM

Vice-Chairman Barry called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Barry, Vincent, Kantor, O'Neil

Absent: Alderman Thomas

Messrs.: J. Costanzo,

1. Presentation from Joseph Costanzo, Superintendent of Hillsborough County Department of Corrections, on the A.C.T. Program (Accept & Commit to Treatment).

Joseph Costanzo, Superintendent of Hillsborough County Department of Corrections, introduced himself.

Brian Martineau, Major, Hillsborough County Department of Corrections introduced himself.

Alyssa Angham, Programs Director, Hillsborough County Department of Corrections introduced herself.

Vice-Chairman Barry stated Alderman Thomas couldn't make it tonight. She is the Chairman of this committee and certainly supports your efforts. I just wanted to make that known.

Mr. Costanzo stated I know we sent over a Powerpoint presentation that I believe you have in front of you. I don't believe the projector is working so we will just give you a brief overview of what the A.C.T. Program is along with some statistics. We will also talk a little bit about in-house substance misuse and co-occurring treatment that is done at the Hillsborough County Department of Corrections. Some of you may have been familiar with what was formerly known as SOAR. SOAR was a substance misuse treatment program started a few years ago that we contracted directly with Harbor Homes for. They would come in and provide support to individuals who were sentenced to this program in targeted substance misuse. That program targeted low to moderate risk and when I talk about low to moderate risk that means low risk of reoffending and low needs and moderate risk of reoffending and moderate needs. Let's be honest. The population that we see now is all high risk, high need. When we talk about high risk, high need, this program treats...people always wonder do you treat the addiction or do you treat the mental health. It is co-occurring. We treat both at the same time. I came here in 2022 and we took a deep dive look at the program following Covid. Since then, we have brought the program in-house. It is a one-year sentenced program for sentenced individuals to the house of corrections. It is evidence-based and based on a model called Transition from Jail to Community and our goal is to reduce recidivism and to provide individuals with the supports they need for re-entry back into our

communities. I will let Alyssa talk a little bit about some of the curriculum and the program itself and the structure of it and then I will talk a little bit about re-entry and what we have done in regards to re-entry efforts. I know one of the big things when I first got down here was individuals returning to the community and the jail is in Manchester. We will talk about some of the individuals who go out on electronic monitoring and where they go and the communication and supervision we have over them. We will also talk about re-entry plans that we give to all individuals who are in our custody for 30 days or more.

Ms. Angham stated curriculum wise we have Thinking for a Change which targets the criminal thinking process. We have Seeking Safety curriculum which targets substance misuse and trauma therapy as well. We also have Helping Men and Women Recover which is just like what it sounds like, recovering from substance misuse. We do interactive journaling, anger management, art therapy, and music therapy. We have a gentleman who comes in and does mindfulness. That is a 12-week program. We try to make sure that we are giving them a well-rounded curriculum. They are in the classroom five days a week usually for 4-4 ½ hours a day plus homework.

Mr. Costanzo stated when we talk about the classroom portion, as I mentioned earlier the program is a yearlong. Some of you might be familiar with what early release is which is 2/3 time. There is an RSA in NH that allows superintendents to award early release time to individuals who have been on good behavior and who we think will return to the community and be upstanding citizens. That is a tool that superintendents use so when you talk about a one-year sentence, roughly they are doing eight months on that sentence. So our program is structured as such. You are sentenced to a one-year House of Corrections recommendation to the A.C.T. Program and a year of probation following. We have partnered with probation and do a warm hand off with them after that year. On the first end of the sentence, they do roughly 60-90 days inside of the facility. We have made some program space upstairs at the facility in our old activities. They are in classes as Alyssa said five days a week. They have homework. The classes don't exceed more than 16 people in a classroom due to space restrictions. We have both men and women. They are in different classrooms. At completion of the 90 days, once they have completed their curriculum and have met with their case managers, they have already started what is called a transition plan and that transition plan is essentially if you think I am getting out to the community where am I going to live and what do I need out there. Alyssa and her team do level of care assessments. How often am I coming back to the facility to check-in for my UA's? How long am I going to have my bracelet on? Where am I working? All of those things are done prior to them even getting out. We don't allow individuals to go to the shelters to live. They need to have stable housing or sober housing and that can be a challenge. Again, these are our sentenced population so when they get out into the community they are monitored with a bracelet; electronic monitoring. You may be familiar with geo-fencing. These bracelets are monitored 24/7 by our facility. There is literally a computer screen in the control room and if somebody is not where they are supposed to be, it sends an immediate alert. There are different responses to different levels of violations. If somebody is just out of bounds because they go to the store...we are not just about pulling people immediately back in. There are certain levels of offenses where that happens but this may be the first time they have been out in the community under corrections supervision. There is a process that we follow. Our goal is re-entry. That is

our main goal. Ninety-nine percent of the prison population is going back into our communities. It is that 1% that is not and the ones that we are dealing with in the A.C.T. Program are not those 1%. Once they are done with that program and they have successfully completed it, that is when the warm hand off goes to probation and parole. Think about that time when they are in their community as a set of stairs. It starts off really strict with three UA's a week and schedules and it slowly backs down as they are in compliance. Sometimes we may have to ramp it back up but again the goal is re-entry and bringing them back into our communities. This is for sentenced individuals. It is not our pre-trial population but those who have been sentenced for non-violent felonies and misdemeanors. They are usually coming out of the district courts all over. We do see some coming out of the superior courts as well. Alyssa has some numbers we can give you.

Ms. Angham stated in a little over a year, we have 84 total referrals that were accepted. Sixty-seven were from either Hillsborough North Superior or Manchester District Court. There were a few other district courts but nothing notable. We have had 35 plus 2 pending completions right now and 12 have been from Drug Court North. We currently have 19 in-house participating and 8 out on electronic monitoring in the community. That is 27 active total.

Mr. Costanzo asked how many returns.

Ms. Angham answered right now we have four returns and only three terminations.

Vice-Chairman Barry asked if someone gets sentenced and they get into your program, do they all have to be sentenced to the 12 months or can some of them be 6 months. Does it have to be that plateau?

Mr. Costanzo answered our structure is the 12 months.

Vice-Chairman Barry asked and if they get good behavior and eight months, are the remaining four months the probation period.

Mr. Costanzo replied no. Their one year of probation starts at the end of that.

Vice-Chairman Barry asked so they do have one year of probation. That is not normal right?

Mr. Costanzo stated once they are released from custody and I have signed off on their early release permit, there is not a full month limbo period. Probation starts right then.

Vice-Chairman Barry asked that is somewhat unusual right. If someone does a year at the county jail usually, once they get out they are out. They aren't normally on probation after.

Mr. Costanzo responded that is the working relationship that we built with probation and parole. The Director of Field Services, Jeffrey White, and the Manchester and Nashua offices are just phenomenal to work with. Again, they have very large caseloads. I have been doing this for a little while and when somebody transitions from the 24/7

supervision over to probation, it is a very trying time. We want to make sure that we have great communication with probation saying hey these are our recommendations like whether they remain in PHP or they go to IOP or maybe they have a job at this point and stable living in their own home or with their parents. Again, that is the open communication with probation. To answer your question, that typically is not...usually it is a misdemeanor sentence.

Vice-Chairman Barry stated I had the opportunity to meet with you guys last week so I kind of got a head start. It was a great meeting and I am certainly in favor of what you are doing and hopefully under your direction you can talk the county into moving the county jail from Manchester to Goffstown. Thank you.

Alderman O'Neil stated did I hear you say you have 27 active participants with 19 still serving the balance of their time.

Ms. Angham answered they are still in the House of Corrections. They have not been released.

Alderman O'Neil stated I know this is a very successful program but if you had to guess, how many are going to commit another crime and go back.

Mr. Costanzo replied if you look at the national recidivism rates, they hover between 50-60% for just nothing. In successful programs, I can tell you that this model has been through five county jails in the state of NH. It started in Sullivan County. They don't have a drug court and the last time I was told it was around a 17-20% recidivism rate for those that were sentenced to the program. When I was in Merrimack, we did a recidivism study and saw similar numbers. We started off at around 50-60% and were able in the course of three years to truly make a huge difference in that recidivism rate. Our goal would be the low 20's. So 20% of the population in that program would be our recidivism rate and that is, again, a great number.

Alderman O'Neil stated if I understood you, their housing has to be identified ahead of time as does work. Do you or does probation help with that?

Mr. Costanzo responded the housing has to be identified ahead of time so it is the House of Corrections, Alyssa and her case managers and our AHC supervisors or our electronic monitor supervisors on the security team. They will do home visits and verify the residence. We have access to the residence and where the individual is located inside the residence and the room that they are living in. It is signed off on that we can do random inspections of that area and the premises when needed because again, they are under our supervision. When it comes to their work, if they are in living sober living and in a program, whether it is an IOP or sometimes if the level of PHP is needed, we waive the first X amount of weeks while they are in that program so they can transition to what they are doing on the outside prior to them actually getting a job. After that, we have had a lot of success with them. Say they are in a program for 6-8 weeks following us and are working to get a job. Again they are still on electronic monitoring so there is a cost there but I will say that the opioid abatement monies that we have received from the state to offset the cost of the electronic monitoring helps so we do end up waiving

that sometimes. Just because someone can't pay \$60 to be out, we want to put them out.

Alderman O'Neil asked have you found certain employers that are willing to hire these people.

Ms. Angham answered there are some second chance employers. We also collaborate with the staffing agencies as well and have seen some success there that end up being full-time or long-term jobs. Yes, there are a few second chance employers we are working with.

Alderman O'Neil asked maybe offline can you let us know. Does the residential living have to be sober living?

Ms. Angham replied no. I have some people who have gone home either to parents or spouses and children. Other people have gone to sober living or a higher level of care.

Alderman O'Neil stated it sounds like you have been able to navigate the residential part fairly well.

Ms. Angham responded yes. Each transition plan is tailored to the individual and the most important part is we are not doing this in a cookie cutter way.

Alderman O'Neil stated it is a great program, thank you.

Vice-Chairman Barry asked how many actual housing in the City of Manchester are you dealing with.

Ms. Angham answered four or five.

Vice-Chairman Barry asked and how many outside of Manchester.

Ms. Angham stated Nashua only has one or two that we have worked with.

Vice-Chairman Barry stated so it is mainly Manchester. Is that because the county facility is in Manchester and it is easier for you guys.

Ms. Angham replied transportation wise it is easier for our people to get to us so they tend to stick around Manchester but also I have had some people very adamant about saying they don't want to be in Manchester anymore and they want a change of scenery.

Alderman Long asked are the programs voluntary.

Mr. Costanzo answered these are sentenced programs.

Alderman Long stated so they are required to take the program.

Mr. Costanzo replied correct.

Alderman Long asked and what is the capacity you are able to be effective. What is the number right now?

Mr. Costanzo stated based on our staffing we try to keep it to 16 in each classroom. You are looking at just over 32 but that is just in the classroom. We could have 40 or 50 people out in the community on electronic monitoring. It is just about filtering them through. it is just based on space.

Alderman Long stated I do see that they have outpatient programming that you recommend that is monitored. You are saying that as far as your success rate, you have four that went back into prison and three who terminated the program?

Mr. Costanzo responded yes we have had three terminations and recidivism wise...

Ms. Angham interjected there were only two that committed serious violations.

Alderman Long asked as far as the classrooms, do you have more than two.

Mr. Costanzo replied no. The two classroom we made used to be our video arraignment rooms and one was a training room. If we need to expand, we also have the gym that we could use. We make due with what we have right now.

Alderman Long stated I remember having a discussion with you but the people who have to be committed and that was the problem.

Mr. Costanzo stated once the program started, it was the sentence piece. The individuals had to be sentenced but we are seeing more people being sentenced in now. Thank you for bringing that up because we also serve as essentially a last sanction for drug court. Drug Court can sanction their individuals to us and we will put them through our in-house portion but we transition them right over. They are not under our supervision when they leave; they are under Drug Court supervision.

Alderman Long asked is there any compensation from them. I heard you say something about \$60. Is that once they are released?

Mr. Costanzo answered that is the electronic monitoring fee. It is \$60/week. Those individuals wouldn't be on that. They would be court ordered to come to our program. These funds are either coming from opioid abatement or the MH funds which are based off of commissary.

Alderman Kantor stated I want to say thank you for sharing and the importance of accountability but with compassion and bringing in the arts. I got to meet Joe and hear about this. Everyone is affected by this and we want to see people come through this and their stories can help other people. I just want to say I support everything that you are doing and am very grateful.

Mr. Costanzo stated we have had some really great success stories too. Some of these individuals...not just our program but I know the Major can share some of those.

Mr. Martineau stated we take phone calls from individuals who have successfully completed the program to let us know that they are on their feet and have a job and are providing for their kids. I got a call the other day from an individual who was taking his kids to school and he wanted to reach out and thank us for all of the stuff we did for him. Those are always nice to get.

Alderman O'Neil stated you hit on two successes – work and housing. We have found transportation to be a problem. Do you have any suggestions on that?

Mr. Costanzo answered I can briefly tell you some of the transportation barriers that we had. We had a great meeting with Manchester Transit. We didn't realize how far out the bus lines went and that we had a stop right outside of our facility. We give out bus tickets and for your information, everybody who leaves that jail is offered a bus ticket to get them down to Nashua because they come right down here to the hub from my understanding and they can get out to Nashua. We can also provide individuals in our program bus tickets to come back and meet with case manager or do a UA at the facility. We have purchased a lot of bus tickets in the City of Manchester.

Alderman O'Neil asked when you are looking to find housing do you consider whether it is near a bus stop. I think unfortunately it is a challenge for some people who don't live near a bus stop.

Ms. Angham replied a lot of the houses are relatively close. If they are going home though...we had somebody who was within driving distance and that was a conversation I had with him before he left. I asked if he was going to be able to get back to us and he said well it will be \$200 to reinstate my license so we worked with him to do that so he was able to use his vehicle to get back and forth.

Mr. Costanzo stated it is the same with some individuals who may have some fines that they haven't paid on their license. It is more than one that we have worked with. Another piece that I want to mention really fast is we partnered with Revive. So Revive is within our facility at least once a week every Thursday meeting with both this population, the sentenced population, as well as the pre-trial population and giving them that opportunity when they leave.

Alderman O'Neil stated I am not familiar with Revive. Can you tell us what that is?

Mr. Costanzo it is peer recovery support. They have an office on Elm Street. They started in Nashua but are now up here. They are fantastic to work with. It is people with lived experience and allows these individuals to connect with them. It is something that coming from other areas in the state, the connectivity to peer support wasn't as easy as it was down here. As soon as they came to our doorstep, we said absolutely come on in.

Alderman O'Neil asked what can we as a city take from what you are doing to either enhance your program or what are we missing in the city. What can we do? I know that is a loaded question. Your program is very successful but what can we be doing?

Is it more peer support that is needed in the community or is it the transportation issue?
What can we be doing to help your program?

Mr. Costanzo replied the first thing is this isn't something you just throw money at. It is the education. You all know now as we have spoken to this group of people but there are people who may not have known there was an A.C.T. Program. A.C.T. by the way stands for Accept & Commit to Treatment. The education. We have met with individuals from the Solicitor's Office and spoken with the Chief of Police and they have all been very supportive. We have talked to the Public Defender's Office. If anybody has any questions, please direct them to us. In regards to how you can help, we all know housing is the number one thing and I think it is going to be the number one thing for a while. It is about being able to get individuals into affordable stable housing.

Alderman O'Neil stated thank you for the presentation.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Vincent**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kantor**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee