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Public Safety Board - Subcommittee on Homelessness -

April 12, 2024 (12:00 PM) – City Council Chambers

In Attendance:

Jessica Eskeland (Chair), Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Councilor Jim Schlosser, Deputy Fire Chief Hebert, Serina Chase (Minutes), Deputy Police Chief Barret Moulton, Frank Caron (Guest), Garrett Jewell (Guest), Tara Reardon (Guest), Travis Cushman (Guest)

Introductions:

The meeting was called to order at 12:06pm.

SOAR program information presentation (Councilor Kretovic / Guests):

Garret Jewel, Major for the Merrimack County Department of Corrections, briefly introduced himself as well as the SOAR program.

Frank Caron, Administrator of Programs and Services for the Merrimack County Department of Corrections, presented the SOAR program to the subcommittee.

Topics covered during the presentation included:

- An overview of the SOAR program's goals, processes, and outcomes.
- Criminogenic needs reduction for higher risk populations.
- Targeting criminogenic need – Results from meta analyses.
- Performance measures:
 - Public safety indicators and outcomes
 - Reintegration indicators and outcomes
 - Processing Measures
- Merrimack County recidivism study:
 - Methodology
 - The released cohort
 - Defining Recidivism
 - Measures



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Councilor Kretovic raised the issue of the public's perception of where some homeless individuals may be originating from. Tara Reardon, Chair of the Board of Commissioners for Merrimack County, provided clarification that there are separate populations within the jail system:

- Those that have completed the SOAR program and whose location after exiting the program is monitored
- Individuals who have served their sentence and their location after exiting incarcerating is not monitored

Frank Caron also mentioned that one of the most important policies of SOAR is that those who have completed the program are never released into homelessness – Those individuals must have a stable place to live upon completion of the program.

Councilor Schlosser asked if any other programs in the community use the SOAR curriculum. Frank explained that most of the treatment areas in Merrimack County do use the curriculum because SOAR is evidence-based treatment.

Councilor Schlosser asked about the difference between Drug Court and the SOAR program. Tara Reardon explained that the major difference between the two programs is the aspect of incarceration. Those in the SOAR program are incarcerated while those utilizing Drug Court are not. Additionally, SOAR is program oriented while Drug Court is community oriented.

Travis Cushman, Superintendent for the Merrimack County Department of Corrections, introduced himself and provided further insight into the SOAR program and the Merrimack County Department of Corrections.

Deputy Police Chief Barret Moulton provided additional insight into Drug Court, as he is currently serving on the Merrimack County Drug Court team.

Jessica Eskeland asked about the biggest impediment/barrier keeping the SOAR program from broader use. Travis Cushman explained that it is difficult to get individuals in the legal system (public defenders, attorneys, etc.) to understand the value of utilizing the program.



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Jessica Eskeland asked if there were any recommendations or considerations that the Subcommittee could take up and potentially consider recommending to the entire Public Safety Advisory Board. Travis Cushman explained that education about the program and the curriculum is extremely important. Tara Reardon mentioned that positively changing the public's perception of jail and incarceration is also extremely important.

Councilor Kretovic mentioned that it would be beneficial for Frank, Garrett and Travis to present the SOAR program to the entire Public Safety Advisory Board. Travis explained that it could also be an option to host the entire Public Safety Advisory Board at the correctional facility to provide a tour.

Deputy Police Chief Moulton remarked that he could reach out to someone at the Merrimack Country Drug Court to provide a presentation about Drug Court to the subcommittee as well.

Approval of the March 8, 2024 meeting minutes:

Motion made by Councilor Schlosser to approve the March 8, 2024 meeting minutes. Councilor Kretovic Seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

Set new agenda items:

- Functional Zero Update (D. Biemer)
- Emergency response data points update (Deputy Police Chief Moulton)

Adjournment:

Motion made by Councilor Schlosser to adjourn. Councilor Kretovic Seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 1:25pm.