

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 9, 2022**

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

ATTENDANCE: Jorge Cruz, Co-chair; Aikeem Boyd, Co-chair; Maria Pereira, Michele Small

OTHERS: Council Member(s): E. Newton, R. Roman-Christy & T. Mack; Thomas Gaudett, Mayor's Office; Peter Morgan, M.D., Ph.D.; Martha Judd, Coordinator, Yale New Haven Health; Anne Hogan; Barbara, 203-209-1058; 914-589-8158

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Cruz called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

Council Member Cruz said that Council Member Simmons was excused due to illness. Ms. Feller from Southwest Connecticut Mental Health System had contacted him and informed him that she had a schedule conflict.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

• **February 9, 2022 (Regular Meeting).**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BOYD MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2022 MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA SECONDED.**

Council Member Pereira said that the Council Members should receive presentations before the meeting and that the Committee Members should be adding those documents to the record for the City Clerk.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2022 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Informational Session with Peter Morgan, M.D., Ph.D., Chair, Department of Psychiatry, Bridgeport Hospital; Alicia Feller, Chief Executive Officer, Southwest Connecticut Mental Health System and Martha Judd, Coordinator, Community and Government Relations, Yale New Haven Health regarding the mental health crisis.

Council Member Cruz said that Dr. Morgan should send a copy of the presentation to the City Clerk.

Ms. Judd gave a brief introduction for Dr. Morgan, who is the Chair of the Bridgeport Hospital Department of Psychiatry.

Dr. Morgan spoke about how they qualify mental health and pointed out that mental health care is not easily accessible. He then narrated a PowerPoint presentation about mental health and current psychiatric care. There has been a shortage of mental health clinicians since 2013 and a steady increase in demand. There has also been an improved insurance availability and coverage. The Affordable Care Act provided many people with mental health coverage that they never had access to before.

He then gave a definition of the difference between psychology and psychiatrist. The mental health crisis was present before COVID arrived.

Council Member Newton said that when COVID occurred, the hospital resources, which were already under strain, were stressed even further. Dr. Morgan agreed.

Council Member Newton said that when he was raised, those who needed psychiatrists were considered to have something wrong with them. Dr. Morgan said that the stigma was changing. Stigmas happen when medical treatments aren't effective, but as treatments improve, the stigma lessens.

Council Member Cruz noted that Council Member Mack had joined the meeting.

Dr. Morgan then spoke about the fact that the insurance companies often reimburse the care providers at a lower rate. Due to this, psychiatrist often refuse to honor insurance and only accept cash. This also has an impact on the patients who need serious treatment because the insurance will not cover the cost of the treatment. Those patients who have less serious conditions are more likely to receive coverage but are tied to the physician through their prescription renewals. Many psychiatrists are going into locum practice, which are short term contracts.

There are a few State Legislature bills that will increase the amount of insurance payments for the psychiatric services.

Ms. Judd said that Ms. Hogan was the individual who monitors the legislative action in Hartford. She said that outpatient services for community need to be increased. When those services are not available, the patients go to the Emergency Rooms because there is no other options are available.

Council Member Pereira asked about the age range for the typical psychiatric patient and whether it varies in terms of gender. Dr. Morgan said that most are diagnoses between the ages of 20-40. He also reviewed the age ranges for bi-polar disorder, traumatic onset, and

schizophrenia. Depression and anxiety are the most common and the earlier the incident occurs, the more likely it is to reoccur.

Council Member Small said that when individuals go to psychiatrists, the psychiatrists often want to put people on medication. She described how she was told that she needed to start medication following several losses in her family. Dr. Morgan said that he could not speak to any specific factors, but the point of medication for depression is to help people get out of the rut. It depends on how severely the losses impact the individual and whether the medication will help. However, this evaluation takes time and if the insurance will not pay for it, he can't take the time.

Council Member Newton said that many individuals who are incarcerated are medicated just to keep them calm. Dr Morgan said that this was called chemical restraint and it was believed that this was preferred to physical restraint. Around the early 2000s, it became more evident that using chemical restraint is not preferable to physical restraint. However, it is important to determine whether the behavior is medically indicated. Medications that have addictive properties have to be handled carefully. Connecticut is fairly good in determining the appropriate treatment.

Council Member Pereira said that there was an increase in the students' mental health. She spoke about the wrap around services that have been introduced in the recent years. She spoke about how some of the schools that only have social workers two days a week and a psychologist one day a week. She asked if psychiatrists should be in schools.

Dr. Morgan said that his experience with psychiatry in school systems is only second hand. It is a major time commitment. He explained that an inner city school would require more services than an area that was more affluent. Discussion followed about poverty, domestic abuse, and trauma.

Ms. Hogan said that most of the social workers were not seeing students in crisis, but were doing more IEPs, which is administrative paperwork.

Council Member Cruz suggested that the BOE invite Dr. Morgan, Ms. Hogan and Ms. Judd to give a presentation.

Council Member Cruz asked about the dynamics of those youth who are on psychiatric medication but then become attracted to street drugs. Dr. Morgan said that when individuals are in pain, often the medications can alleviate the pain, but they take time to have an effect. Street drugs help alleviate the pain in short term. Discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER PEREIRA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER BOYD SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Service