Special Commission on Correctional Consolidation & Collaboration Meeting Minutes

Date: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM, June 15th, 2026

Location: Online

Commission Members in Attendance:

- William Brownsberger, Chair- State Senator, Suffolk
- Daniel Hunt, Chair – State Representative, 13th Suffolk District
- Estela Reyes- State Representative, 4th Essex District
- Andrew Peck- Undersecretary of Criminal Justice, EOPSS
- Andrea Cabral- Former MA Secretary of Public Safety + Former Sheriff
- Robert Gittens- Former Executive Director, Bridges Homeward
- Meaghan Dupuis- Executive Director, ForHealth Consulting
- Patrick Cahillane- Sheriff, Hampshire County
- Nicholas Cocchi- Sheriff, Hampden County
- David Rini – Executive Director of Prisoners Legal Services
- Mac Hudson - Paralegal at Prisoners' Legal Services
- Harry Jean Jaques

Staff To Be Contacted:

- Eric Helmuth, Senator Brownsberger's Staff Director -Eric.Helmuth@masenate.gov
- Teri Valentine, Senator Brownsberger's Legislative Director - Teri.Valentine@masenate.gov
- Erin Walsh, Representative Hunt's Staff Director – erin.walsh@mahouse.gov
- Cassie Tobin, Representative Hunt's Legislative Aide - cassie.tobin@mahouse.gov

Time Stamps are in accordance with the video recording on the MA Legislature website, found here: https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5714

09:25: Presentation on Parole by Officers Brian Lucier, President of the Massachusetts Parole Officers Association (MPOA) and Shauna Hawksley, Vice President of the MPOA and a parole supervisor in Dartmouth

The MPOA includes field parole officers and field parole supervisors. institutional parole supervisors and special investigators.

- All positions are civil service positions and qualify as special State Police Officers, except special investigators
    - Institutional parole officers and special investigators work with incarcerated individuals to prepare them for parole hearings and re-entry.
    - Field parole officers and supervisors work within communities to manage cases and reentry services.
- Covers 9 Parole offices, 30 correctional facilities, and every HOC and DOC site.
- Works in specialized units such as the Interstate Compact Unit, the Warrant Apprehension Unit, and a Life Sentence unit.
- Frequent collaboration happens with long term residential programs, sober houses, transitional programs and rooming houses.
- Organizes necessary communication with psychiatric providers, counseling providers, hospitalization programs, DMH crisis centers and Community use disorder services are also common.
- They help connect inmates with job placements, job readiness training, education, public benefits, staffing agencies and local businesses and schools.
    - Have found that there are gaps in DOC referrals, as they send inmates into communities which have fewer familiar resources.

Re-entry Navigators would conduct interviews with inmates on the day of their release to discuss their needs in the community, helping to make more updated referrals.

- Unfortunately, these positions lost their funding in 2025. They now rely on similar resources found in the DOC, despite their disconnect to local communities.

Regional Re-entry Centers (RRC):

- Run under EOPS with the DOC and the Parole Board used to act as re-entry nuclei in Quincy, Mattapan, Springfield, Lawrence, Brockton, New Bedford and Framingham.
- Their 3 goals included: improve information sharing, reduce duplicative efforts to prioritize resources, and assist returning citizens who were released without supervision.
- DMH, DPH, HOC's, DOC's, Sheriff's offices, community center and the Sex Offender Registry, worked together there.
- In 2006 they worked with 667 non-parolees, However, after RRC's were phased out in 2009, only 510 non-parolees were serviced.
- They differed from Criminal Justice Support Centers (CJSC) because they can start communicating with inmates from day one of their sentencing from within the DOC.

Professional Development and Training:

- The Massachusetts Parole Board does not currently have a training division or a designated training facility.

- They were previously embedded in the Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC) Acadis training program.
- Barriers for inclusion were funding and staffing to develop resources and account for the necessary capacity.

23:16 Presentation Ended

23:55: Sherriff Cahillane Q: Should the Parole Board and Community Justice Centers be combined? Does a Parole Officer have the right to arrest, and why are you disengaged from MPTC?

- A: We currently operate under different branches, but we do collaborate where we can. CJCs also cannot communicate to the Parole Board whether their services are being used.
- A: Yes, we do have the right to arrest as Special State Police Officers, we carry firearms and can arrest parolees. We are also not included, under the law, as Post Certified Officers.

27:28: Commissioner Cabral Q: How does your arrest, new officer, and first responder, training differ from Chapter 90 training? What kind of in-service training do you undergo? Is your separation from MPTC training because of your designation under the Judicial Branch?

- A: We currently go through 500 hours of training at a parole specific academy. We also fall under the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

30:43: Harry Jean Jaques Q: Do you have data on what drives revocations, such as genuine threats to public safety versus barriers to unemployment, housing and behavioral health issues? Resources across the commonwealth have not been found to be uniform, do you think a statewide template based on community organizations would be beneficial? What specific structural changes are needed to ensure that community-based organizations are involved as Co-designers of re-entry policy and strategy, rather than simply service providers implementing decisions made elsewhere?

- A: While that is a great question, we don't currently have the exact data, I can say anecdotally that compared to 10 years ago, we are not returning parolees for the same violations anymore. If a parolee is caught with their first positive drug test or having behavioral health issues, they are more likely to receive treatment now. One of the only normal cases of returning someone with substance abuse or behavioral heal issues to a Correctional Facility would be because they refuse treatment.
- A: Further involving community-based justice centers while inmates are still in facilities will help coordinate services. It could also help mitigate duplicative efforts.

34:44: Commissioner Gittens: Is re-entry training offered for parole officers? Can you speak to the step-down process and reentry services between DOC, HOC and Parole, where do you see room for improvement?

- A: We used to have more training with re-entry navigators. We now use in-service trainings provided by UMass, but there is a lot of on-the-job training. We are also aware of federal level grants that cover similar types of training.
- A: HOC does better at local levels, whereas DOC's interior referrals and recommendations will be denied by a Parole Board, causing unnecessary delays.

41:04: Sherriff Cocchi Q: Do you notice a tougher population of parolees reneging on their promises to commit to services and treatments once they're released after the 1st 24 to 48 hours? Post Certification unfortunately doesn't cover the training needed for parole officers, deputy sheriffs, or campus police officers. Hopefully we can find a streamlined path to maintaining this growing demand in the workforce.

- A: Paroling rates are up, so more folks with less resources are out, causing a strain on our ability to provide services. Motivating and communicating with them is a tireless effort from our officers.

54:09: Commissioner Hudson Q: My question is regarding the CJC's and parole reentry resource centers, what were the challenges they faced with the parole population attending those centers?

- A: Transportation and employment schedules make it difficult to attend regularly scheduled programming at CJC. There are no known issues with parolees meeting with parolee officers.

56:57: Next Steps and Reporting

- September 30th to November 30th reporting date has not been finalized.
- We've visited all HOC facilities and hope to visit the rest of the DOC facilities in the fall.
- Meetings about mental health (Need DMH framing)
- Concerns about summer HVAC issues in correctional facilities
- Judiciary branch discussion
    - Judges were contacted and were unable to be present at this meeting
    - Would it be beneficial to have the input of District Attorneys?
        - Contact was formally attempted, but they may be more willing to attend in the fall.
        - Could we send them a list of questions? Would we be able to gauge their understanding of correctional resources, before recommending a committed sentence, suspended sentence, or straight probationary sentence.
- No July meeting, next meeting in September, date undecided.

Motion to Adjourn at minute 1:10:29