

  
**Tompkins County**  
**COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD**

Tompkins County Mental Health Center  
201 East Green Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850-5421

Maria Morog, Chair

Ellice Switzer, Vice Chair

Frank Kruppa; Commissioner

Harmony Ayers-Friedlander,  
Deputy Commissioner/ DCS

Larry Roberts, Chair,  
Mental Health Subcommittee

Sheila McEnery, Chair,  
Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee

Stu Bergman, Chair,  
Substance Use Subcommittee

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**Tompkins County Community Mental Health Services Board**  
**February 7, 2022, 5:30 p.m. Meeting Minutes**  
**Via Zoom**

Approved 3.7.22

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkpJNVbpLLbEbhoDbTIEgSQ>

**Present:** Dr. Maria Morog; Ellice Switzer; Mary Hutchens; Jan Lynch; Paula Winner; Travis Winter; Khaki Wunderlich; Dr. Auguste Duplan; Sheila McEnery; Larry Roberts; Stu Bergman; Sullymar Pena Vazquez;

**Excused:** Mandy Caughey;

**Guests:**

**Staff:** Frank Kruppa, Commissioner; Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DCS; Samantha Hillson, PIC; Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

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The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Maria Morog, Chair. Motion to approve the January 2022 minutes; Sheila 1<sup>st</sup>/Larry 2<sup>nd</sup>. All were in favor.

**Privilege of the Floor:** None

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**Announcements:** Dr. Duplan shared that Cayuga Medical Center is now fully staffed with five psychiatrists.

**Commissioner Updates/Reports:** Mr. Kruppa reported on the merger between the Mental Health and Public Health Departments. Administration is scheduling meetings in February with county leadership, the county attorney's office and finance to discuss the chart of accounts and the process for charter updates. The cross functional team (CFT) charged with identity, name and logo, sent out an RFP for branding consultants and are scheduling interviews with the four finalists. He referred to an email sent to both the CSB and BOH members with a summary update and options encouraging participation in the process for input, feedback and support. The legislature has the ultimate decision.

Mr. Kruppa met with Ms. Hillson and both CSB and BOH chairs to discuss options for their participation.

Options:

- Engage the full board periodically during extended meetings/schedule additional meetings
- Newly identified subcommittee formed to meet periodically with the vendor and CFT
- Identify 1-2 members to participate in the actual day-to-day

Ms. Pena Vazquez, Ms. Lynch and Dr. Duplan volunteered to participate in the process. Invites will be sent out by Ms. Hillson for the vendor interviews.

**COVID Update:** Mr. Kruppa reported that they are working with Lakeview to bring booster vaccines to some of their sites. The Alcohol and Drug Council had a ground breaking event for their new facility on Triphammer Road. They hope to have the open access center and stabilization services operational within 12 months.

### Deputy Commissioner Updates/Reports:

Ms. Ayer-Friedlander reported:

- System of Care meetings are being held for children services with representation from Ms. Hutchens; available services were mapped out and are working on goals and objectives of what is needed to do to meet the needs of families and children in the community. Compliments were received from OMH on the level of commitment and involvement.
- The Suicide Prevention Coalition is formalizing their strategic plan.
- Crisis Intervention Training for law enforcement held last fall with a Sequential Intercept Mapping will reconvene in February. The plan will be reviewed to provide feedback to the people who developed the document and to move forward with the next steps on how to implement the CIT model in our county.
- In 2022, TCMHC and PROs will focus on four areas of clinical work: trauma-informed care; suicide prevention as a champion for zero-suicide; equity and diversity; and the treatment of co-occurring disorders.
- The Mental Health website has been updated to include agendas and approved minutes of all subcommittee meetings. The website also includes a description of the Board and all subcommittees and information on joining.

The Board members complimented and thanked Ms. Hillson and Mr. Schiele for a well-designed website that is clear, concise and easily accessible.

### Bylaw Discussion:

Term limits – Ms. Wunderlich referred to a previous meeting on the issue and the email sent to the Board by Mr. Kruppa on the NYS MH Law and discussion of and length of term limits. Legislation limits CSB and subcommittee members to two terms of four years unless the local municipality (Tompkins County Charter) changes it but there is nothing in our bylaws on term limits.

Discussion:

- Ms. Switzer believes longevity is important.
- Ms. Vazquez believes longevity is also important and much can be learned; an evaluation system might be an option.
- Ms. McEnery asked, “what is the impact of not having term limits in place; are there any problems that have arisen”.
- Dr. Morog said that it is important to consider that we have chosen to do something different from what the statute has established. There is a case to be made for a balance between institutional memory, history and fresh perspectives of the changing of the community and the way that things may be different that newer board members can contribute. The question is do we have the right balance, do we want to be different from the statute or do we want to be more in accord with the statute?
- Mr. Roberts believes we are doing a good job in bringing in new and younger members. Dr. Morog added that current members are all of a certain age and many will be retiring soon.
- Ms. Switzer said she has experience with another committee who does annual basic evaluations with no self-select to stay on. She suggests a half measure between hard term limits where you have to be re-invited for your next term and then some targeted recruitment for openings.
- Dr. Duplan said that he has been on the board for 16 years since he first moved to Ithaca and added that he will discuss with his colleagues about joining the board. The board confirmed that it is fine to take a leave from the board and return.
- Ms. Wunderlich is uncomfortable with peer evaluations of board members deciding as to whether somebody is invited to reapply.
- Mr. Bergman believes a vice chairs are a good idea on the subcommittees and 6 – 8 year term limits for chairs.
- Ms. Wunderlich believes we should look our ability to retain members and attract new members in a future meeting. Ms. Lynch added that new members may not understand the purpose and we might need to be a more purposeful group.

Dr. Morog believes it is a good idea to further discuss how to be more purposeful as the current footboard does not align with the purposes identified in the bylaws and to bring those closer together.

Dr. Morog summarized the bylaw discussion on term limits:

1. There is value in institutional memory
2. There is value in new energy as new people join they bring new perspectives

3. Half measure endorsement (recruitment after two terms)
4. Negative responses for assessment/evaluations
5. Take a functional look at where people are, what they're thinking, what they want and what the needs of the board might be

Mr. Roberts suggested creating a grid of experts needed/wanted on the board as done in the past; such as law enforcement, etc. He does not believe there is much support for term limits. Ms. Lynch believes there is more value in explaining the purpose and orientating new members than deciding on term limits. Dr. Morog concluded that the discussion will be revisited later.

**Fentanyl-Laced Drugs in our Community:** Ms. Switzer said the fentanyl-laced drugs discussion in our community has been on her mind for quite some time but recently a friend in common with Ms. Lynch reached out to them about losing her 23-year-old son to fentanyl poisoning last summer who was not looking for fentanyl. This mother is a long time Tompkins County resident with a long history as an executive director with a human service agency in Elmira, NY. She said as they dialogued about potential action steps to address the crisis, there seemed a potential of under reporting of fentanyl poisoning causing a serious public health threat throughout Tompkins County. This mother has spoken to several families who have lost loved ones to fentanyl-laced drugs. Ms. Switzer noted the rash of deaths related to fentanyl-laced cocaine last year in Brooklyn, NY.

Ms. Switzer believes that this should be an issue of priority in sync with the BOH. The Boards have a responsibility to the community at large to make the community aware that the fentanyl-laced drugs are circulating and are a threat to the community. Ms. Switzer suggests forming a joint task force and defining in scope that might look at the problem, gather data and seek out representatives from substance use organizations, colleges, and Ithaca City School District to understand the problem and better formulate some recommendations.

- Ms. Lynch agrees with Ms. Switzer and more attention is needed on fentanyl-laced drugs.
- Ms. Pena-Vazquez shared that her brother passed away last year from a fentanyl-laced overdose. She said that many times, use is related to lack of resources, mental health issues, unemployment, and housing for black and brown communities. Finding solutions to these issues in under served communities would be helpful.
- Mr. Roberts added that in Binghamton, fentanyl is becoming the more common drug as users are being encouraged to try a test strip and have Narcan with them as they try it out. He asked for data about the overdoses in Ithaca.
- Mr. Bergman added that fentanyl reached in a peak in 2017 because of its cost, enhancement qualities and has become an addiction nation-wide. The substance use subcommittee discussed fentanyl pre-COVID.

Mr. Kruppa responded that unlike many other places, overdoses have not statistically risen from year-to-year over the last two years in Tompkins County but noted a fentanyl-laced related death three weeks ago. The medical examiner runs toxicology screenings on all deaths. Fentanyl was in the forefront Pre-COVID, including with law enforcement, and the challenge is the damage being done. Messaging on fentanyl-laced related drugs will go out to the communities.

**Nomination Committee Update:** Mr. Bergman reported that there are no nominations at this time as the SU applicant will attend a meeting in March. Dr. Morog reported that the nominating committee members have attended the mental health and substance use subcommittee meetings. The developmental disabilities subcommittee will be attended by Mr. Bergman this week for those interested in subcommittee chair positions. The election for the subcommittee chairs will follow for those interested.

Mr. Roberts suggests inviting the substance use providers to next month's meeting to discuss and update the Board on fentanyl in the community. Ms. Winner suggested inviting law enforcement as well. Ms. Lynch suggested inviting people personally affected by a fentanyl-laced related death.

There being no further business, Mr. Bergman motioned to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Winter; all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 pm.

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**The Next Community Mental Health Services Board Meeting  
will be March 7, 2022, at 5:30 pm.**