

AREA 31 WESTERN MASS INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE
P.O. BOX 1391
HOLYOKE, MA 01041-1391

BUSINESS MEETING
Wednesday November 3rd, 2021

17 members were in attendance in person and virtually.

Andrew opened the meeting at 7:00 with a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer, and the guidelines of the committee. Tyler read the tradition of the month, and Candie the concept of the month.

Introductions of the committee members.

New Institution Group Reps (IGRs):

Kris C. - Forest Park Group

Secretary's Report: Dan was present to read the minutes of the last meeting.

Treasurer's Report - Mitch was not present to give a report in person.

• Ending Balance from Prev.	\$900.00
• Total donations	\$1721.11
• Expenses	\$130.00
• Ending balance for book purchases	\$1591.11
• Ending Balance to Carry (reserve)	\$900.00

BTG – Jeff was present to give a report. No texts or calls to report this month, there was very little activity. We do need new volunteers to give rides when calls do come in. Please reach out to Jeff either by telephone or email (contact at the end of this report). BTG volunteer forms will be printed and distributed at future Institutions Committee meetings, as well.

Liaison – Tyler was present to give a report. No new information to report on the effort to establish contact with representatives from each facility. Section 35 at

Ludlow reports (Mike) that there are current commitment holders that may or may not have been filled via this committee.

Librarian – Chris was present to give a report. He was able to meet with Cathy, the previous Librarian, and take the existing inventory. All of this has been transferred to a locker at 474 Pleasant Street. If you need books, it is best to meet Chris here at this meeting each month. Big books and 12 and 12s have been distributed by volunteers to Franklin Recovery and to Berkshire County House of Corrections.

Berkshires – Bronwyn was unable to make this meeting, but provided the following notes to be presented:

- We have distributed books to the sober living/halfway houses and hospital institutions in our areas.
- We have quite a few open commitments as groups are either struggling with the idea of going into a hospital during a COVID surge or are struggling with doing meetings via Zoom.
- Communication with the groups is a major issue as attendance at our monthly meetings is very low with only some "die hard" regulars.
- The jail has just reopened to meetings and I'm working to set those up now.

Open discussion of meeting issues

Chris T. asked about the retention of commitments that had been assigned prior to COVID closings. Dan H. reported the general sequence of events: that early in the pandemic, facilities contacted the Institutions Committee to indicate that they would be stopping commitments until further notice, and that each facility that has reopened to commitments has done so piecemeal and, in nearly every case, has let our committee know that some of the slots have already been filled, either by previous chairpersons or by others that contacted the facility outside of the Institutions Committee structure. We have attempted to update our list using the information we've received, and have shown as "OPEN" those commitment slots that facilities have requested and are not already filled by one means or another. In general, all reopened commitments that we have been asked to fill are being regarded as "OPEN", since most previous meeting chairpersons that have wanted to resume their commitments appear to have done so through the facilities directly.

Area Delegate – Mike, Alternate Delegate, was here to give a report. The area office is moving soon to South Hadley to a church on Carew Street. The hybrid format the Institutions Committee has been using may not function because the internet access available at 474 Pleasant Street has been provided by the Area. The Area

elections have been held and a new slate of Area officers has been elected. Five slots in total were filled. The Mass State Convention will be held on 11/13-11/14. Check Massstateconvention.com for details. The information is not yet on the Area website, but it is coming soon. There is a \$10 registration. There is an online registration option. NERAASA will be held on 2/25-27 in Pittsburgh. Register online by searching for NERAASA. It will be planned as a live event that may have a hybrid option. District 6 is having a workshop this weekend, 11/6, live and hybrid. Information for this is available on the Area website.

CPC - Charlie M., CPC co-chair was here to give a report. He reminded us that CPC works closely with Institutions, and can step in to assist when an institution contact, such as a facility director, recovery coach, nurse, or corrections officer requests more information about AA.

ROLL OUTS – None.

ROLL INS – None.

OLD BUSINESS -

Peter, Safe and Sorry Group, had indicated that both Franklin Recovery and the Franklin County Sheriff's Department had indicated that they would like commitments to resume at their facilities. He has passed back to those facilities that the Committee can fill meetings once we have a letter or email indicating where and on what days and times commitments are needed. He also indicated that the Kimball House (pre-release) facility is interested in commitments on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday nights. Tyler, our Liaison, will reach out to confirm facilities, dates, and times.

NEW BUSINESS:

Gary W., Clinical Director of the adolescent substance abuse program Goodwin House in Chicopee came to the meeting to find out how to secure commitments through the Committee for his facility. He will send a formal letter, per Committee guidelines. Members present assured him that there would be interest in chairing commitments among their homegroup members. We anticipate receiving the letter in the next week, with an opportunity to vote in the facility and fill slots for commitments with interested chairpersons at the December Institutions meeting.

A member indicated that the director of the Mill Street facility (Western Massachusetts Recovery and Wellness Center) and the director of the Chicopee Women's Prison have been looking to get commitments back online at the Chicopee facility. Tyler will connect with the facility and coordinate the effort.

There was a motion, given the imminent loss of internet service at 474 Pleasant Street, to continue future Institutions Committee meetings at 474 Pleasant Street as in-person only. All in favor.

Dan H. spoke with a clinical director at Mira Vista (formerly Providence Hospital), who indicated that the facility will not be using the Institutions Committee to fill commitments. She cited a lack of reliability in meeting chairpersons assigned through the Committee and a lack of structure for ensuring commitments remain filled. The committee discussed structures and systems that our Committee had used in the past to ensure consistency of service. Some of these have failed in recent years and especially during the pandemic:

- Meeting commitments are supposed to be held by a chairperson and an alternate, both of whom are listed on the Committee's Master List along with their correct contact information.
- Meeting chairpersons, or, when needed, their group's Institutions Group Representative are to attend the monthly Institutions Committee meeting and affirm their participation in specific commitments by initialing the commitment information on the meeting's sign-in list. If a commitment goes without being initialed for more than a meeting or two, the Liaison can reach out and address the issue or declare the commitment "OPEN".
- The Liaison, and as backup, the Institutions Committee Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, and Secretary, serve as points of contact for all of the facilities, should they need assistance with a commitment. Each of these representatives has access to the Master List of commitments, chairpersons, and the chairpersons' contact information.

Committee Elections:

Several committee positions were filled by necessity through the course of the year, and those elected will remain through 2022. We are due to elect a Secretary and Treasurer.

- Jax is elected secretary.
- No individual stood and no one was nominated for Treasurer. We will try again in December.

The Liaison and Bridging the Gap Coordinator are assigned by the Institutions Chairperson. Our Liaison, Tyler, will remain in the position for 2022. Our Bridging the Gap Coordinator, Jeff, will be stepping down in 2022 after two years of service. Thank you, Jeff and Tyler!!

The next meeting will be on December 1st in person at 474 Pleasant Street.

Your 2021 Institution Committee

Chair Andy
Co-Chair Jim R.
Secretary Dan H.
Treasurer Mitch
BTG Jeff
Liaison Tyler F.
Co-Liaison
Librarian Chris T.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan H.
Scribe Pro Tem

Contact information for Bridging the Gap:

Bridging the Gap
C/O Western Mass. Institutions Committee
PO Box 1391
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1-888-240-6991

Open Commitments

Institution	Day	Time
Franklin RC / Northern HC	Tuesday	7:00 PM
Franklin RC / Northern HC	4th/5th Friday	7:00 PM
Mill Street (M) VIRTUAL	1st/2nd/3rd Mon	7:00 PM
Mill Street (M) VIRTUAL	1st Tuesday	7:00 PM
Mill Street (M) VIRTUAL	Tue	7:00 PM
Mill Street (M) VIRTUAL	1 Wed.	7:00 PM
Mill Street (M) VIRTUAL	3 Wed.	7:00 PM
Mill Street (M) VIRTUAL	2&4 Wed	7:00 PM
Mill Street (W) VIRTUAL	Tuesday	6:00 PM
Mill Street (W) VIRTUAL	3rd Monday	6:30 PM
Mill Street (W) VIRTUAL	1st Wed	6:00 PM
Mill Street (W) VIRTUAL	2nd Wed	6:00 PM
Mill Street (W) VIRTUAL	4th Wed	6:00 PM
Mill Street (M) Spanish VIRTUAL	Monday	7:00 PM